

LET'S GO BACK TO 1942
By Jerry Tammer "Gus" Denny

The Tennessee maneuvers of 42. These were soldiers who would go with Gen Patton from North Africa to Italy, France, and then to Germany. There was never on the face of this earth a finer and fighting group of young northerens, mid western, and other young men assembled anywhere. I am proud that I still have memories of some of them and was able to witness the unbelievable sight that they brought to our little rural hill town of TN. Little did I realize then that I was watching "practice" that would bring down death, hell and destruction on so much of Europe. They were practicing for an event that would claim so many of their young lives, but in return gave to (which some are so ungrateful for) us freedom and security from carnage that was to follow. In memory of you Ernie "Snakebite", wherever you are may God Bless you and all the rest. They came rumbling into town like a mighty herd of iron cattle. The Sherman tanks, huge artillery guns, the huge trucks and the ever loving jeep. They brought a smell with them of grease, tarpaulin and sweat. In their hearts if there was any fear it was hid well. (after all it was only a game). They rode in like liberators waving, talking and a keen eye for any young girl that might be in the yard or on the porch. **LET ME SAY THIS RIGHT NOW. ALL THE TIME THEY WERE THERE, THERE WAS NEVER AN INSTANCE OF ANY UNRULEY INSULTS, ATTACKS, OR IMPROPER BEHAVIOR ON THEIR PART.** They were bivouac about a half mile from where we lived and it was great fun and excitement for a twelve year old to see them operate. We would venture as close as they would let us come to see what makes a fighting machine work. Never did we realize how devastating that this game was. **END OF PART ONE. NUMBER TWO TO FOLLOW. GUS.**

Subject: PART TWO OF 42

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To this day I get mad at Japan and Germany (and some say the US) for the dumbness of it all. The deaths, the suffering, and sorry caused by what? What for? I hope the leaders had fun later on seeing some of these fine men that I admired so much getting crushed into a pulp with the tracks of a tank, being burned into a crisp by a flame thrower, or blown away with a high powered rifle. But this was yet to come; for now it was bitch, laugh, and be with the locals as much as possible. They told their stories of their families and their homesickness, their girl friends, and I am sure they got overly amazed at times with our "Southern way of life". The outhouse might have been new to some of them but the home cooking was real and the love and compassion that most people showed was real. For the younger set it was a Roman holiday. Souvenirs of all types and even, if no one was watching maybe a little ride or get to touch a tank or watch an artillery shell being fired. Little did I realize that the twelve year old in Europe would see the real thing with the lasting results that it brought. But, that was eons away in mileage and time for me.

One great story that got me into a little war of my own with my mother happened when the troops first came into town. They were unloading a box car load of slab bacon, etc.

A young soldier ask me as I passed by: "Hey kid you got a sister". Sure I did and she was pretty. The next thing was where do you live. I was proud that he was spending sometime with me and I told him. He grabbed a whole slab of bacon and said take this home with you. This was a true saying of bringing home the bacon. Mom was near as excited as I was. After a tongue lashing and other physical threats it was decided not to return the meat due to the fact that it might get the guy in trouble and after all I had not sold my sister into prostitution.

True to form a young soldier "strolled" by the house and found some excuse to come into the yard and was met by my mother. He charmed her at once with his sincere words and actions and was made to feel at home. That day he never did see my sister as she was gone, but he told mom how much he had enjoyed his visit with her and how much she reminded him of his mother that he missed so much.. Now it was her turn to ask him to come back when ever he could. I guess you could call it Southern hospitality. Anyway she didn't get no tongue lashing like I got. He did come back. He met my sister and they walked and talked and later when they left corresponded for a long time. I don't think there was any love interest there as my sister was very much in love with a local guy that was in the Navy. But to this day I feel a closeness to his memory and I hope the price I paid was rewarding to him in the company he kept with me and my family the whole time they were there. He had brothers and a sister, a Dad and a Mom and he was a long ways from home and only moments away from being much further in an unknown land. I don't remember how the bacon tasted but the sweet taste of his friendship and the friendly family treatment he received lingers on until this very day. As Merle Haggard says in his song: When you attack our brave fighting men you are walking on the fighting side of me. I love you guys wherever you are.

