

World War II Memoirs



Staff Sergeant James C. “Buck” Hutto
January 31, 1923 – December 6, 1993

Serial No. 14 126 435
United States Army
82nd Airborne Division
508 Parachute Infantry Regiment
3rd Battalion
Company I
1942 – 1945

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I was nineteen years old when I enlisted in the United States Army in December 1942. I wanted to enlist in the Army Air Corps but the army recruiter talked me into enlisting in the paratroops. I thought the tough training would help me survive, so I became an airborne trooper.

From my home in Gaston, I had to hitchhike to the recruiter in Columbia and then to Lexington to get a release from the draft board. From there, I went right back to the recruiter. He gave me two bus tokens to go to Fort Jackson, where I spent two nights and then shipped out for training.

TRAINING LOCATIONS:

Camp Blanding, Florida (for basic training)
Fort Benning, Georgia (for jump school)
Cheraw, South Carolina (maneuvers)
Tennessee maneuvers (from Lebanon and then various locations in the state)
Camp Mackall, North Carolina
Camp Shanks, New York

My commanding officers were Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, Gen. James M.Gavin, Col. Roy E. Lindquist, and Lt. Col. Louis G. Mendez, Jr.

SHIPPED OUT TO EUROPE:

On December 27, 1943, we shipped out to Belfast, Ireland, on the USAT *James Parker*. We billeted on the estate of Cromore near Port Stewart in Northern Ireland, where we spent about two months training. When it was almost time for the invasion of Europe, they sent us to Wollaton Park near Nottingham, England, to prepare for D-Day. Our job was to jump into enemy territory and destroy railroads, disrupt communications, and to prevent the enemy from completing their mission. I was a “Red Devil,” a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division. I was the squad leader in a mortar squad. *[My father recalls there were 2,500 men to a regiment and 17 men in a “stick” of paratroopers, and that a platoon had four squads.]*

I remember that I had tried my best during training to beat this certain other guy, Clayton, on the mortar. You had to run ten yards with a shell, place it and aim it just so - and then shoot. I gave it everything I had so I could beat Clayton, and I did. Then they

said, “You did so good that you’re the gunner!” I didn’t want to be the gunner on the mortar squad because he had to carry the mortar! As it ended up, half of the time in combat I didn’t even have a mortar with me.

[Many years later, at a regimental reunion, my father’s lieutenant, Frances Mahon, told me that Hutto was the best he had ever seen with a mortar. He said that Hutto could use his helmet for a base and then “lob” the shell wherever he wanted it to go!]

At Wollaton Park in Nottingham, there was a brick wall about seven feet high around the park. It was a beautiful place, with hundreds of deer and a big lake. We 508th troopers were there in an area also enclosed by barbed wire. I always said this was to keep the women out! There were lots of girls, mostly nice girls – some college girls – waiting outside the gate night and day. They were there waiting for us to go on leave or to get a pass. There were always lots of girls waiting outside the wire and outside the park gate – oodles!

[My father always spoke fondly of Nottingham and his days there. Near the end of his life, he expressed that of all the places he had been during the war that he would most like to return to visit Nottingham.]



James C. Hutto after completing jump school and prior to D-Day.

D-DAY AND THE NORMANDY INVASION

[Regarding the D-Day preparation, my father said he remembered being able to ride on the roads anywhere in England for miles - "I mean 30 or 45 minutes without stopping"- and both sides of the road would be lined with equipment – trucks, jeeps, artillery pieces. "You could ride for miles and miles with no break in the equipment lineup."]

We didn't know exactly when the invasion would be. But when it was four or five days before D-Day, they put all of us at an airfield *[at Folkingham]* inside a huge hangar with barbed wire entangled around it. We could not get out to talk to anyone and they couldn't get in to talk with us. The air force brought us chow and their driver got out at the gate and our army driver drove the truck on in.

I jumped my first combat jump into Normandy, France, on D-Day - June 6, 1944. We jumped at night around 2 A. M. The moonlight was pretty bright, and you could see a good bit below our C-47. Our pilot dropped us at around 500 feet; he said that he wanted us all out safely rather than have the whole plane shot down. Our chutes barely had time to open and the Germans were really letting us have it with anti-aircraft fire and tracer bullets. Many troopers were killed before they hit the ground or shot while they dangled from parachutes caught in trees or on buildings. We were all scattered out from our DZ – our Drop Zone.

