



THE TRACE

Newsletter of The Jackson County Historical Society
November 2003

Article was taken from The Herald Citizen Newspaper
WWII Maneuvers

*This article was placed in the Jackson Co., museum:
located just off the square in Gainesboro, TN.*

www.jchistoricalsociety.org

Thousand of US Army troops train for battle in the Cookeville and Middle Tennessee area –‘maneuvers,’ it was called.

For the young, what “maneuvers” means to middle Tennessee may be as familiar as life without automobiles but Putnam Countians living in this area in the 1940’s remember the large impact they had on the Upper Cumberland area.

These maneuvers or “war games” as they may be more aptly called were held to prepare soldiers for real warfare in Europe during World War II.

“We are here to toughen the men for dirty work,” said Lt. Gen. Ben Lear, according to an article in a small volume, Somewhere in Tennessee, by Eugene H. Sloan.

The Tennessee Maneuver Area was in operation from 1941 to 1945 and included a 21-county area stretching from Cumberland County in the east to Humpherys County, west of Nashville. Major roadways of troop movement were US Highway 70-N, west to east, and State highway 10, north to south, according to a research paper by Frank Burnes, Kelly Serigo, and Rex Bennett.

As the Second Army trained for battle, people across Middle Tennessee did their part for the war effort “too, and part of the meant giving up some of their privacy as soldiers marched through their backyards and vehicles rumbled town backroads.

Why Middle Tennessee? The Middle Tennessee area was choosen for maneuvers because of its terrain is similar to that of Germany and other parts of Europe. :\\”The terrian here was a whole like that in Europe,” said Sterling McCanless, WWII veteran and Cookeville native. “That’s why there were so many maneuvers.” McCanless was 17 years old when the maneuvers began and was working counting chickens for his father and was also employed at the old Kroger store on West Broad St. in Cookeville.

According to Burns, Sergio and Bennett, three major contributions of war games in Middle Tennessee leading to the victory in Europe were “to demonstrate how airborne troops could be moved in division strength over considerable distance; prove that armor could be used swiftly and decisively with powerful precision” and showed that the Cumberland River could be crossed under severe weather conditions. This was important because it was said that the Cumberland River was as wide and swift as the Rhine.

According to the Thursday, June 19, 1941 issue of the Putnam County Herald, "The army maneuvers brought the first taste of war to Cookeville Sunday night when four trainloads of troops and equipment were unloaded here. This was part of the armored "Hell on Wheels" division of the regular army. "The group unloading here was part of the "Red" section, which is opposing the "Blues" in the war games, covering an area of 600 square miles in Middle Tennessee. "The men unloading here, composed largely of the tank; engineering and signal units of the division, were hidden in the woods nearby and were camouflaged with branches cut from the trees, hiding the men, tanks, guns, trucks, and other war equipment from observation by "enemy" airplanes. "It was reported that 11,000 men were bivouaced here but, by driving by, very few of the men and little of the equipment could be seen," according to the article, published some months of course before December 7th attack on Pearl Harbor and the official start of the war.

In February 1943, the Putnam County Herald reported that the Second Army would hold maneuvers again in the spring and summer in Middle Tennessee, beginning about April 15. The war games were predicted to last for a longer period, probably five or six months, covering approximately 3 million acres instead of the original 13 counties in the maneuvers the previous year. According to the same news article, Tennessee Governor Prentice Cooper issued a proclamation setting aside a 21-county area for maneuvers: **Putnam**, Wilson, Sumner, Trousdale, Macon, Cannon, Rutherford, Bedford, Moore, Lincoln, Grundy, Coffee, Warren, Smith, DeKalb, White, Jackson, Clay, Franklin, Davidson, and Marshall counties representing the eastern portion of Middle Tennessee.

McCanless said that several training maneuvers took place in the Cookeville area off Gainesboro Grade and on Burgess Falls Road and **Buffalo Valley Road**.

"I knew they were on farms around the Caney Fork River," Cookeville native Eleanor Mitchell said. Mrs. Mitchell was a 22-year old when the maneuvers came to this area and was attending Tennessee Tech.

Putnam County and the surrounding areas were affected by the maneuvers in a variety of ways. According to the March 4, 1943, issue of the Herald, "Putnam County farmers and land owners are urged by the War Department to sign and return cards granting maneuver rights to the Second Army during their maneuvers. "The army will pay for crops, fences, livestock destroyed and other damages that may result from the maneuvers in the county.

According to Burns, Serigo and Bennett, ranger training was introduced in May 1943. Farmers in the Burgess Falls area were surprised in the pre-dawn hours by rangers in soot-faced camouflage crawling through their backyards. "Highway 42 to Sparta acted as the eastern edge of the active area and night traffic moved with only the blue blackout lights visible," they write.

The Herald reported on August 5, 1943, that the first regimental maneuver of the 7th Regiment of the Tennessee State Guard would be held August 13, 14, and 15, by Col. Walter K. Crawford on the Cookeville Armory grounds. Maj. Thurman Shipley, father

of Dr. Bill Shipley, a Cookeville orthodontist, was one of the officers reportedly helping with the plans.

During the maneuvers, Gainesboro became the only American town to be “bombed” during World War II. A Mitchell B-25 aircraft dropped a simulated bomb on the public square by mistake, according to Burns, Sergio, and Bennett.

