

THIS IS THE STORY OF MY LIFE

by
R. H. Lloyd

On a bright Spring day on April 15, 1923 in London, KY (at least that's what I remember) R. H. (Rutherford Hayes) was born to Hazel Southerland Loyd and Pleas Loyd. Our Daddy changed the spelling of our name from a given name to a surname (Loyd) in 1937. After living in London for awhile the family moved to Orlando, Florida and for the most part raised their family there. Since this is about me, I'll tell my story.

My earliest recollection of where I lived, what happened there, and where I went to school, all took place in Orlando, Florida. First, I remember going to Colonial Elementary School for part of the first grade. I remember my daddy taking me to school the first day. My next memory is finishing out first grade at Mark Street Elementary School. Actually, we lived just off Orange Avenue and I had to walk all the way to Mark Street by myself. One thing I remember at Mark Street was as we were being let out to go home after class one day. Some man in a two door car tried to get me to get in the car with him. Somehow I knew enough not to get in the car, but to run. So I ran up the street and I didn't see him any more.

While we were living off North Orange I remember one occasion. Our father wasn't with us at that time. I don't know where he was or why he wasn't with us, but he wasn't, and it was just mother, my brother, Harold and me at the time. One night I woke up intending to go to the bathroom. As I got to the door of the bathroom I saw a man standing in the window opening. It scared me so bad. I believe Joyce was a baby. I ran to mother's room and told her someone was at the back door and could I get in bed with her. She said, "Yes." Then after a little bit we heard the back door knob turning back and forth like someone was trying to get in. We went out the front door. There were packing houses across the street from where we living. The night watchman came across the street from one corner to the other. Mother called to him and he came over. She told him there was someone at our back door. He went around and checked, but didn't find anyone, just some footprints. I can't remember whether we went back to bed or not. We were scared to death.

From there we moved to South Hughy Street. The reason we moved was because mother had to work somewhere to make a living for us. There was a packing house across the railroad at Gore and Grand Avenue.

In my second year I was transferred to Grand Avenue Elementary School.

From there we moved to Peadmont Street and then a block or two over to Citrus where I attended Grand Avenue Elementry School. One thing happened in my second grade that I remember. My teacher strapped me to a desk chair for talking in class when I wasn't supposed to. This didn't seem to satisfy her or me either. So she told me to go stand in the hall. I thought she told me to go home. So I went out and

went home. The next morning when I came back to class she was really furious because I hadn't stood in the hall as she had told me. "Well, you didn't tell me to go out in the hall. You told me to go home." We finally got that thing settled and I survived the second grade of school.

Another interesting event happened while we were living there. My mother was talking to one of the neighbors standing out in the yard and a pregnant woman passed on the other street. She was very pregnant and I thought that was funny. So I laughed about the woman and said something about it. Boy, oh boy, did she ever get on me. I was surprised because I thought that was something that everybody would laugh at.

Then another thing that happened while we were there. I had made me a sling shot. Of course most of you know what a sling shot is. Anyway I was testing it out, flexing it out, and getting it limbered up. Mother was on the front porch and I was on the other side of the house when I shot my sling shot across the street. A car came by at that very moment and my sling shot hit the car. The man stopped and came back and said, "Somebody has a gun over here and they shot my car." Mother didn't know anything about what I was doing. I threw that sling shot under the house and ran to the back. I'll never forget that. Isn't it funny the things kids will do in the growing up years.

From Citrus we moved out to 2147 West Jackson. This is where we spent a lot of my early life. In fact, Mother finally bought the house and it was there that Harold, Joyce, Gene, and I kinda grew up. A lot of silly things happened during our life living on West Jackson. While living there you could look over about a block away from our house. We lived on a corner lot, and we could see a dairy farm across Lake Sunset. That fascinated me seeing those cows over there. I just couldn't stay away. So I started slipping out, going around the lake to the dairy farm to see what was going on. They were milking cows there twice a day. That was really interesting. I kept going around the lake to visit the farm. The people living there was L. C. Cox, his wife and Clarence, his grown son. I wanted to milk a cow. So they told me if I could get my daddy to give me a bucket they would give me a cow to milk. I don't know where the bucket came from, but I got a bucket and they gave me a cow to milk (they were milking about 30 cows twice a day). Then I started coming around more often (they got up at 3 o'clock in the morning) and low and behold if I didn't want to go over there so bad when they were milking that I actually got up in the dark of the night and walked around that lake and through the woods so I could be there when they were milking the cows.

Eventually, I lived and grew up with the Cox family. Daddy wasn't around. He was gone, as usual, claiming to be out looking for work. I don't know how my mother, brothers, and sister survived. I do remember that when my brothers and sister came over to the dairy to visit me, Mrs. Cox would give them milk, cottage cheese, and things that would sustain the family.

Time came for me to go to school while I was staying with the Cox family. They encouraged me to go to school at Central Elementay School. We would leave

the dairy with the milk loaded in the truck. I would ride on the back and we would go to town and start making our deliveries from house to house. When it was time for school to start Clarence would drop me off at the school. In the afternoon when school was out I would jump off the school bus at our driveway, which was a long lane. Then I would run to the dairy barn because the others would have already started milking the cows they were assigned. I would be behind schedule and I would have to hurry. The day came as I got older that we would milk about 12 cows each milking.