[The Drop Zone "N" for the 508th was in the vicinity of Ste. Mere Eglise and Chef Du Pont, France, near the Douve and Meredet River. My father remembers landing on the opposite side of the Meredet River from Chef Du Pont. Ste. Mere Eglise would become the first town in France to be liberated.]

I landed in a field bordered with hedgerows. As soon as I landed, I spotted a little white horse and a donkey. The donkey was as scared as I was, and he was running like crazy around and around the field. I just lay there, still in my harness. Then the donkey ran between me and my parachute, and got tangled in the suspension lines. He started dragging me toward a barn. I had noticed the barn when I landed; the roof had been knocked out of it and the Germans were in there shooting out of it at our planes. The donkey was dragging me by my parachute straight for that barn!

I got out my trench knife and cut the suspension lines on the chute. I was within 50 feet of that barn when I was finally cut free. I spent the rest of the night in those hedgerows, doubting that I would live much longer.

Once I heard a German patrol a few feet away and then the sound of the bolt on a machine gun being pulled back. I thought that they would shoot out all the hedgerows and that I would get it. But they moved on and at dawn they evacuated the barn. I left to try to rejoin my regiment.

I recall being pinned down by German machine gunners in a wheat field a few days after the jump. You could hear the machine guns firing across the field and see the bullets cutting down the wheat stalks in long swaths, like they were harvesting it.

My best friend, R. J. Dennett, jumped right behind me in Normandy. He was taken prisoner by the Germans. I didn't see him again until we visited him and his family thirteen years later in his hometown of Drexel, Missouri. He told me that when he said he would see me later, when we jumped, he didn't think it would be thirteen years later.

[My father recalled the following upon seeing a photo in a 1992 issue of Static Line of the flooded marshes in Normandy, looking just as they did when they were flooded in 1944 on D-Day.]

Most of all, I remember when dawn came on the morning of D-Day. I saw, at dawn, many, many paratroopers dead, drowned in the flooded marshes of Normandy. Some were only a few feet from a dike or solid ground. But they had drowned there in the dark where they landed in the water. They could not see how close the land was or they couldn't tell which direction to go to reach solid ground. Their packs with all their equipment weighed over 90 pounds, and in the dark they didn't know how close to land they were or they could have cut them off. Their chutes were flapping over the water when dawn came. Still in their chutes... I saw many drowned like this.

In Chef Du Pont right after the drop, I was crawling down the hedgerows mostly looking for ammo. All the dead were lined up, all over and against that hedgerow in both directions. I glanced up and saw an 82nd boy. He was looking ahead, raised up. His hands were pulling a belt tourniquet around his leg. It was shot or blown off. I thought that when I got to him I would move him to where they had placed the wounded. Then I saw that he was dead, already stiff, shot exactly between the eyes. I guess he had raised his head too high trying to keep the belt tight on his leg so he wouldn't bleed to death and was shot in the head. He looked alive; I thought he was alive. He was looking off into the distance with staring eyes like he was looking 10,000 miles away. That was as spooked a feeling as I ever had during combat – all those dead lined up under that hedgerow and him, dead, staring...

Against the next hedgerow back were the wounded, lined up like the dead ones before. One doctor who had a heel wound himself was trying to help them all. Mostly just giving them morphine. They were wounded real bad.

I remember an old couple in Chef Du Pont. I was assigned a roadblock at a gate near their house and not too far from that hedgerow. *[Near the Meredet River causeway and in the vicinity of Hill 30.]* Every once in a while I would go and ask them for some bread. It was from a round loaf and they would cut me a big slice and spread lots of thick butter on top. This was better than ice cream to me after all those C-rations. The people were always good to share their food with us – all over Europe.

I came across a wounded trooper, really young, who kept calling for his mother. When I could get over to him, I knelt down and wrapped my arm around behind him to lift him up so that I could give him my morphine. My hand went into a big cavity in his back and touched his beating heart. I just held him there like that. He died in my arms, calling for his mother.