The March 23, 1944 issue of the Herald reported that the maneuvers would be over by April 1 but that 5,000 engineers and some road equipment would remain until May 31 to repair the roads damaged by the movement of heavy military vehicles and equipment. Putnam County was granted \$70,532.40 to repair the damages to county roads during the maneuvers.

This article was taken from The Herald Citizen Newspaper and has been placed in the museum.....visit the museum to view this and other articles of interest.

Museum hours are Saturday 10 a.m. until 1 p.m.

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www.ajlambert.com – Audrey J. (Denny) Lambert

My father, Tim Denny told me about the army maneuvers that were being held in Putnam Co., TN – near Buffalo Valley on Buffalo Valley Road and surrounding areas. He told me that the terrain of this area was similar to that of Germany and other parts of Europe. He recalls that his father, Virgil Timothy Denny gave permission for the armies to practice on his farm located on Little Indian Creek, Hopewell Rd., Rt. 1 Silver Point, TN.

Miriam Shanks Gwaltney lived next door to the Virgil Timothy farm with her parents, Luther “Luke” Alexander Shanks & Dona Florence Boyd. Miriam wrote me this story about her memories of the WWII maneuvers.

Miriam remembers when WWII started and military maneuvers were held all around Little Indian Creek, Putnam Co., TN on the Virgil Denny farm. The troops were camped on Virgil’s property near Denny’s Memorial Methodist Church. The soldiers were preparing to go to Italy to fight the war. The terrain in the valley was similar to Italy so the soldiers could practice their maneuvers there. Dona would make chocolate pies for some of the soldiers. Miriam used to sit on her front porch and talk to them when they came to her house, she was in her teenage years at the time.

Denny’s Memorial Methodist Church was on the corner of Hopewell Rd. and Little Indian Creek Rd in Putnam Co., TN. This church was next to Denny’s Seminary a one room schoolhouse built by Silas Denny and taught by one of the first teachers, Thompson Luther Denny. Land for the church and school donated by Timothy Denny, father of

Virgil Timothy Denny so his children and the children in the area could have a school and church in the community. Silas and Thompson “Tobe” Denny were his nephews.

My father, Tim Denny Served 15 months in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater of Operations with the 1522nd Army Air Forces Base Unit. Served part of this time with the Army Transport Command – Veteran WWII - 7 April 1943 – 11 March 1946. He serviced the plane the Enola Gay.

I was told some interesting facts at my father Tim Denny’s funeral. My brother, Richard mentioned that Tim serviced and loaded the plane called the Enola Gay this plane was the one that bombed Hiroshima, Japan in World War II. L.H. Gill confirmed my brother’s story. My brother said that Tim took a picture of the nose of that plane with the writing the Enola Gay on the nose. I am not totally convinced that I have found that picture. Tim was in the Asiatic-Pacific for 15 months with the 1522nd Army Air Forces Base Unit, serving part of this time with the Army Transport Command. Date of entry 7 April 1943 – 11 March 1946. I wrote to the National Personnel Records Center for Tim’s service records. They wrote me back but could not confirm this story. Dad and I never discussed this story, I never knew to ask about the Enola Gay – Superfortress B-29. One of his pictures could have been the Enola Gay, the arrowhead and Enola Gay motif was applied while the plane was stationed on Tinian Island in the Marianas chain before the plane dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. The planes familiar arrowhead motif had been changed on both sides to the letter “R” in a circle to confuse the enemy if they made contact. Tim was buried in Cadillac Memorial Gardens, East in Clinton Twp., MI on the anniversary date that the bomb was dropped on Heroshima, Japan.

I also was told that Lamar Medley, my father’s 1st cousin, served in the U.S. Air Force as a Captain in World War II. Two years of his service were in the Mariana Islands in the Pacific, and it was from there that the first Atomic Bomb was flown and dropped by the Enola Gay (B-29) on Hiroshima. This plane was piloted by Co., Paul Tibbetts, with whom Lamar was personally acquainted.



- See Story of Lamar Medley
- www.ajlambert.com

Left to right: Ernest Medley, son Lamar & Micheal Martelia (Anderson) Medley, his wife.



Tim Denny

Paul W. Tibbets Jr. (1915-). On August 6, 1945, Tibbets piloted the Enola Gay, which dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. He helped establish the National Military Command Center in the Pentagon.

Source: Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN, 2 April, 2006, Sunday Reader, Section B: "Way Back When" by Bob McMillian, Herald Citizen Staff.

1943: Lt. General Ben Lear, commander during the 2nd Army's latest round of war maneuvers in Middle Tennessee, says the exercises are going to be tougher than before. They're trying to simulate real wartime situations because commanders have learned in recent action that troops often lack battlefield discipline needed in a hot fight.

With that in mind, Lear has announced a new set of regulations that civilians need to keep in mind while the maneuvers are going on.

Troops aren't allowed to hitch-hike.

They're supposed to be in enemy territory so don't give them a lift. Troops can only drink from approved water supplies they carry with them so don't offer them a drink. Troops are supposed to take pains not to destroy timber or crops. Troops are not allowed to accept food from civilians.

Also military convoys are supposed to pull completely to the side of the road when at rest, so report it if you can't use the road when trucks and tanks are parked. And don't try to visit the troops while they're on maneuvers even if a family member's unit is involved. There's no visitation allowed, says Lear. (April 1, 1943)

<http://www.ajlambert.com>