The next thing that comes to mind was when I was in the third grade at West Central Elementary School. They were very normal days and years of education. I remember at the beginning of the fourth grade I had a new teacher and she wanted to know what every teacher wants to know, and that is, who her students were. She asked everyone, one at a time, to give their full name. I said my name is "R. H." She said, "No, I want to know your name." I said, "My name is 'R. H.'" She was a little smarter than I was at that age, because she told me to take a little piece of paper home and have my mother write my name on that piece of paper and bring it back in the morning. So I did what she said. That afternoon when I told mother the teacher wanted my full name. I heard for the first time my full name spoken by my mother, because all I had ever heard was "R. H. Lloyd." I couldn't remember what mother wrote on the paper. To me it looked like Rufus. After taking it back to school and turning it in to the teacher, I never saw or heard my full name again so I didn't know what my correct name was.

When I entered the army they requested my full name, so the name I gave the military became my legal name. It was November 4, 1940, and I was 15 1/2 years old. The Army wanted my legal name. So I told them it was "Rufus Hayes Lloyd" Years and years later I found out that my name was "Rutherford B. Hayes Lloyd." I was named after President Hayes, but I had never heard it used, so I was unable to use my correct name. I didn't remember the name my mother had written down, so I became Rufus H. Lloyd. Even when I went for a passport for overseas travel I still went by "Rufus Hayes Lloyd".

Well, let's get back to the early days. One thing I'd like to inject here that I thought was something worth remembering is this: Before I was old enough to go to school -- I was three, maybe four years old -- out near Ben White Raceway where Granddaddy and Uncle John each built a house. Uncle John and Aunt Stella did not having a house yet, they lived in an army tent with a single cot to sleep on. At times rain water came into the tent They also built a two room house for mother and us kids. The property became John's and Stella's years later.

But here's what I was going to tell you about: Granddaddy used to have a little store at Forest City Road. I would walk through the woods and go to the little store. I'm sure my Grandfather Southerland must have encouraged me to come up there because he was so kind hearted that he would give his #1 grandson probably some candy or something. One day I was walking up the path to Forest City Road. I was a

very curious person, and I was always looking and exploring. This one day I saw a gopher hole, a pretty good size gopher hole, too -- so I went over and looked down the hole. And, lo and behold, it was full of rattle snakes. That really scared me and I stopped going up to Granddaddy's store by myself.

Okay, now we are back to West Central Elementary School. My 5th grade teacher was Mrs. Johnson. She was strict, but very good at teaching young boys, and I appreciated what she tried to do for me. When I finally graduated I attended Cherokee Junior High School. Now some of you may know where Cherokee Jr. High is here in Orlando. Those were good years when I went to school there.

At this time I had been away from home since I was in the 3rd grade of school. I lived with the Cox family across from mother's house on Jackson Street. In the afternoon I would get off the bus and hurry to the barn to start milking the cows they had assigned me to milk. When I got older I became a regular hired hand. I really appreciated the Cox's for what they did for me as a little boy and then finally a young man.

Usually Clarence and his wife took a vacation ever summer. (They had no children.) The first thing of excitement for me was when Clarence said, "R. H. how would you like to take a vacation?" He was keen on taking pictures when he would go on trips and this would entice me to want to go, too. He brought his pictures back home and developed them in the bathroom sink. We all got a chance to see where they had been and what they had seen.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, R.H. I'll give you \$2.00 a week and if you save that \$2.00 a week then next summer you can take a vacation." Wellllllll - you know boys, they like to travel, too. This gave me a challenge. So I began to save my \$2.00 a week.

When summer would come we had a family that came down for the winter from the state of Vermont and stay for a month. In fact, Mother Cox's original home was in the Vermont. Mr. Cox, was from the state of Georgia. Mrs. Cox ran things, so consequently I accepted her more or less as a guardian mother.

One day I asked, "If I went on a vacation where would I go?" I'd never been anywhere except Orlando. "Oh," they said, "you could go to Vermont and all around up there savor some of the big towns". I wasn't too interested in some of that because I'd never been there.

So when summer came I was ready for my vacation. They said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. You've learned to drive a car and we're going to get you a person that needs someone to drive their car for them." They contacted someone in town that needed a driver. Now I was given the job of chauffeuring the man and his car to Boston, Mass. When we got there that was as far as the fellow was going. He dropped me off at a bus station.

I went from Boston on up to Hardwick, Vermont. Mrs. Cox's brother and his family lived there. I went to the door at the address that Clarence had given me. Mrs. Eldridge came to the door and didn't even think about who I was. She didn't

recognize me for I, of course, was dressed up for traveling. I told her who I was and finally she became aware who the young man was standing in the door.

Lo and behold, it was harvest time on the farms in Vermont and the very next morning after breakfast Mr. Eldridge took me out on the farm where they were harvesting wheat. I had never seen a thrashing machine, didn't know what it would or what it was going to do. He assigned me the job of standing at the back keeping the trash and straw off of the thrasher. By the time the day was up you couldn't tell what nationality I belonged to. I stayed on that summer until he finished his harvesting. The way they did up there, they would double up on their work at each others farms. That way they had the help that was needed to complete the job so they didn't have to hire anyone.