We were not allowed to take prisoners.

Rene Croteau, from Louisiana, died on July 4 in Normandy. Our squad was going from house to house, cleaning up. [*Routing the Germans with gunfire.*] Much of the fighting was hand-to-hand there, but I remember that Croteau died in an open field.

There was a young French boy around 14 or 15 years old who had taken up with us, especially with Croteau because he could speak French. We had given this French boy an 82nd uniform and boots. He had little feet, and we had given him our Lt. Williams' paratrooper boots because he had little feet, too. Lt. Gene Williams had been killed in combat. I remember that the next day a telegram came for him telling him that his wife had given birth to twin sons.

This French boy ran out onto that field when he saw that Croteau was down, and tried to drag him off the field. Croteau was already dead. The boy was killed there with him. After that, we all wished that we knew the boy's family so that we could tell them how he had died, that he was brave and that all the paratroopers mourned him.

Someone in our squad shot a big dairy cow and then cut steaks off of it while the cow was kicking. We built a fire using a kind of plastic explosive and then hung the steaks near the fire. When they were almost "ready" we got orders to move out and we left - the fire, the steaks hanging there, and the cow - still kicking.

In France, we had no sleep and were eating C-rations in the rain or wherever. Once our squad stopped to eat in a pasture where there were dead cows, all stiff and bloated. One trooper took a look around as we ate and said, "Better 'n home. A picnic every day!" Then he jumped back up to sit on a dead cow to eat. When he did, all this rotten mess squirted out of the cow's back end!

I remember taking cover in these deserted or bombed out big, old French chateaus. They all had wine cellars; some still had bottles in them. We would drink four-star brandy and chase it with the champagne. But it was the calvados that really made a lasting impression on me! [*Calvados is a potent apple brandy.*]

In July, I shot myself in the left hand with a 45. I thought the chamber was empty. They operated on it in a field hospital in France. I was then shipped to a hospital in Oxford, England. I remember a trooper there in the hospital who had a bad leg wound. I would go visit him in his room. He was a boxer from the Midwest. In Golden Gloves, he said. He got gangrene in the wound and they amputated his leg at the knee. He was bad

after that and they amputated again at the hip. I didn't see him again but I heard he died soon after that.

Also while I was there at Oxford, one of our nurses kept after me to fix her bicycle. She was a pretty girl; I think her name was Miller and that she was from Boston. I finally went and looked at her bicycle and I couldn't find anything wrong with it. The other guys laughed when I told them that and said, "That's not what she wanted you to fix, Buck!"

I recuperated there at Oxford until mid-July. After I recovered, I did training with the 82nd replacements doing night jumps in preparation for Operation Market Garden in Holland. I missed Hill 95 while I was out with my hand. I often think that this may have saved my life, because our regiment saw some bad combat in July in France. Our company was at a low strength, around fifteen men, when we finally returned to base camp at Nottingham. We should have had 100 or more troopers.

Normandy was worse than Holland. [*A reference to Operation Market Garden.*] Nobody can explain to you how bad combat can be; no one can tell you how horrible it is until you are in it. I try not to think about the war, but after the 508th Reunions I think about it afterward a lot more. I'll think about it in bed sometimes and I can't sleep.

[My father told me that after he was newly married and this happened, he would get out of bed and run, often dressed in just the boxer shorts he wore to bed. He told me the route he would take, up past the Gaston First Baptist Church and down Oakey Springs, a dirt road. Then he would cut across a large field owned by his neighbors, the Smiths, and continue down what is now Meadowfield Road back to his house and his bed. Daddy told me that after running he could sleep. My mother would still be asleep and he would go back to bed with her.]



Buck Hutto with his buddy Art Extrom from La Grange, Illinois

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OPERATION MARKET GARDEN
The Rhineland – Holland

I was in France until around July fifteenth and then was shipped back through Southampton to Nottingham, England, to train replacements and to get ready to jump at Nijmegen, Holland. We were to secure the bridge over the Waal River as part of a joint operation with the British 1st Airborne and our 101st Airborne. It was a daytime combat jump on September 17, 1944.

