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Hello

I am C B Wheeler of Modesto Calif. I'm retired from Gallo Winery. After 24+ years there. I retired Jan. 4 1985. Have lived here in Modesto since

1954. I was drafted from ~~here~~ ^{Martinez} in 1942 but came here Sept. 25 1945. This is where my wife was. Her and my daughter, Linda, I have two more now. Connie & Kathy. Plus eight grand children. Connie is named after my M. 18.

After reading the "Duck Shoot" news letter #16 I thought I would write you a letter I was drafted Feb. 22 1942 at Martinez Calif. Took my basic at Camp Roberts Calif. Field Artillery Took automatic weapons. Fired the towed 37 and they shipped me out. I landed in the 403 TDBn. Fort Lewis Wash. About May 1. 1942. Not much to see at that time But I stayed in that outfit till it was Deactivated in 45. Co. C. 3 platoon. All the way. Bn. Co. Major Ruddle, Col. Minniece, an Lt Col. McCurry.

② I think we got our half tracks with Franch 75's at Fort Ord Calif. Went to Camp Pickett Va. with the 3rd Inf Div. We still wore artillery Breads on our caps and G.H.Q patches on our shoulders. I got to see the water at Hampton Roads But that is all. We were sent back to Camp Hood Tex. Not to much there at that time either. But we took the T.D. Course. We broke their records, set some and broke them. 603 began to shape up. We were sent to La. Maneuvers. I made Cpl. at Camp Pickett went into the 7th Recon for the third platoon, had it all thro. Maneuvers and into Camp Shelby Miss. There Capt. John Savini made me Sgt. and gave me the 5th gun sec. 3rd plt. Two beat up old half tracks with Franch 75's. We could stand behind them and see the round as it went to the target. "No tracer" But I did get nine good men to boot, and that was good. Then we were sent back to Camp Hood. About 6 months we stayed at that cold spot. We trained T.D. officers, and we also got our new Destroyers. And man what a butty. Slick, fast, smooth and hot 76 M.M. gun that shot like an M.1.

③ 45 miles Cross Country 60 miles on the road.
and it would do it too. It was the new T.70
I was the first to throw a track on the T.70 in our
Bn I thought the Col. was going to tear me up. But
he only asked a few questions and that was all. I had
three T.D. officers on a problem at the time.

We trained on the T.70. "Same as the M.18" only in
test form. We made a run from Camp Hood
down to Madagorda Bay Tex. for a few days
fired on a target 5000 yds out in the bay. "It
was so foggy we couldn't see more than 200 yds. But
the 5th Sec. fired anyway. But we were told to
cease fire after two rounds. But that wasn't all
we ran those T.70 into that water and I swear
my drivers went under the water. They stood up
to keep their heads above water. But we were pushing
the water and splitting it so it did not get into
our motor compartment. So we kept going for about
75 yds and came out on the ~~end~~ other side. We
did this several times. Then we started back to
Camp Hood, about a 3 day trip. This was kind of
a speed trip. One destroyer skidded on the
pavement tipped over and crushed S/Sgt
Hartgrove between the turret and the pavement.
We came in to Camp Hood in scattered groups.

(4) And fired on the range again. We gave that Old T.70 a work out at Camp Hood. Then we loaded them on flat cars and rode them to Camp Maxey Tex about a days ride. We were there about a month or so. Got a lot of good training there most of it in the T.70 out in the field.

Then we were off to the C.T.O. I signed up for two more Destories M.18 at Quiting Grange England. We were getting ready for the big push. Col. Minniece found some ammo. racks somewhere and had them mounted in our M.18's right on the bottom of our original ones giving us 70 rounds. 25 extra rounds. We sure learned to appreciate that later on. We got to name our Destories anything we wanted if it started with a C. I liked Connie I don't know why but I did so I asked my crew what they thought. They said O.K. Deal named his Cheyenne. He had a couple of boys from Wyo. We took those two M.18 45 hundred Miles of Combat to Fritz Germany. Most of the time in the field and when others were resting we were on our post holding. Or digging for ~~indirect~~ ^{indirect} fire, and if you ever seen an M.18 dug in you know that is not resting.