This concluded my summer. I got a ticket and headed back south by bus to Orlando. I went to school and when the summer came I took a bus and went back to Vermont. This time I went to the Horton's farm. The Hortons were some people from Vermont that I met during the winter months who came to Orlando for the winter season. They were friends of the Cox's. When I got there I found that they had a big barn. In fact it was four stories high. The first story was where we kept the team of horses and parked the cars. It was also where we kept the manure until the following year when we could spread it out on the fields to enrich the soil for the hay. The second floor was where the cattle were kept. We had sometimes over 107 head of cows and they hardly ever were outside. Year around they were kept in the barn. It was my job to care for those cattle, seeing they had water, food, and cleaned up after them. It was about seven of us men that were milking cows at one time.

Another part of my job was to help load the milk when the truck came to pick up the milk and take it to the creamery. I got to know the driver of that truck. He was also a small farmer. I stayed at the Horton's farm all winter. When summer came I was still working in the barn and the driver of the creamery truck became quite friendly with me. He told me he had leased a farm that had about 12 head of cows, two horses, and four or five calves and he needed some help caring for the cattle. There was also a big empty house on the farm. One morning he told me, "How would you like to go for a ride down to my farm. I need to go down there and check on it." He said he had hired two French young fellows to do the work and take care of the cows and I have heard that things are not going good. So I said, "Yea, I'd like to go. That would be fun." So I went down to Randolph Center and the snow was so deep that we couldn't get to the farm. I was impressed at the depth of the snow there. We had to get out and hike through the snow banks until we finally got to the farm and what a shocking surprise I saw for a young farm boy. There was no one there. No one taking care of the farm. The two young men had left, flooding the stansions where the cattle and horses were kept so they would have something to drink. Originally there was a team of horses. One of the horses was dead. One cow was injured so that her utters were affected and she was in bad condition.

He wanted to know if I would be interested in a job there, and I said, "Sure." It

was a great big challenge to a young fellow like me. It was just what I was looking for. He took me up to the next farm and introduced me to the husband and wife who owned the farm and made arrangements for them to feed me two meals a day: breakfast and dinner. I lived in this old two story house, empty except for a bed, for the whole following summer. I doctored my cow and got her well. He brought me another horse to team up with the mare that was there, so I had a team of horses to do the work outside. There was a creamery truck that would come by to pick up the milk every day if they could get through the snow. By the end of the summer the driver told me that they said this little farm had produced the highest grade of milk for the number of cows that they had ever had come from that farm. So I must have fed them pretty good. I had to get hay from other people, and someone had to bring out the grain to feed the horses and the cows.

When it came time to harvest my hay I had a team of horses and a wagon with a hay rack, but I needed someone else to help me. So I contacted my mother down in Orlando about my brother Harold, who was only a year and three months younger than me. (He was a big fellow for his age.) I asked if she would let him come up and help me. She agreed to that and I borrowed the money from my boss to get him up there. So he came up and stayed with me for a couple of months till we got the hay in.

One day we were out there in the field and the front wheels of the wagon dropped down into a little gully. When I started the horses up to pull the wagon out, the young half-morgan horse that the owner had provided, rared up on his hind hoofs instead of pulling. He didn't want to pull. I told my brother, "You get up there and take the slack out of the lines when I tell you to." I stood by the head of the horse with a pitchfork, then I told them to "gitty-up." The half-morgan started to rare up and I caught him behind the ears with the pitchfork and he pulled that wagon out of the ditch, and ran clear to the barn and was going so fast that he missed the ramp going up into the barn. And there we were, with a team of horses up in the barn loft with no way to get them out and the wagon dumped over on its side. But we finally managed to clean it up. I never did forget that! That was silly on my part, but I wasn't more than 13 years old. I managed the rest of that summer and finally turned in my resignation. He paid me off and got someone to take my place.

The farm I was operating was in east Randolph and I had to catch the bus in Barre, Vermont. I had to lay over there for a couple of days. During the course of time I went around to see and tell everybody goodbye that I knew and had made friends with over the last year and a half. I stopped over at Plainsfield, where that four story barn was and told them goodbye. Then I went by the previous owner of the farm I had been running to see his brother-in-law.

Neither one of us had a car. We borrowed Lester's brother-in-law's car. It was Saturday afternoon and we wanted to do something to celebrate being together and having a good time in years past, so he let us borrow his four door Ford. I say "four doors" because I want something else to come into the story. We weren't much for getting out and rambling around and we didn't do any drinking or anything like that.

We were both pretty clean cut fellows. So we went to Hardwick, a pretty good size town, since they always had a Saturday night square dance. Some of you probably don't know too much about square dancing, but that was where they call the movements that you make. We were going along on a gravel road going around a mountain and for some reason -- nobody knows why because we saw no evidence of it -- the car went off the left side of the road. I know my friend Lester was a good driver. He wasn't impaired by anything he'd drank. We were circling right, but the car went off the left side of the road. Then we began tumbling down the side of the mountain. We made five bounces, tearing down tall trees as we went until we landed at the bottom on a big boulder. At the very beginning I thought we were going over and I'm going to have to get down under the dash to kind of protect myself from the windshield. When we finally stopped, the car was right side up even though the car was crumbled up pretty much in any direction. We stopped once, I thought we did anyway, and I was going to get out. By that time it had actually stopped..