I lost some of my best friends in Holland. My squad leader and assistant squad leader were killed, along with many others. Lt. Mitchell, from Greenville, died almost as soon as we hit the ground in Holland. A horrible death – a bullet hit his white phosphorus grenade that hung on his belt and detonated it. The powder never stops burning. He was covered with it. A slow, terrible death... *[My father thinks that Mitchell's family is now in Augusta, GA.]*

Some of my worst times in Holland were as a scout for Company I. You couldn't see the Germans as frequently as in Normandy, but you could smell them and know that they were nearby or had just been there. I guess they could smell us, too.

We would scout into Nijmegen at night and it would be so dark that you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. You had to walk with one foot on the edge of the road just to know where you were. I remember doing this with my buddy Baldwin (from Houston, Texas). We were about 25 yards ahead of our company. He would be on one

side of the road and me on the other. I just kept hoping that we wouldn't bump into each other and scare each other. I knew he was pretty scared and I was afraid he would bump into me and cut me in two with the Thompson that we each carried.

Some of our worst fighting – combat – for our company was on the other side of the Nijmegen Bridge - the German side. We were able to take the bridge and the brickyard, but we lost so many men. We lost our squad leader and our assistant squad leader here fighting to secure the bridge. My platoon sergeant made me the squad leader and I had to take over the attack. I remember that for days later, even after we had taken the bridge, that there were still German snipers up in the steel structure of the bridge.

Someone told me later that this was the first time Allied forces had actually penetrated into Germany. This was also part of the largest airborne assault in history.

[My father recalls I Co. being part of the battle for the town of Beek, being led by Col. Mendez. He was in combat for the next few weeks in and around Nijmegen, Arnhem, Beek and Groesbeek, Holland. Sherman tanks were attached to the company to help take their objectives.]

In Nijmegen, I remember listening to wounded all night, but there was still shelling going on and we couldn't get to them. When light came, I crawled out and came to a German officer and a German sergeant, both badly wounded. The officer's groin was all blown out and the sergeant had a leg wound, I think. The officer was conscious and motioned to me. I came over close and got out my morphine. Paratroopers were issued morphine injections because they knew that we probably wouldn't have a medic available most of the time in combat. So I rolled up his sleeve and gave him my morphine injection. After that, he motioned for me to take his watch. It was a gold watch. I tried to tell him I didn't want it, but he kept on and on motioning. So I finally took it just to calm him down. Later, I asked our medics about him and someone told me that one of the two had lived, but I don't know if it was him.

I remember in Holland these burned-out brick walls, at least twenty feet high, still standing on the corner end of what had once been a big house. We had taken cover there and kept our sleeping gear there. We were out talking to some soldiers in a jeep about mortar ammo when a few yards behind us that thick brick wall suddenly fell down. WHAM! We would have been killed sure.

I was sent out with another trooper to set up C-4 plastic explosive to blow up a bridge. We each took a side and went down the embankment near the base of the bridge. I stopped short when I saw a German directly in front of me pointing a rifle at me. I thought, "This is it," and waited for the bullet. I didn't hear one. Then I realized that he was dead, with his head forward as if he were aiming his gun. I heard my buddy yell to get the hell out of there and we ran. The bridge blew and it seemed to literally "rain" bricks for a long time as we ran to get away. I think we used too much C-4!

[When asked how he had obtained a Nazi SS trooper armband and insignia]

We were searching from house to house in Nijmegen looking for Gestapo Headquarters. I was going through a desk drawer in a house there and found this and some other stuff. *[I thought this was highly unlikely and said so; Daddy was silent.]*

BELGIUM AND THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

After spending about six weeks in Operation Market Garden in Holland, we were sent in November to Camp Sissonne near Reims, France for some R & R. *[My father has a photo of himself with his good friend Andy Downer, from Charlotte, taken at a well at Sissonne, after a twenty-three mile hike and no sleep.]*



J. C. Hutto (L) and Andy Downer at Soissonne, France

It was December and I was excited about making the regimental football team and about getting my helmet and uniform, which was to be issued the next morning. Then we got notice to be issued combat equipment, clothes, boots and combat ammo. We stayed up all night doing this and left at dawn in a convoy for Belgium. The Germans had broken through the defensive line and they were sending us to close it.

