

The Third Armored Division

The Third Armored Division was the Division that my father, Lloyd John Keleny, was in. This is not to be confused with the Third Army, which was Patton's army. The Third Armored, with the nickname of the Spearhead Division, was under the First Army, VII Corps to start out, when they landed on the Normandy shore on June 29th, 1944, 23 days after the initial Normandy invasion. The First Army had 11 infantry and 3 armored divisions under it (the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th).

The Americans had many advantages over the Germans; they had field phones so the infantry could talk to the tanks; the 1st Army had its own air force—the 9th Tactical Air Command (TAC) with 400 combat aircraft; much of the German artillery was pulled by horses, ours was pulled by trucks; ammunition was in short supply on both sides, but the Allies had more than the Germans; the US had photo reconnaissance and could read German radio traffic after they broke the Enigma code, plus the French resistance gave us timely German troop information.

Interesting note: there were a few black artillery battalions in the Cobra battle.

Despite all this, there were 36,700 casualties in the hedgerow (or bocage) fighting of Operation Goodwin (started July 19th, 1944 to break out of Normandy) and Operation Cobra (started July 24th).

My father was drafted on November 11th, 1942. He did his basic training at Fort Sheridan, Ill starting on December 11th. He went to Fort Bragg, NC then on December 25th to Alliance Nebraska into company 326th of the Glider Infantry, but his motion sickness got the better of him and he couldn't complete the training because of it. He then went to the "state university at Vermillion, SD" in April 1943 for cadet school (ASTP- Army Specialized Training Program), but I can't find out why he never finished that training. As mentioned above, he was sent overseas with the 3rd Armored Division in the infantry and landed at Normandy on June 29th, 1944. When my father left the army he was a staff sergeant in charge of a squad of men in a halftrack who went ahead of the army to find out where the Germans were located.

The Third Armored was, as it sounds, an armored company, made up of many tanks (usually Shermans) and half tracks. My Father was wounded twice, first

on September 22nd, 1944 on his hand and on his back. He went back to duty on November 7th. His second wound was in his knee and took a bit more rehab. His was wounded on February 15th, 1945 and returned to duty May 2nd, 1945. This was when he was at Cheltenham, England for recovery (so that's where I put Malcolm to recover from his wounds).

A cousin of mine, Molly Meuer, had written my day in 1996 to ask him about his time in the war. I will put down the reply to her questions (I have left his grammar and punctuation as he had it in his letter).

3/18/96

“Greeting - Molly Meuer

... As I started to answer your questions I realized that it has been 53 years since the end of world war II. Some of my memories seem to be as vivid as the instant they occurred and some are starting to fade from memory.

I thank you for the opportunity to pass this information on!

I know that you will get a good grade - Your typing is real neat!

Thanks again

Your Great Uncle Lloyd J Keleny

[I don't have Molly's questions, but here are the answers]

#1 - On Dec. 7, 1941 I was with my father and Mother, in a car, and heard that the Japanese had Bombed Pearl Harbor.

#2 - I was drafted and the number they gave me was 36286901 - this number was put on what we called a dog tag - they were hung around our neck - for identifying the Dead! The tag also gave our type of blood and religious affiliation.

#3 - No - I was not a bit scared to join the Army. Though I may have been apprehensive not knowing what lay ahead.

#4 I think that the turning point in the war was the Naval Battle of Midway.

#5 - The Worst Battle, in my mind, probably was the one I was in that occurred during our attempted Spearhead into the German position. Somewhere past the French town of St. Lo France. It occurred at night. I was in the 3rd Armored Infantry and at night, when the circumstance was right, I would crawl under one of our tanks to sleep. Well, to shorten this a bit, let me just say that they shot 3 tanks from above me and each tank caught fire when hit with an armor piercing shell, probably a German 88 antitank gun did the damage. That is why our Sherman tanks got the nickname of Ronson, after the Ronson lighter, because they light up so quickly.

The worst Battle I believe was the "D" Day landing on June 6th, 1944 - onto French soil - I was not in this landing -

#6 - I was in the service for a total of 3 years. My experiences over seas would be way to numerous to relate here. The answer to Question #5 is just one of many experiences.

#7 - No I did not have a lady back home - if you mean a girl friend.

I wrote letters to my Mom and Dad.

No I don't have any of those I sent home.

#8 - The Two Big Battles that I was in are - the closing of the Falaise Gap in France and the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium.

#9 - They were sheer hell at times, but not all of the time.

#10 - Yes I was wounded. The first time I received small pieces of shrapnel into my left hand and a larger piece hit my back.

The second time I got wounded I received a piece of shrapnel into and just above my left knee joint.

Both were caused by the exploding of a mortar shell - one a ground burst, the other a tree burst.

#11 - When my squad was not fighting we set up a camouflage net above our half-track and lived under the net. We had blankets but no sleeping bags.