When we finally stopped I was concerned about Lester. I called out, "Lester, Lester are you alright? He groaned, and I said, "Oh boy, What's the matter?" He said, "My back, my back." I said, "Oh dear, let me help you." I thought I should make some motion to do something and I couldn't do anything. I couldn't figure that out. What was wrong with me? Finally I said, "Lester can you help me get out?" I heard his front door squeeking as it was bent up, but it came open, and when it came open I fell out of the car. I'd been standing on my head in the back floorboard not knowing that I was upside down.

After looking the situation over we climbed back up the side of the mountain to the road. We didn't know of anyone we'd seen behind us, so we thought we'd better walk forward in the direction we were headed to see if we could find some help. And we did. We found a house and the folks got up and gave us water and some rags to clean ourselves up and get the blood off. We wanted to know where we could get some help. "The only people we know is a man that lives on top of the mountain. He is a logger and has some big draft horses. He might could help you." We walked back down the road until we came to a little road he had mentioned. We were climbing up when we heard a car that was trying to come up the mountain, chugging along. The road was so steep that it could hardly make it, but it did get up to the house. The man saw us there and asked what we wanted and we told him. He said, "Well, let me go to the barn." He went to the barn and got a couple of those big draft horses. We went back down the dirt road and he started winding around the mountain so as to get the horses down to the car without any problem. He hooked on that car and pulled it back up to the road level, and believe it or not -- that car started. We ended up getting into that car-- driving the car, and where do you suppose we were going? Back home? To the barn? No! We went to the dance. When we got there the dance was over. It was midnight or later. And guess what they were playing when we came in, "The Dance They Saved for Me." I tell you it was so fitting for the condition we had just come out of.

Well, we actually got the car back home and we stayed awake since it wasn't many hours before daylight and time to go milking at the barn. When the owner got up, we said we had something to tell him. He walked over to the car and looked it over, then said, "Well, it's time to go milking boys". So we both went to the barn and started milking the cows. I told the man that I would stay working until we had enough money to pay for the damage done to the car. He said, "No, no, -- no need for that. I'll take you to the bus station in the truck and we'll worry about the car later."

I got in the bus the next day, just sitting back kinda taking in all that had taken place. Before we got down to Boston I had taken my shoes off since my feet kinda hurt. I found that my right foot had broken toes and was swelling up. And a strange thing was that I had on a pair of new green socks and those socks were torn to shreds still on my feet. How they got shredded, why didn't it cut my foot and leg? I don't know.

I was headed for Orlando. When I got to Orlando I found things so different. Clarence had volunteered into the army, all the other fellows that I knew had gone into the army, and they were getting ready for the war in Germany. So my plans were to go with Clarence. Like I said, he was very dear to me, an older brother as it were.

I went down to Captain Walker's office in the new Armory building and he didn't ask me how old I was, only thing he said was, "Raise your right hand" and he swore me in. That's how I got in the military -- November the 4th, 1940, at age 15 ½.

Well, life changes drastically for me now. I'm in the army. I remember marching down Orange Avenue as we paraded for the people. We were out by the fairgrounds. Some of you may remember that.

One thing that happened while I was staying at the Armory. An army plane came down nose first with such force that we never found the pilot of the plane or its personnel. It hit the ground just back of our Armory building.

It wasn't long before it was time for us to go to the real world military. So we shipped out and went to Camp Blanding. There we were with the tents, half wood, then half of the top of the billett would be canvass and screen wire. Water was so bad that we had to have some kind of a "duck walk" to keep us from having to wade water. We stayed at Camp Blanding for two years before we went to Fort Benning, GA. Our job there was to train young men to be army officers. I guess we didn't do too good a job training because they sent back 25% of all the young officers that we sent over to them, especially in the Pacific.

So many things happened at Fort Benning. After three or four years our men began to settle down and miss home and finally they started marrying the ladies that lived around the camp area. Most of the young men that I knew from Orlando got married. I remember David Killburn, Frank Manuel, Pete Dirk and on and on. Even though married they continued their work there. I got married in Atlanta, Georgia and got involved in family life. We lived in Richland, Georgia with a salary of \$47.00 a month. Because we didn't have funds to provide much of a livelihood, Sandra had to go and live with her maternal grandmother. Two years later Ronald was born. I

don't know what I would have done without the training that I learned living on the farm, but it sure came in handy at that time. There was only one Doctor listed in town and that was at Richland, Georgia, just outside the base, and everyone depended on that one Doctor. When it came time for Ronald to be delivered the Doctor was not available. His wife said he was out in the country on another case and she would let him know when he came back, but she didn't know when he would be back.

Because of my duties on base I wasn't able to be home much of the time so I remember sending for my brother, Gene, to come up and help me out.