We traveled in truck convoys in the freezing cold weather all day and all through the night, stopping only for “piss stops.” We arrived at midnight near Bastogne. *[Werbomont]* The truck convoy with the 82nd went towards Leige and the 101st behind us went on towards Bastogne. They met a German SS Panzer tank division and eventually became surrounded in Bastogne.

The 82nd spent the next few weeks trying to rescue the 101st Airborne, rout the Germans and close the Bulge. It was during this time that Gen. McAuliffe of the 101st replied “nuts” when the Germans asked him to surrender.

In the Battle of the Bulge, it was terrible hard because you had to fight not only the enemy but also the miserable weather conditions. Snow up to your hips sometimes and you had to fight in it and live in it – day and night. It was hard and I swore that if I got through it that I would never be cold or hungry again. Even if I had to steal or whatever, I would never be cold again. *[My father always said this with a little grin and a chuckle, but growing up in our home in Gaston, S. C., I remember my father quite often in winter getting out of bed at night to turn up the thermostat, and often in the evenings when the weather was cold. My mother would sometimes scold him for this, especially during the energy crisis of the 1970’s, but he continued to do this for the rest of his life. On the rare occasions in South Carolina that we would have snow and icy weather, he would skillfully build a roaring fire in our fireplace and enjoy the warmth. Later, as an adult, I thought that maybe Daddy had suffered frostbite at the Bulge and that this would bother him when the weather was cold so that he always kept the house a little too warm.]*

[It was the coldest winter in Europe in over fifty years.] There were so many dead bodies, German and American, left in the snow and freezing temperatures. They were frozen solid. The burial detail would come around and load them by the legs and shoulders and throw them into the bed of a truck. They made a loud noise, like you were throwing big pieces of firewood into the metal bottom of the truck bed. Sometimes the bodies would break open or the arms would snap off.

Christmas 1944. In the snow, in Belgium, they dropped us turkey, gravy and dressing for Christmas dinner, but ours was nearly frozen when we got to it. Company I was in reserve at this time. We were deep in the Ardennes. There were huge, tall fir and evergreen trees covered with snow and it looked like a Christmas card, but all the shelling had split them up and ruined them. *[My father commented that the destruction of Hurricane Hugo around Charleston, South Carolina, in 1989, reminded him of this scene.]*

I found a mattress near a shelled-out house, slit it, and Sgt. Elliot and I slid inside it like a sleeping bag to stay warm and to sleep. During the night, we heard someone walking near us. I didn’t want to get out of the mattress because it was warm, so I just yelled something out. We heard something drop, and he ran off. Next morning, we found German machine gun ammo right near us where he had dropped it. *[Fred Gladstone, a buddy, laughs when he recalls once seeing Hutto walking toward him wearing his “sleeping gear,” the mattress.]*

Not long after Christmas, my buddy Andy Downer *[from Charlotte, N. C.]* and I were on outpost duty at night in the snow near Erria (Belgium) about 100 yards in front of our lines. We each had some boys. Our job was to pass information on back to our

lines behind us. Sometimes a German patrol would bump into an outpost and we would have a firefight right there.

That night, German SS Panzer troops [*Hutto recalls a battalion of them*] broke through the outposts and were overrunning our lines. The artillery and automatic weapon fire was real heavy. My boys wanted to get out of there bad. I told them we would have to have orders from headquarters before we could pull out. One boy said that he sure would go get them! He somehow made it back and said that Col. Mendez told us to “get the hell out of there.” He said he passed dead Germans on the way back to our outpost. We got out of there fast.

The regiment had to counterattack at night to take back Erria. [*Near Thier du Mont*] We killed around 200 Germans that night.

In Holland and at the Bulge, the German paratroopers would scare you to death before they attacked. They would yell and carry on loud, like the Confederate soldiers did. You knew they meant it before they attacked.

