

Revised copy

MY RECOLLECTIONS OF WORLD WAR II
1942-1945

Immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, patriotism among the citizens of this country reached an all time high. I registered for the draft on February 16, 1942, some three months before my 21st birthday. Sometime later I was classified 1A meaning I could be drafted into the military at any time. I was still operating the store for my parents most of the time, but also working for some of the farmers in the area when they needed some part time help. During harvest in July, I was shocking small grain for Art Hurst and he managed to get me reclassified 2A so I could delay any call for service until after harvest. However, he didn't want to pay me what I thought was the "going wage" so I quit, went to the draft board and told them I was ready to go into the service; they reclassified me 1A and I soon received my "greetings" to report to the Local Draft Board in the Post Office Building in Huron at 11:45 AM on August 10, 1942.

LuVerne and I had become engaged in April and marriage was discussed. We decided to wait until the war was over or until my service time was completed. So at noon or shortly thereafter on August 10, 1942, I joined some forty other young men for a march from the Post Office to the Great Northern depot to board the train for St. Paul, Minnesota, and Ft. Snelling. On August 11, we received physicals and for those of us who passed, induction into the Armed Forces of the United States. We were then sent back home for almost two weeks; there were twenty-four of us in this group. We were ordered to report back to our local draft board at 8:00PM on August 24, 1942, for transportation back to Ft. Snelling for further processing and assignment to duty. Our clothing was issued to us, our civilian clothes were shipped back home and on August 28, I left Ft. Snelling for assignment to Battery B 531st Coast Artillery Battalion (Anti-Aircraft, Automatic Weapons, Mobile) at Ft. Bliss, Texas (near El Paso). We traveled by train and arrived there on the 30th, I think. There were seven of us from Beadle County that ended up in this battalion. We lived in huts, six men in each hut.

Immediately upon arrival, 13 weeks of basic training began. The first two weeks we were restricted to camp, meaning no passes to town. Basic training composed of hiking, physical conditioning, drilling, firearms handling, aircraft identification, learning about using our 40MM antiaircraft guns, 50 Cal. machine guns, shooting our rifles at targets on the rifle range, viewing training films, getting all kinds of vaccinations and, in general, learning army discipline. At the end of the first two weeks, we were allowed passes on weekends to go into El Paso. I went in a few times and then took one Sunday trip to Juarez, Mexico. Several of us took in our one and only bullfight. I had no desire to see another or see Juarez again. Perhaps the one thing that still sticks out in my mind was the 25 mile hike that we made on the 15th or 16 of October. There were some good USO clubs in El Paso so I went to visit them whenever I was in town, usually every Saturday. Finally, after hearing many rumors about where we might be going after basic, we received orders near the end of November to start loading our guns, directors, trucks, and all equipment onto flat bed railroad cars. On December 1 and 2 we left Ft. Bliss behind and headed west aboard a troop train. I must have been on the one that left December 1 as I