The night that Ronald was born, since we couldn't find the doctor, I sent Gene up to the telephone operators office, just a little country office, and they tried to find a doctor somewhere, 'cause we had to have a doctor. I went looking for someone, and I couldn't find anyone. When I came back Ron was at the point of being born. I told his mother, "You can't have that baby now, we haven't found the Dr. You gotta wait." She said, "I can't." I said, "You're going to wait." I didn't realize you couldn't stop it. That's one thing I didn't learn on the farm, that you can't stop it. I finally had to deliver him myself. I remember when they finally did find the Doc he came in and checked in with us. I was sitting in a rocking chair rocking Ronald in my arms. He said, "Well, son, you did a pretty good job." Then he did the little bit of work he needed to do and that was it. That was quite an experience for a young country boy that hadn't seen or known very much about delivering babies. Over the next few years more babies came along -- there was Ann, Steve (deceased), Glenda, Danny, and Krista. What a sweet little family I was blessed with.

It wasn't long until we had to go to Fort Jackson, SC, getting ready to go overseas and into the war in Europe. They got us all pretty well organized for the duty that was ahead of us. Then they sent us up to Camp Miles Standish, Rhode Island. That's where we got on the ship to go overseas in a convey of young soldiers heading for war. We went to England first where we kept on training, schooling, and training ourselves, and our men -- then finally the day came when they were going to make the invasion of Normandy and they shipped us down to Fort South Hampton, England, out from Liverpool, and kept on training. Finally they loaded us on ships for landing. They used anything and everything they could get in the water, and what we had our men on was an old English freighter -- what they called an old limey ship. I remember when I got on with my men I didn't have any room for them to sit down, no chairs, no benches. Some of us just sat on the deck outside, others were down in the hole of the ship. I remember I was looking for a place where some of my men could get off their feet onto a resting place. I saw a corner of a hallway, a fenced in potato bin. It was where the sailors kept their potatoes stored on board ship until they needed them. I climbed over the wire around it and squatted down in the rotten potatoes to get a little relief from being upon my feet so long.

It didn't take us too long to cross the English Channel. When they started unloading us they told my men to go down a hallway. I noticed up ahead that I could see a hole in the outside of the ship which was a place to unload freight off the ship.

When I finally got up to the outside edge of the ship I could see what they were doing. They were coming out the end of the hallway and jumping onto a metal landing barge. We were having high seas. When the landing barge came up I could see that this wasn't going to be an easy landing when we tried to get from the ship onto the landing barge. I had it figured out. I wasn't going to try to get on that thing when it was coming up. When the landing barge came up past the door some of my guys would try to get on then and it would catch them coming up. I thought I'm going to outsmart them. I'm going to wait till that landing barge comes up and starts down then I'll jump on when it comes by. I had it all figured out. Well, I jumped when it came by but I didn't catch up with it until the landing barge got to the bottom of the wave and I thought I went through the bottom of it.

In just a little while there was something else that caught our attention. The Germans were firing canons out to sea trying to sink some of our landing barges, which they did. I looked out over the top of the landing barge so I could see where we were going and what it looked like. I could see ships and landing barges sunk. I could see men laying face down floating in the water all over the place. Then finally they said, "Okay, it's time for your men to go." "Okay fellows, it's time to go. We gotta go." We jumped into the water and as we got to the edge of the beach we were able to see where all the firing was coming from. The Germans had pillboxes with canons, machine guns, everything -- all up and down the beach, and they were just wiping us out. I told my men, "We are not going to make it if we stay here fellows. Let's see if we can't get up to the beach." So I started up towards the beach and got to the edge by way of a drainage ditch that came out to the water. I got up in there and made the motion for my men to come on up, and when they felt they were safe enough to jump up and run they did until we got up in the drainage ditch. This is how we started the war in France.

We then organized our platoon and started making our way inland. I remember passing by a helmet on the ground belonging to one of the soldiers that had been wounded before we got there and the helmet had a bullet hole from the front forehead coming out the back of the head. Of course, they had already taken him away so I didn't see him. It sure impressed me seeing that helmet with the bullet holes in it.

We kept working our way inland trying to establish a beach head at Omaha Beach. I got to the Vir River with my men. It's a small river, more of a canal that it was a river, but it had been dug out so they could use it for transportation by boat. I had my men dig in on the banks of the river and some of them got so close to the bank that when the Germans fired on them it would knock dirt into the holes that they had dug for a foxhole.

One night as we were all waiting to hear from the Germans we heard some friendly voices across the river and they were calling asking for help. I had a platoon boat in my pontoon so I sent one of my men with the pontoon boat across the river to see who these two fellows were. Come to find out, they were paratroopers who had dropped behind the German lines and they had found the river down further from us

so that when they tried to find a way to get across the river they got no help. When we got the two men back across into the friendly area of our platoon we found that one of the young soldiers had stepped on a landmine and had blown his foot off attached only by the heel string. I had my medic come over and in the dark with a flash light we tried to help him see how to amputate the rest of his foot so we could do something for him. It was at this point the wounded trooper called our attention to the fact that he was holding a live hand grenade in each hand with the pins out. I took one of them and tossed it in the river and I took the other grenade very carefully out of his hand. With the pin gone it was ready to explode. I took it over to the foxhole we had dug and sat there the rest of the night trying to disarm the grenade I had in my hand now. I didn't have a piece of wire that I could run through it. That's what it takes, a little piece of wire that you could stick through the hole of the handle. Finally success.