[*When a young friend asked if he had been scared:*] I was real scared. I was so awful scared that I could feel my heart beating in my ears. I thought the Germans could hear my heart beating, too. I thought – how much longer can I last, how lucky can I be to survive again and again. But you learn a lot after awhile in combat. It’s hard to describe the experience of combat except to another combat veteran.

We took a little town in Belgium near Thier du Mont ridge named Comte, I think. [*My father mentions that his buddy Fred Gladstone would remember the name and that he recalls that a 508er later married a girl from there.*] We took the town, but then they pulled us out during pitch, black night because we were sticking out like a sore thumb. Company I was in rear guard and we had a tank behind us as we pulled out. It was armed with explosives and would blow up bridges and causeways after we had crossed. I remember hearing the loud BLAM! only 50 yards or so behind us each time they did this. Then, only about a week later, they sent us back to the same place, the same town. We came in and took the town again.

In Comte, a German had hidden out there in a house since we had taken the town the first time. He had apparently held a family hostage in their house for several days. One of my boys (Phillips) had found out and he hid in a shed near the house, spying on the German. I think the German shot that boy in the leg through the same crack that he had been using to spy!

I told Sgt. (Jack) Elliot for him to take the back, I’ll take the front and we’ll get him [*the German*] out of that house. Just then, I happened to kick out of the snow a British Gammon grenade filled with the plastic explosive composition ‘C’. It had probably been there under the snow since the first time we had taken the town. It was an anti-tank grenade that exploded on impact, had no timer, and was three times stronger than TNT.

I threw it on the roof of the house. It made a very powerful explosion. The German came to the door with his rifle. Sgt. Elliot was waiting there with his Thompson and he unloaded it on him.

The family came running out of the house into the snow. Then suddenly a young woman with a baby in her arms ran out. She kicked, stomped, and screamed at the dead German lying in the snow while still holding her baby.

Some of us took up in a great big old house there with three floors and a big fireplace. We were on the ground floor, near the fire, while the family was building a coffin for a dead old man down in the cellar. You could hear the hammers and the saws. Then over us upstairs you could hear the women and the rest of the family crying and praying over the old man's body.

I remember thinking how strange to be here in the middle; happy to be warm, smoking, drinking wine, and cleaning our guns while they were crying and praying over that body, their grandfather, I think. And the men building a coffin below us in the cellar. I remember thinking what a place to be.

Cascio died at the Bulge. Brassie S. Cascio. I never knew what the 'S' stood for. Cascio was really Italian; dark hair, pop eyes, pitted rough face, from Chicago. He died during the last offensive of the Bulge. There was a German machine gun sniper in a house in a little small town. Cascio went to the door and I guess the German surprised him there with that gun. He shot him up close; almost decapitated him. We got there real soon after. I turned the corner of the house and saw Cascio lying on the stone patio. There was his blood all over the stones, still steaming in the cold. They had already taken his boots. We later got a bazooka and shot that house to pieces.

After Christmas, and the Bulge was secure, we were pulled back from the front for a night of rest. Everybody wanted pancakes to eat for supper. We had just eaten a bait of them with syrup when I got sick and vomited all night. The next day we were to go back to the front to help another unit. *[My father does not recall the location, possibly the 1st Infantry at St. Vith.]*

We were loading up when the platoon sergeant asked where I was. My buddy, Andy Downer, had told him that I was sick. The sergeant ordered me to the platoon doctor who made me lie down, and then he punched around on the side of my belly. When he would let up, it really hurt. The doctor said that he couldn't get me to the field hospital now, but to go with my platoon's convoy and when they unload to walk, to stay there and wait for him. His jeep would be the last in the convoy and he was going to the field hospital. I could go there with him.

So I got off the truck and waited and waited, but his jeep never came. I didn't want to be out there alone so I began to walk to rejoin my platoon. The snow was waist deep in places and the Germans were really shelling all around; we were about a mile

from the front line. I finally got a ride with an old supply sergeant to some little town. There was still lots of shelling and I found that my platoon had already pulled out.

I waited until the shelling let up, and then ran to a building with a big red cross on it. One of our doctors, Captain Klein, was there. He examined me and told me to go with the ambulance to another field hospital farther back from the front.

