

Roy G. Cordts

U.S. Army

U.S. Army-115th Infantry—Regiment of the 29th Division



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1st Battalion - "The Big Red."

I was drafted into the U.S. Army on Feb. 24, 1943 at Peoria, Illinois. After weeks of basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina and six more weeks in Tennessee, I received a furlough before shipping overseas as a combat replacement ammunition handler. My parents put a blue star in the window. We sailed on May 6, 1944 taking a zigzag course to avoid German submarines and planes in the North Atlantic. We arrived in Glasgow, Scotland on May 20 and immediately left for Wales. The morning of D-Day, June 6, 1944 I pulled guard duty and heard the constant roar of aircraft engines overhead. They were headed for the Normandy beaches. The Allied invasion of Europe had begun. The next day we were passed by a convoy of trucks and ambulances bringing the dead and injured to hospitals in England. My unit crossed the English Channel in June and

was assigned to the 115th Infantry Regiment of the 29th Division—1st Battalion called "The Big Red." Every day we supplied the ammo to the front lines, running through the hedgerows under rifle fire. Our 1st Battalion defeated the Germans at St. Lo on July 18 and took many prisoners. We cleaned the minefields under fire taking many casualties.

On the evening of August 4, 1944 shell fragments hit my friend Murphy and me and we were evacuated to England. I remained in the hospital until October and returned by ship to Normandy and back to my 29th Division. When the Bulge began, two of the Divisions were sent to the Battle of the Bulge. My Division, the 29th were left to defend a 26-mile front on the Roer River. Our Commander ordered us to remove the German dead and Murphy and I grabbed a litter and went into the field. Murphy stepped on an anti-personnel mine and it exploded with great force. Murphy and I had been injured the same day in France and wounded again on the same day in Germany. Murphy died and I recovered.

We attacked and crossed the Roer River, proceeded across the Cologne Plain and went north to the Elbe River meeting minimum resistance from the Germans. We met the Russians there and victory was declared. I was 21 years old on April 30 the same day Hitler took his life. The war ended and we were ordered to do occupation duty on the Weser River in Bremen. It was in Vegesack that I helped organize a dance band and used a saxophone borrowed from a German orchestra. We played in hospitals and at the Red Cross and in dance halls. We played on the Armed Forces Radio Network and while there, we had the honor of meeting the late Bob Hope and had our picture taken with him. Finally, after earning 71 points, I left Germany for the United States. I had participated in the battles of Normandy, Northern France, the Rhineland, and Central Europe. I am thankful that, as their only son, my parents did not have to display a gold star in their window. I feel sorrow yet for those families who did display it in

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honor of their sons who gave their lives for our country.

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