After they bandaged the young fellow up and we got rid of the grenades, his buddy and my medic took him back to the aid station at the rear of our company.

We then advanced down the river to a little village where we could cross to the other side. As we made our way down the bank we had to fight our way down to get the Germans cleared out so the rest of our company could go through the village. One of the first things I saw was that the Germans had blown up a couple of our jeeps. One was on fire. I crossed the bridge with my platoon and went up along the other side of the river to clear it out. A sniper was up in a church steeple trying to eliminate anyone crossing the river. I sent a couple of men up to try to eliminate the sniper.

Something had happened there right close. We knocked out a couple of tanks that they had been using to shoot artillery from. One of the officers from one of the tanks had come out the turret and when he did someone shot him in the forehead and he was hanging up there, dead of course. But the thing that caught my attention was a beautiful wrist watch on one arm that was hanging out. Well, I, being a country boy, had never had a watch, much less a wrist watch. I thought, "Well, you know he can't use it any more and I'd sure like to have that, and here's an opportunity for me to get one." Of course, it's against army regulations for us to take any kind of loot from the enemy. I was going to take my chances of getting away with it, because everybody else was busy fighting. After looking around to see if there was anyone over me that could court martial me, I felt safe enough to take the watch. And believe it or not, when I turned around that watch was gone. How or when anyone could have gotten the watch with me standing there by the tank, I don't know. But I'll never forget it because it was a strange experience. Probably the good Lord didn't mean for me to have that watch anyway. But I was trying to defy His wishes.

We had gotten away from the little town of St. Jeane, France, and had cleaned out the opposite side of the river that we were originally on. We came to three or four houses on the side of the river. My commanding officer told me to take my men and clean out those three houses of possible enemy. So I said, "Okay", he then said "take your men and go down in the ditch along the side of the road." That was the side of

the river the Germans had been on firing at us and I disagreed with him but I'd never refused to take an order. So I took my men and started down along the side of the road in the ditch, then we had to cross over the road after we got past the first house. As we started to cross the road, I got across the road, then the Germans began to shoot and kill my men. My men couldn't get across. They were already on the middle of the road before they realized they were targets for the German snipers. My men were wounded, yelled for help, of course, but there was nothing I could do. I told Wilson to go get a medic, that we had wounded men on the road. He said, "Sergeant, I'm wounded, too!" And sure enough he was. He didn't say a thing until I told him to go look for a medic.

I had to get out of there so anybody could get over to the other side of the house where I was. They needed to have some space in that fox hole. I went up into the barn of the second house and found no enemy there, but they fired an 88 canon at the barn where I was in the loft and that shell went right through and didn't explode. Once again my life was saved! By the way, the Germans had artillery shells that they could gauge when they would explode. And they would gauge the canons before they fired them at us so they would go off at tree top level.

Just a little ways on down the direction we were headed, trying to take the land and capture prisoners -- I had my men on top of a ridge and the men had dug foxholes, just temporary, just something so we could get down below ground level. Then the Germans fired these canons with a timed fuse on them and one canon exploded. It wounded and killed five of my men. Just one canon. Now I was just about without any military personnel for me to command and direct.

I happened to be looking down to the left towards the river and I saw two German tanks coming around with soldiers following the tanks. I knew we were in trouble as we had no protection from tanks. Most of my men were either dead or wounded. So I went back to our company headquarters and told them our situation. They sent another company that had been in reserve on up to take over our location and take care of the tanks and the soldiers that were coming around and back of us.

My commanding officer told me to take any men that I had left, make a report on them and record all the dead and wounded. We were to dig in around that area. But the problem was that in that area there were trees all around. I knew it wouldn't be good to stay there. I was looking to find a foxhole that the Germans had built.

What they would do was take a gate off the corner of the field where the gates were usually built. Then after taking the gate off and leaned it up against the bank hedgerow, they would then take grass and weeds and finally cover it with dirt. Then they would just crawl up under it. I found this one and I thought, boy I feel lucky today finding this. I'd made a report on my men and once I got my responsibilities done I crawled up under the foxhole.

I had not been asleep any day since we had made the invasion on the beach. You may not believe that you can stay awake that long, but when you are scared enough and looking for death any minute, you never know when a sniper is looking at

you through his sight barrel -- you'll stay awake!

As I was laying there I went off to sleep. Before I fell asleep I remembered I hadn't changed my socks for days and days since I had come in on the beach. I still had the same wet socks on, and my feet were full of pitted out holes from being in water for so long. I found a German backpack and he had a pair of shoes and a pair of socks in it that were clean and dry. I put the socks on and changed shoes, then I crawled up under that lean-to. I lay there thinking about where I was, how long would this last, and sooner or later I would get it, everyone does if you stay in there long enough fighting -- someone would put you in their site.