#12 - I got a chance to visit Paris just before our unit was shipping home. I took a bus tour and some of the historical sites that I saw are - the Eiffel tower - It was still closed. Statue of Joan of Ark, Notre Dame, Le Saare - Coeur, The Bastille, Arc de Triomphe, Napoleons tomb (Rose Marble)

#13 - I observed the people and culture of England, France, Belgium, Lurenberg, and Germany. Everything I saw was educational in itself.

#14 - During actual battle one's emotions run from fear to elation - a controlled fear and a controlled elation - that one is still alive.

During free time one would be in a rest area and able to take showers eat regular meals and enjoyed the relative safety of the area.

#15 - I ended up as a staff Sergeant with 9 - soldiers assigned to my squad. One drove the half-track

I like the comradere. I dislike going into combat for I knew that I'd lose two or three of my comrades, either killed or wounded.

#16 - I was most happy when President Truman ordered the dropping of the Atomic Bomb. Our third Armored Division was slated to be in on the invasion of Japan and many more thousand of Americans and Japanese would have died.

#17 - I was never homesick - though I often thought of home.

#18 - Received two purple hearts

#19 - I guess one can say that not running to the rear, during combat, was heroic in itself.

#20 All the Battles that I was in were significant to me.

With Regards

Your Great Uncle

Lloyd J Keleny

My Uncle Bryan Linden remembers (my father's nephew from his oldest sister, Evelyn Linden [and Ed]):

-Opening the box at 328 W. Johnson (where my dad lived):

Your dad sent a box, long and narrow box about 12 in wide to Lloyd from Lloyd. Grandpa was fussy about opening the box. Sent from overseas. It had a Mauser (spelling?) rifle, binoculars in leather case, helmets: German, French, and Belgium, a German luger (gun) and a German flag. He was rooting around in a German tank and round the luger and the binoculars.

-Cartoons:

He sent many cartoons back and the women were looking around trying to find the message in the cartoons.

-Recording by Evelyn Knight titled "Grandfather's Clock":

When Dad come home, he bought a 78 (record) called "Grandfather's Clock" by EK. All the way home on the ship that is all they played.

-The Occupation:

He was in the occupation in Krichberg (spelling?). [We have a picture of my Dad standing by a Lion there]. It is behind a hospital or sanatorium. He carved his name in the Lion. In an archway into the square of the town there was a door that they all carved their names into. Maybe around Reginsburg (spelling?).

The Army kicked out the people's homes and Dad would fish with his 45 Tommy Thompson gun. The river was alongside the town. He would shoot into the water and pick up the fish.

He shot deer. Some meat had got bad with maggots on it and an old German lady

took it and cleaned it up. After that he felt obligated in helping them with their subsistence. They were Roe deer

-Kicked down door:

His normal MO. He would stand back, throw a grenade into a room then enter. They were trapped in a ger. Town. That time there was steps down to a door. He was going to throw a grenade into a low window. He kicked the door down, an old man, woman and civilian family huddled in a corner

In that same town, Dad was a lean-to, he was standing with buddies around somewhere. Out from behind a haystack was a German with a large gun and pointed it at Lloyd. He told the German to drop the gun and he did.

They would always get trapped waiting for the army to catch up to them.

-Take Prisoners back:

One time, Dad had some prisoners – 5-7 – He said, here take these guys back (make them prisoners). A short time passed and the other soldier was back. The other soldier took them to the river and shot them. Lloyd never said a word

-Picture in Stars and Stripes:

Dad said he saw a picture in s & S. A German soldier draped over a tiger tank. He had seen it – the clothes were burned off him, there was excrement everywhere, but the paper showed him fully clothed

-Shrapnel in back:

He didn't know he was hit. He was walking along and a buddy said he had blood and he had to get it taken care of. Might be the same time he got it in his finger. Knee wound was a different time.

-Sleeping in a chair:

When he was home, your Dad was sitting in AC's chair (AC is his father —Arthur Connelly). The family was having cake and ice cream and Brian was bringing it to Dad. Brian nudged him and he threw his arms up and broke the dish with ice cream. He admonished Brian for waking him up, and made him cry. (Bryan was a

child at the time.)

If you're interested in knowing the different Military units, they are as follows:

Squad - 11 men lead by a sergeant or corporal

Platoon - consisted of 2 or more squads, commander is a Lt.

Company - Unit consisting of 2 platoons, lead by a captain

Battalion - made up of 2 companies, commanded by a Lt Colonel, maybe part of a regiment

The different ranks in order are:

Private

Private first class

Corporal

Sergeant (and there are many derivations of Sergeant (staff, 1st class, master, 1st, s. major, command s. Major)

2nd Lieutenant (Lt) - wore one gold bar

1st Lt - one silver bar

Captain - two silver bars

Major - gold oak leaf

Lt Colonel - silver oak leaf

Major General - silver spread eagle

Brigadier General - 1 star

Major General - 2 stars

Lt General - 3 stars

General - 4 stars

5 star General