Close to a war story.

You asked one time for war stories. I do not tell war stories. If you have ever seen Flanders Field, the crosses will tell you enough stories to cover all wars.

One non related war story that might be of some interest. I had at one time considered a military way of life and managed to get my self reassigned to the country of Panama. I was a seasoned vet, sfc, respected and liked by officers and enlisted men alike. Of course, that I held the top non com position in the inspector general office might have had some bearing on that. we had a 'gripe' session one a month in order for personnel to bring in their problems. of course an officer held court with the officers and I with the enlisted men. I think I heard so many stories, some true and others created by people with wonderful minds of imagination that I developed a love for psychology, which I persued during my college life.

So many of the stories dealt with homesickness and excuses why they should not be resigned or granted leave, etc. One man once told me a story his family had put together for him so that he might be able come home. His mother was to be on her death bed and dad not much better. The red cross was to be notified and if they investigated his aunt was really sick so she could be the sub for his mother. The plot failed and I gave him a stern lecture on how dishonesty and deception never worked. not too long after this I was

called not by the company commander but by the commanding general's office to come in at once. I thought what have I done? did I give some one a bum steer or cause them to do bodily harm to themselves?

Anyway I went and was informed by the warrant officer (who was a good friend of mine) that he had some bad news for me. My dad had called the commanding general, personally and told the general of my mothers plight and his feeling that she might not be on this earth much longer. The general and my boss were close personal friends, and the general wanted to make sure that Clyde's boys got the best of treatment. There was not a special plane for me (or was there) but for some reason that night I was on one back to Mobile, AL no red cross, no leave, just a three day pass issued by the general. I am probably one of the few soldiers who returned to the states from an overseas assignment on a three day pass.

With haste and much land to cover I arrived in Baxter the next day. there I found sitting on the front porch daddy and pa (john r) both as drunk as cootier brown, and mama hanging out clothes on the line. Dad and Pa were rolling in the aisle it was the best joke they had ever pulled. This could have been the maddest I ever have been in my life. I went and kissed my mother hello and goodbye at the same time, grabbed my bag and departed back to Panama. I said some things to my dad that no son ought to, but if ever he deserved it it was then.

On my return I went by to think my friend in the CG office for his help and just praying that he would not go into deep details about my mothers well being. I think he thought she died and he was hesitant to bring it up. I am glad he didn't. They could have cost me my plush job, got busted back to a private, and packed my bags for Korea. I don't remember the soldier that told me the concocted story of his family, but I will tell him something he had better been watching his mother because I think my dad was seeing her. Talk to you later, Gus.

How about this for a first?

Every family has its first, child, dog, cat, vacation and the workers their first raise. There is the first one to finish high school and then the first one to graduate from college. The first one goes on and on and are talked about for years and cling over head like a velvet cloth of protection that will protect their memory. I was not the first child; so they already had a dog and a cat. During the depression there were no jobs, so no raises. My smart brother, being older beat me to college, so that chance was blown Vacations in the '30's!!! What was that again??? My oldest brother beat me to the great war and won all the medals; so there was no first there. I was not the first to get married either. There is some revenge. Well, why did I come long since all the first were already taken? Let's see. No not that one. OK. No that won't work out either. How about this one? No my sister did that. Oh there is one left.