I went off to sleep, and when I woke up it scared me for I didn't know where I was. As I leaned over and turned on my side so I could look out the opening down at my feet, I saw light. I couldn't understand why because it should have been dark. Then I eased myself out from under the lean-to, stood up and looked around to get my bearings and see what had happened. I looked on the ground at the head of my lean-to and there I saw something that really had a meanful affect on my life. I saw a chunk of iron where a shell had exploded just about 7 or 8 feet from where my head lay, and it had plowed dirt up to within 12 to 18 inches of my head. There lay those chunks of steel, yet I hadn't even heard the canon go off. I didn't hear an explosion or anything else. It took me awhile to get over that. As I've said, it made a great impression on me physically, mentally, and spiritually.

I was not a born again Christian. I had good principles, but they were not religious. As I layed there, I said to myself, "You know, that was a close call. It could have been my night." I began to think about home and my family. I thought, "If I could only get back home to see my family one more time." I didn't know how to pray. I had never prayed, yet as I layed there I felt the urge to pray 'cause I wanted help and I knew that only God could get me out of this horrible fighting and killing, and it seemed it would go on for a long time. If there is a God in heaven, I thought, I'd like to ask Him to do me a favor. If He will help me get back to the United States, I don't care if my arms are off, my legs are off, but alive, I'll do whatever He wants me to do from then on.

I tried to think of some scripture. I'd never had a Bible. I'd gone to church and I'd heard the deacons pray, so I tried to remember what I had heard. "Tho I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thy rod and Thy staff is with me." I couldn't think of any more of that. It sounded to me like a prayer. It sounded religious. I never knew until I got back to the United States and became a Christian that I was actually quoting from the 23rd Psalms. "Tho I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." So I made that promise, "if He would just get me back home, I'm not asking for much. Just get me back to the States and I'll do whatever He wants me to do."

My commanding officer gave me my instructions with the new recruits they had brought in for me to continue the fighting. We gathered up men, we instructed them, and we began to organize the army to have an artillery barrage starting

tomorrow morning. The artillery shells would be shot over our heads toward the German's line. Our job was to have our men ready so when the artillery would start firing over our heads we were to advance toward the enemy line. As the shells would go over our heads and explode we were supposed to be running ahead to attack the Germans that were on the other side of the field. We were ready, as ready as we could be, because the next morning when we started our movement charging across the field, I found that the Germans had a fast machine gun. The firing from that would scare you just hearing the firing. Our machine guns were very slow, sounded like a "pop pop" gun. (Oh, by the way, we didn't get started with the artillery to help cover us to keep the enemy's head down, just didn't get started in time.)

I told one of my new recruits to go to the left and follow a washout drain with a hedge on one side, check it out and we'll follow you. He looked at me and said, "If you want to go up that drain you go yourself". Well, I could have had him court-martialed just for that. Some officer would have shot him for being a coward. I took off up through the ditch and my scouts and officers followed me. All of a sudden I was conscious that somebody was shooting at me because the dirt would pop out of the hedge near me. So I jumped over the hedge to get away from whoever was shooting at me. One of my men called out, "Sergeant, Sergeant, they shot my gun out of my hand. What am I going to do"? I yelled back, "Get you another one!" I was having my problems, too.

It was very fortunate for us that the Germans had withdrawn their men and were moving back from us, because when we got to the top of the ravine we found that the Germans had a machine gun set up right in the corner of the field and would have swept the ravine and would probably killed all of us. They had moved his machine gun to another place. When I got there and saw we couldn't go any further in that direction because of the deep ravine. We had to go somewhere, either left or right, and I decided to take my men to the right. First I wanted to check it out to see how safe it would be for the men. I took one of my scouts with me and crossed over the hedge. About half way I stopped and looked through the hedge, and believe it or not, I looked right down the barrel of that machine gun. He froze long enough for me to fall to the right. Then he opened the machine gun wide open. I was laying down on the ground back of the hedge. They finally hit me in the legs and left hip. I looked to see where my scout was and he was out in the field away from the hedge. He was kneeling down on both knees and had his arms around his head. I don't know what happened to him. I think I remember that he escaped because he played dead.

Once I got shot a German officer and his soldier came around the corner of the field to check to see who I was, what I was doing there, and whether I was alive or not. He had a machine pistol. When they came around and saw me laying there alive, I called out, "Comrade, Comrade, Comrade". That was the only German I learned. I had taken a course coming over on the troop transport. He motioned for me to "come, come." So I crawled after him because I couldn't use my legs. We were behind his lines quiet aways, so he had me crawling up back of his lines and in front of the

American lines where we had started the charge.

I began to hurt and began calling for the medical aid. A German medical person came over and I pointed towards my legs and he checked and saw them. I said, "Medicine, medicine." Before we left that morning our artillery had fired and set up a barrage to cover us as we charged across the open field toward the Germans. They are supposed to be down in their hole while artillery is falling and that would protect us so we could be up above ground running.

It must not have been my day because I didn't have any water, I had no rations, in fact my canteen had a hand granade in each one of the pouches. I couldn't have lasted too long. I said to the medic again, "Medicine, medicine and pointed to my shirt pocket". He reached in and got out the sulphur pills, a new medication, they had given us before we went into combat. They told us if we got wounded don't you hesitate to take those pills because you could die from gangrene and all kinds of problems, so I wanted to get that medicine down. I had two half packages. I don't know why I had two half packages, but I did. Maybe I couldn't get more. He got them out and I tried to swallow them. They kinda got stuck in my throat because I didn't have any water. They had told us to take lots of fluid because the pills could damage your kidneys. Well, you can imagine what happened when I didn't have any water, hadn't had any water, and still didn't have any water.