⑤ We were split up and never got to fight as a Co. and very seldom as a plt. But the 5th Sec. of the third plt. managed to stay together all the way. When we both couldn't be relieved, we both stayed. Mud, Rain, Snow, Sleet, we just didn't want to separate so we hung together. We were out on point a time or two going to Breast. We held rear guard when the sixth pulled back at Breast. I had the radio on all that day. Plt Sgt would let me run my little Joe. So my battery went down. When it came time for us to move. Every body was going and I was cranking. Mortar fire was all over us so I wasn't thing to good. But we got her to going anyhow. At ^{3rd Sec.} Orient we went on a mission to get some Germans that wanted to ~~surrender~~ ^{surrender}. There was a plt of armor Inf. with and some officers. We fired over the town at about dark. The German officer came down the road. Him & Col. Brown met and talked. So the next morning we fired over the town out in to the bay. and eighty German came out. Then we fired again and they fired back. The truce was over. The whole third plt. was at armor court. firing into the building. We spent the night close by. We went into Lunerville France. We were under small arms fire at the time.

⑥ I was out of the Destrory, ~~and~~ directing Connie into a firing position, Capt. John hollowing, "Get the hell out of there" But we got Connie on to the side walk, with the gun pointing up the street we fired three rounds and man you should have seen the window shutter fly ^{by} I never will forget that. Capt. John didn't either. He told my wife the story the last and only time I saw after the war, about a year before he died.

Now I will tell you about the "Duck shoot." not really. It is "Connie wins Prize at Shooting Gallery." It was on the 4th day of Jan. 1946. I retired from Gallor 40 years later, Jan 4, 85. We woke up at first lite of day to the tune of shells bursting in the tree right behind us. We rolled out of our sleeping bags into the snow. "We always slept when we could leaving sometimes four men on guard. two on the 50⁺ and two on the ground" I threw my sleeping bag over my ring mount and ran to the Crest of the hill telling Dad to bring his Destrory. I found two tanks small ones, and about forty inf. coming up ^{about 75 yds off} the other side. Cheyenne got the tanks. with the help of a squad of armor Inf. we stopped the foot soldiers. we did quite a lot of shooting that day. Sometime in the morning we spotted some more tanks. Connie went up. we got four. One Round each. and then back with one more each to make sure. They didn't move any more. we backed off on and oblight to the left we stopped. I jumped out. laughing and proud of my

⑦ Leaned on the drivers hatch to brgg a little and a round
plowed snow between me and the Destory. We got seven
tanks that cold day. About two miles out of "Bastogne"
No Connie never got hit. That idler wore out several
weeks later. It was just the out side rim.

We just came of and out post "about 10 days" what I
thought was overlooking a road & blown out bridge out
of Dikirk. But any we were at a road house. and the
road was cut through a high ridge. The trees behind
us was wraped with T.N.T and primer cord. We took
Connie up on top the first night. It snowed. We
didn't know how to get Connie back down the hill.
you see if we over shot the road we would end up in
the bottom of a deep canyon. Connie would slide in the
snow. there was a line of telephone poles down that hill
three between us and the road. So we lined up those
poles. Phillips put her in reverse and let her idle down
he got all three poles and slipped onto that road as
pretty as a picture. We left there Dec. 22. got back to
the company. On the 24 we went to Metz. Had Christmas
in Metz. "no turkey" and on to Bastogne. We the 5th sec.
I know was out for 29 days. "Read it in Breast to Bast
Bastogne." We had a lot of thing happen in that 4500
miles. We fought the tigers two times that I know off
Russell hit one five times in the front. He came over
the hill into us. we hit him three time. He backed off.
He came back quick. we hit him two more times.

⑧ He backed off again and didn't come back. We saw him again a few days later. Knocked out by artillery. We left five graves in his front end pretty deep.