There the doctor told me to get on the table. They had tents with operating tables set up side-by-side, one table right next to another, for nearly 200 yards or more, operating on wounded. *[My father indicated the distance from my home to Ed Knight's home and just as far in the opposite direction, too.]* So, then they took out my appendix in a field hospital near Liege, Belgium.

After that I was shipped through several Belgium towns and hospitals and on to First General Hospital in Paris, France. When I got there, I saw German medics who were POWs, carrying around American wounded. I was a little afraid of them at first, but pretty soon I figured out that they were glad to be there, too. They were always quick to offer a cigarette or a light.

Eventually I was shipped to a hospital in South Hampton, England, via a hospital ship from Cherbourg, France. It was very nice, comfortable and had good food. Here we were returned to good physical condition. Paratroopers were made – ordered – to run everywhere, not walk like the other soldiers. The sergeants said they were sorry, but they had been ordered to make us paratroopers run!

After the hospital, I was shipped back to Nottingham and then to an airfield at Chartres, near Paris. We then prepared to be ready to jump at short notice on a POW camp somewhere in Germany. We knew that the war was nearing an end and they were afraid that the Germans were planning to shoot POWs. This camp had many 82nd soldiers there. The planes were already loaded.

Then on May 7th some guys came through the airfield in a jeep and yelled did we know the war was over? The next day, May 8, 1945, our Colonel told us that General Eisenhower had selected the 508th PIR to serve as his honor guard at Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEP) headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany.



FRANKFURT AND SHAEF HEADQUARTERS

We soon were moved into the best apartments in town after the army had given the residents three hours notice to move out. They had to leave most of their furniture for us to use. *[I have seen a photo of Hutto in his quarters in those apartments. He was apparently quite impressed with his accommodations.]*

Our Regiment provided security for SHAEF headquarters and served as honor guards and for parades. We had to look our best and wore white silk parachute scarves and white gloves as part of our uniform. One of the things that we did was go to the Rhein-Main Airbase to meet all the dignitaries coming to SHAEF. *[My father recalls that in 1945 the airbase was just a field with batting laid on the ground to enable the planes to take off and to land.]* I remember waiting for review by President Truman, the Secretary of the Navy Forrestal, the Secretary of State Byrnes, the Secretary of Defense and lots of others. I even saw Joe Stalin. I forget - there were so many. I also saw the famous figure skater Sonja Henie who went up with us for a practice jump and was made an honorary member of the 508th.

I guarded General Eisenhower's office at SHAEF many times, both at the outer office and his own office door, and sometimes as Sergeant of the Guard at the gate. So many officers went in and out of there, we were supposed to salute only the generals! I saw many I recognized: Bradley, Montgomery, Smith, Patton, Taylor and so many more that I didn't recognize!

Once I was Sgt. of the Guard at the gate with a trooper from Texas. We saw this officer come up in a strange old-fashioned fancy dress uniform and wearing a colonial style feathered hat – like Napoleon. My gate guard whispered to me, “What in the world rank is that, do you think?” We had never seen anything like this and we had been trained to recognize the insignia of all the Allies. I said, “Don't worry, just salute him.” Well, I found out later that this guy was an admiral, the commodore, and head of the whole French Navy!

Some of the Regiment would get into the General's cognac, brandy, and other “supplies.” I knew better than to drink while on guard. General Eisenhower told our colonel, “Tell your boys to take it easy on my liquor cabinet.” That's all he ever said.

Once I was on guard in the General's office, and they were in there making a film. I remember the bright lights on his secretary, Miss Sommersby, as she was posing to look like she was taking dictation from Gen. Eisenhower. His little black Scottie dog was there, too.