How about being the FIRST one to not only meet the Queen of England, but attend the reception for her! You talk about firsts. The saying that the Lord in mysterious ways is so true, but huge bundle of nerves and a brazen coolness can get many results also. You

know you are going to hear it; so here we go. When Queen Elizabeth ascended to the throne of England, her first official visit out side of the country of England was in all places, the Republic of Panama. Don't ask me why? I don't arrange these trips. Maybe Phillip wanted to see the canal and was still in good graces as they had been married only a short time. When the news reached us I was in the military stationed in Panama. The president of Panama at that time was a guy by the name of Jose Remon, what a character? Later on him. They blew the visit up "big time". My good friend Bob Steigler, from Mich. had connections. His dad was a big wheel with one of the motor companies and their overseas operations. Bob's good looks, style and dad's money made him a gay blade in the Panamanian society. He had dated the debutantes of the cream of the cream. At this time his companion was the daughter of a high ranking Panamanian official. I think the dad was looking out for his little angel and surely didn't want her to go unescorted and after all Bob was not too bad a pick for a son in law, hopeful in the future. (for those who read love stories...it never developed) So far nothing is unrealistic and not too earth shaking, but that is all about to change when I enter the picture. Bob was not bad to drink, but I think when he ask me if I would like to go with him, he had been nibbling on a little of the sugar cane juice. Here I was a red neck hillbilly from Tennessee who hardly knew a Queen from a King. (except in poker) Of course everyone knew England. That was where the good Gin came from. OH how vain.

Oh how vain we can be:::: Of course I accepted. Then the schooling started. First there was the matter of dress. I had never seen a tuxedo, less long worn one, and don't remember knowing anyone who had, That was taken care of since they had stores back then also. I remember it was an After Six brand, white jacket, black pants with a silken stripe down the leg. The accessories that came with it were breath taking. Cuff links, pearl buttons, a tit your own bow tie. A thing wrapped around your mid drift like we used to put on the mules when plowing. A hankie, black shoes and a boutonniere. I think I remembered buying my own socks as mama was always fussy about us wearing other peoples socks and underwear. Now I Could dress-----WILL CONTINUE LATER. SEE YOU GUS.

But how to act was another question. I already knew how to say yes sir and no sir. I already knew titles of Sergeant, Captain, Colonel and I had even said General on one or two occasions. But this was another ball game. Your royal highness, queen, prince, and a lot of other titles that got a slow talking southern boy tongue-tied. Then the hardest part was when to bow or bend without falling. Bob had the car and his date had lined me up with I hate to say I have no recollection of what, but it was a girl as at that time they were the think of choice. Ok I was dressed, schooled in my manners and actions. Had a way to go. All I needed was the nerve.

As we pulled up to the entrance of "THE Club" it was lined on each side by the Guard's finest policemen with swords drawn and crossed over heard (like we were getting married). I felt my bluff would run out at any moment and the swords would come crashing down right through my skull, At that moment Bob sighted his girl friend waiting at the door. I have to say I loved the Panamanian people and respected them a lot, but I have never seen a prettier sight in my life than her because I knew they would not let those swords down on such a young beautiful girl. WE ARE IN..PRAISE THE

LORD WE ARE IN. At the proper time the royal court entered and what a sight to behold. I am sure Remon felt about as much out of place as I did.

I could say the Queen was beautiful and stunning, as I am sure she was. The only thing I recall was her complexion. It was beyond doubt the most perfect I had ever seen until years later when I met my wife. My wife always used Merle Norman and I am sure her Highness must have had a connection with Merle. We were introduced to the Queen and I did not fall in the bend. She was a great lady that night. A toast, a meal and then enough sense to go to her quarters. The rest of us could not make that statement. The excuse for a party was there, and what a party. There was enough bubbles to make Lawrence Welk look like tee-toller, scotch by the gallons (not from Joe's bar either). There was a swimming pool throw in and jump ins. Beautiful Panamanian dancing and Remon entertained the most with his table top dancing until the table broke in half with him. I would like to say this was the greatest event in my life, but it comes in second to my wife and children since they are much closer to me at present than the Queen of England. It is ok if you just call me LORD GUS.

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