Another time we were leading a pl. of light tanks & a pl. of Engineers. They put in front because they saw Tiger tracks. We followed those tracks for about a mile. It was just beginning to get dark when he opened up on us with H.E.

We didn't have any place to go. So we did a right turn and came upon a steep incline about 45 degrees angle and about 150 feet to the bottom. Phillips stopped and said what now. I said get over it. So over that hill we went. I looked back and Cheyenne was a little to the left and ~~the~~ behind us. Those tracks were going full speed backwards. Dust was flying. What a sight. When we got around to where the Tiger was he was gone. And one time we were with the 50th Armored Div.

And the Capt. called me ~~off~~ over and told me he wanted us to lead. So we took off down the road and a black cross in front of us. I asked Russell if he was suppositious. He said "Well I don't know." We got out of town about a mile and they opened up on us direct fire. We kept going and those rounds kept getting closer. I seen smoke off to my left in some woods. So I told Russel where they were and had Phillips to stop. We started firing and so did Edmondson on Cheyenne. We fired about ten rounds a piece while those halftrack and light tanks were running in front of us. They had to go in front there was a field there and nothing in back. They got

⑨ a lot of missile blast I'm ^{sure} but the Winnies quit firing. and we pulled on down the road where the rest of the task force was waiting. I was proud of those T.O.'s that day. That was right after Lt Rogers got shot & never did see him after that. We were with the 50th just sitting and waiting so the 5th sec. pulled off a little ways to one side and we spotted a wagon convoy a little down hill from us. There must have been 10 or 15 wagons and quite a few soldiers. So we opened up on them. They gave us a lot of small arms fire. So we backed up for cover. We were just starting back when the Lt. came running and ask what we were doing. I told him and he climbed up on my destiny and we went back. Russell fired a few rounds and I used the 50 Cal. We backed off again. I turned to speak to the Lt. He wasn't there. He was laying up where we had been. I jumped down and run to him and Deal came up to help me get him back.

You can look at the little book "Castward" about the center. Follow page has "Happy new year" on it. You will see a "Panther" with a little hole in the rear end. Cheyenne put it there at about 1800 yds. One shot. I spotted this tank from the crest of a hill. "we like crest of hills". I motioned for Deal to come up and pointed he fired. I was in front to close. The missile blast threw me to the ground hard. I got up and ran down hill. I could hear the artillery coming in. I had to hit the ground when I saw the Inf. boys hit. I couldn't see

10 Hear for a couple of hours.

I don't know how much the 5th Sec. destroyed over there. But we did try hard. The ring mount an 50 was a good piece we fought airplanes a few times. Deal said he shot down an ME 109, and I believe him. He also got a throat mike shot off his throat. Those M.18's are wonderful and I loved them. But they had a few weak points to. I had had a hole in my turret from a rifle a 50 would tear one up, when you are with the tanks you have to keep out of the way of missile blasts. Heavy Mud is tricky. They slide on Cobble Stone. They are wet and cold. But that exhaust is like a floor furnace. These pictures were taken after the war. So when we went out to have them made Russell was some where else so I had to use "Heredia" in his place. I wish it hadn't of happened that way but it did. I don't really want you to write this stuff just read and think about the 603 as a whole. The 6th Armored kind of burnt in their history. I think the 5th Sec. 3rd Plt. C.Co. was one of the best fighting team in the C.T.O. and we where the 603 T.D.B. I'm sending a picture of the 5th taken after the war. All of the 5th Sec. Came home and that is what I am proud of. 3 men lost from battle fatigue. that is all.

I have a Christmas "Menu" 1943 and Roster of ^{that} ~~the~~ Time Camp Hood Tex. If you would like to make a copy I'll loan it to you. Oh yes I enclosed a copy from the day room to, Bug Sgt Miller. But there is not many of these left.

Please don't take this letter to heart. Just laugh a little and throw it away.

PS 90% was fun

Chas B Wheeler