The German young man reached down and took my knife off my belt. (I had a hunting knife on my belt that I bought on the ship going over). They had told their soldiers that if you are ever captured by an American they'll cut your throat; they all have a knife to cut your throat.) We were told never to cut anyone's throat, but we had it as a safety factor if we needed it. The first thing I thought of was "he is taking my knife off to cut my throat." But he didn't. He took the knife to cut my boots and legions off.

Because our forces that were coming at us were making headway as far as the charge the Germans decided they would have to move back further. So now, what were they going to do with me laying there on the ground on my back? They left me laying there. They took their men and had them move back around the field and across the hedge and across the ravine that I had originally found.

I knew from experience that when the Germans move out of a spot they have had for awhile, they zero their weapons on that location for an artillery shell, at least mortar.

I knew I couldn't lay there with artillery coming in on me. I looked around over my shoulder and I saw another shelter like I had the morning before. I immediately started to drag myself with my arms toward the shelter, finally I crawled up under it. I was laying in the shelter worried, not knowing whether I would survive this day or not, good chance I wouldn't. All of a sudden I heard what sounded like a horse running across the field by the shelter. All of a sudden a body landed at my feet. There it was. It was a German soldier with a white handkerchief around his head. He was wounded, but I would say not too serious, it was just his head. He was shocked to

see me under there and I was shocked to see him out there. I was needing some water. He just squatted there in the opening of the shelter. I said, "Water, water" and he gave me the signal, "No water, no water." I happened to look past him down the hedge. I saw a canteen a little ways down. Someone had left their canteen there. I pointed past him and I said, "Go get it, go get it, water," So he crawled down there and came back with the canteen. He offered me a drink. I said, "No, you drink first." He took a drink and just as he took a drink -- bang, bang, bang. Somebody shot him in the back. He lunged in on top of me. He died instantly because he was coughing up blood when he first landed on top of me. Remember my scout? I think he was the one that shot him because when they found me later on, he said to me, "I shot a fellow over here this morning". I said, "Well, you must have shot this German.

As I was laying there, I couldn't get out, and I couldn't get him off me. He must have weighed 200 pounds or more and there was nothing I could do. I was hurting, I was needing water, and I was needing medication.

The rest of my company didn't know where I was or where any of my men were unless they found out after I was wounded.

I heard some rustling noise in the hedge outside of my shelter. I saw a head peep through and I knew who it was. It was a Sergeant, a companion of mine in the same company. I called his name and said, "Come and get this dead German off of me ." You know a lot of times they pull surprises on you to get you out in the open so they could see you and shoot you. He couldn't believe it was me because he saw me that morning before I took my men out, and here I was calling his name. Finally they decided that I was real, a real American. I called his name then I told him who I was.

Finally he got a couple of medical scouts and sent them down to the edge of the hedge where I was as close as I could get. They jumped over the hedge, drug him off of me, drug me out and took me over the hedge where four soldiers carried me back for medical aid. As they started carrying me back they fired an artillery canon at us. When the solders that were carrying me on a stretcher saw the artillery coming in on them they jumped into a little ditch and then one of them said "Let him stay here, let's go. We gotta get out of here before we get killed." They started to get up and leave me. I grabbed two of them by the hair of the head and I hung onto their hair and they said, "pick him up, pick him up" so finally all four picked me up and carried me back. The last thing I remember was they put me across the body of the jeep that was rigged to carry injured men back to a field hospital tent. They did some minor surgery on me there and the next thing I remember was I hearing an airplane. I became alert and I saw a big airplane sitting in front of me in the field. It was a C-46 without any seats, and I looked up and there was a nurse standing in the door of the plane, and I just became conscious enough to realize the fact that I didn't have any clothes on. I was embarrassed. Of course, they don't pay any attention to that. I guess they covered me up when they saw I was embarrassed.

Then they flew me over to Liverpool, England to a better hospital where they did further surgery. From there they shipped me back to the United States on a

hospital ship to Charleston, SC, then on to Tuscaloosa, AL for more surgery. My next move was to White Sulpher Springs, W. VA. Where they did the major surgery that saved my life.

In the course of time I received my discharged from the army, still walking with crutches. Because of the need for space they discharged a lot of us patients before we were able to walk.

I went back to Orlando -- "Home Sweet Home"! As soon as I was permitted to go back to school I entered business college and finished my schooling, then entered the business world.

August 4, 1962 I received a call to the ministry with great anticipation and trepidation. I carefully accepted the call and I began to prepare myself for the ministry full time.

I had various responsibilities. I entered the literature evangelist field first. From there I was asked to take pastoral and evangelistic responsibilities in various states in the south - Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, and finally Tennessee. Evangelism is the field I preferred.

I have endeavored to keep the promise I made 64 years ago in that foxhole. "If He will help me get back to the United States, I don't care if my arms are off, my legs are off, but alive, I'll do whatever He wants me to do from then on." God has kept His part of the bargain. And here I stand, with both legs and arms. I give God all the glory!

And this is my story.