General Eisenhower spoke to us often and once asked me who would win the regimental football game that day. “Red Devils, Sir!” I said as I saluted. The 508th had the best team there. We only lost one game with that score being 6 – 0. Our games were something! Our team came running into the stadium with a loud cannon bang and streams of red, white and blue smoke. It looked like the team ran out of this smoke and

onto the field. Our regimental band would lead out. We also had a drum and bugle corps. General Eisenhower would come and sit on one side until halftime and then he would go sit on the other. *[Daddy mentioned Wiesbaden as being where the stadium was, but he also mentioned Victory Stadium in Frankfurt, too.]*

Once I was taking down the flag outside of SHAEF with some of the other 508 guys and Generals Eisenhower, Smith and Bradley happened to come out of the building together. They stopped, saluted the flag and waited for us to take it down and fold it. I was pulling at the rope when suddenly it came off the pulley and wouldn't slide. That flagpole was at least 100 feet high. I had to force down the rope by literally jumping up at it and using my body weight to pull it down. Still it would barely move. It began to rain and the generals still stood there, saluting and waiting. The rain finally wet the rope enough to help me get the flag pulled down. It was all I could do, though. The generals continued to salute, standing in the rain until we had folded the flag. Thank goodness that rope didn't break!

I regret not being able to march in the ticker tape parade given in New York City after the war. In Europe, we combat veterans were anxious to get home and get jobs. Mostly green recruit boys without combat experience replaced us in the Regiment. Gen. Gavin knew about the big victory parade coming up and he wanted to keep his combat veterans with the Regiment in Europe so we would be the ones to march. But we didn't know this and the high point men were anxious to go home. So we were shipped from Frankfurt to Berlin, then all the way through France to Marseilles, and then shipped on home. A few weeks later, as I recall, the 508th represented the United States Army in a Victory Parade in New York City. Most of the combat veterans didn't get to march – just their replacements. *[I remember my father watching this parade on a video tape that someone had given to him around 1993 and hearing him, after all those years, still voice his regret at not having been able to march in it.]*

After I got back to the states, at Camp Miles Standish in Boston, we unloaded at night and got ready to walk to our barracks. They told us that we could put our bags on trucks they had there so we wouldn't have to carry them. I thought that maybe I should take my musette bag with me and not load it up. It had all my "contraband," French cognac and champagne, knives, a silver plated German luger pistol from an SS trooper in Holland, German insignia, some European currency, and other souvenirs that I wasn't supposed to have. But I figured that we would probably have to walk a couple of miles to quarters and I was beat, so I handed it up to a recruit to load, along with my other bag. We had to walk two blocks. I never saw my musette bag again. They had stolen it.

[Near the end of his life, in 1991, my father gave this reply when asked by his young friend, Jeffrey Rish, what advice he would give young people today about entering the military:]

Don't be afraid to go defend your country. Be proud of being in the service. Be proud of your country.

DECORATIONS

Combat Infantry Badge
Presidential Unit Citation with Oak Leaf Cluster (Distinguished Unit Badge)
European Theatre Campaign Medal
With 1 Arrow (to signify Invasion of Normandy)
Four Battle Stars:
Normandy
Ardennes
Rhineland
Central Europe
American Theatre of Operation WW II
Good Conduct Medal
Bronze Star (Normandy)
Purple Heart
World War II Victory Medal

Foreign Citations

France – Fourragere in the colors of the Croix de Guerre (Normandy)
Belgium – Fourragere (the Ardennes)
Holland – Orange Lanyard – (Nijmegen) originally used parachute cord

NOTE: The 508 Parachute Infantry Regiment was decorated by the nations of France, Belgium and Holland for gallantry. The Regiment, as well as the 82nd Airborne Division, received the Presidential Unit Citation, twice. Staff Sergeant James C. Hutto was awarded the Bronze Star during action in Normandy and also the Purple Heart. He returned from the war to his hometown of Gaston, South Carolina, where he married his sweetheart Margie Mack. He was employed for over thirty years and retired from the Savannah River Nuclear Weapons Facility at Aiken in the K Area Reactor. He was the father of four; Sharon B. Hutto Marks [*the recorder*], Frances E. Hutto Bobbitt, James C. Hutto, Jr., and Alison H. Hutto St. Clair. “Buck,” as his friends knew him, was a graduate of Swansea High School where he was a member of the football team.

The men who have pride and peace of mind
And the respect of other men...
The men who say in their twilight years
That they'd do it all over again...
The men who love the flowers and trees
And watching the animals play...
These are wealthy men, for what they have
Can never be taken away.

George E. Young