

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **Greenfield and The Army Years**

The three years I lived in Greenfield with my Father were probably the best times of my youth. High School was excellent; I worked weekends for Dad on the Front Desk. I had my hobbies, playing drums and short wave radio. I went to the movies a lot, walking a short distance up main street. Dad and I had dinner together each evening. I went to dances and visited the library next door.



#### ***Andrew Hamilton Lane - Roger and his drums***

Father Andrew related an episode when he was a shoe clerk, I guess as instruction to me, as a young man. It seems a very good-looking lady came in for a new pair of shoes. My Father, seated before her on one of those little stools, ready to assist in trying on shoes, was startled when the lady said, “reach up easy street and roll down my stockings”. There is another story about his days at Longwood Towers to relate.

There were a few other instructional words of advice, I still remember. "If you are going to be in the hotel business, you better learn how to drink scotch!"



### ***Early picture of the Mansion House***

I was 16 at the time, in High School at Greenfield, Mass. My Father, Andrew Lane was the Manager of the Mansion House, a down town hotel on Main Street, catering to traveling salesmen and some tourists. Room rates were \$1.50 to \$3.00 per day. I lived with Dad for three years 1942-45. The first year, my Mother and my younger brother Bob spent the winter at St. Petersburg in Florida, partly for her health.



### ***Roger's 16th Birthday Party***

On my 16th Birthday, my Father gave me a great Birthday Party at the hotel. I invited 16 friends from high school for dinner to be joined after dinner by another hundred for a dance with a live band.

Dad and I visited Boston for the hotel show. He got all his Brothers together at the Copley Plaza Hotel for a family dinner. It was the first time I had met some of my Uncles.



### ***Quick picture by the machine***

Later when I was 16 and still in High School, Dad arranged for me to attend Boston University and study hotel accounting. I would take the train to Boston, a hundred miles, then the subway to Commonwealth Avenue. After attending class, repeat the subway and train trip back to Greenfield to arrive by midnight.



### ***Roger the Short Wave Listner***

June 6, 1944 - D Day the landing of American soldiers and sailors on Normandy Beach, France. I remember it well; I was 17, a high school student, living with my Father at his hotel, the Mansion House, downtown Greenfield, Mass. With his permission I stayed home from school that day to listen to my short-wave radio for the BBC to get reports. We had a large map on a small bulletin

board in the lobby. I would find where the landings were and place pins on the map for the different sites. As the days progressed, I would update the Allied lines from the radio or newspapers, as our troops moved in-land.



### ***Flora Bell Lane - Bob, Dad and Roger***

My Mother, Flora Bell, came for a visit at the hotel in 1944. Bob visited us over the summer too.

All that year and into the next year, when I crossed my eighteenth birthday and was eligible for the draft, I watched the war (WWII) progress in Europe and Asia. But by 1945, I was back home in Orrington, Maine with my whole family. My Father was not well and had to retire. I had transfed back to Bangor High School for the second part of my senior year.

At Bangor High, I did very poorly with Spanish. I got the first D in my life. So switched to bookkeeping in place of Spanish. The bookkeeping teacher was so wrong when she told me I would never do well as a bookkeeper. Little did she know I would make a career out of hotel accounting.

My draft board was still Greenfield, Mass. Fortunate for me, the area known as the Connecticut Valley, had had a high number of deferred young men, now in their twenties. They had been tobacco farmers, and because cigarettes were so important to the home front and the soldiers, the government had exempted them from service until around the time of my birthday. This was also the time of the Battle of the Bulge, when they were calling up young men for 30 days training as infantry soldiers. Quickly they were sent over to Europe as Army replacements. We were losing dead and wounded in very large numbers just then.

So my Draft Board had a large pool of formerly deferred men, older than I was. In addition, I was still in school. Some how, luck had been on my side. When I first started school in kindergarten, my Mother had delayed my first year. This meant that, where most of my fellow young people, finished high school at 17, I was finishing a year later.

I graduated in June of 1945. I knew I would be drafted. The war was almost over in Europe. So, I took a job as a bellman in a resort hotel at Winter Harbor, Maine, at the Grindstone Inn. When I arrived there, they found out that, although I was just eighteen, I had experience as a night auditor, two years earlier in my Fathers hotel. They had a vacancy for this position and no candidate.



***Grindstone Inn - Winter Harbor, Maine***

War conditions were still effecting the operation of this summer hotel. Business was only fair. Gas was rationed, so people

had to arrive by train at Bangor. The hotel car would meet the train each day and take the guests the hundred miles to the coast. Departing guests would leave with the auto right after lunch for the trip to Bangor and take the train home.

Because no one could leave until this P.M. time, the manager came up with an unusual arrangement for my work. I would start very early in the morning. Take all the front desk records to an unused large office, which looked out on the front lawn and the sea below. In this office, I would do the hand transcript, post up the bill, balance everything and have the accounts ready for the guests who were leaving and had to settle their bill, right after lunch and their departure.

August 14th was VJ day (Victory over Japan). Everyone was celebrating. The hotel guests had a big party. The hotel was located in this small coastal town of Winter Harbor. The town's people got together that evening with a dance at the fire station. A local band played all evening and way late into the night. Everyone who worked at the hotel joined the local residents and danced all night.

Less than two weeks later I was inducted into the United States Army at Portland, Maine. Private 31513916. My basic training was at Camp Croft, Spartanburg, South Carolina. We were the last cycle of infantry replacement soldiers before the post was closed. I was assigned to heavy infantry, which meant in addition to training with the M-1 rifle and carbine, we trained on the 81-millimeter mortar and the 30 calibre water-cooled machine gun. Would you believe, I'm an expert machine gunner?

A little episode while at Camp Croft, Spartanburg, S.C. goes like this. Our barracks was B-28. We were the last cycle through the camp as the war (WWII) was over, both in Germany and Japan. They were training us for Occupation duty in Germany or Korea. As a result we were not issued live ammunition for our weapons, except on the range. They were afraid we would shoot each other, accidentally.



At Camp Croft they had regular inspections at which time, we had to field strip our weapon, a regular issue M-1 rifle and lay out all the parts on your bunk. Then a group of Officers would come by and inspect the piece. Other times the inspection required you to stand at attention, holding your rifle, until the Officer asked to see it. You would present arms, open the breach, and hand it to him. He would look it over, inspecting it for cleanliness, then, return the piece to you. You would release the lever, returning the bolt to its seated position. The Officer would then move on to the next soldier.



### ***Camp Croft, Spartanburg, S.C.***

Well, my funny story was about an inspection one day. First, I need to relate that there was a rumor going the rounds, of a soldier in our Company, who was stealing rifle parts, to send home, hoping to eventually reassemble a complete M-1 rifle as a souvenir of his army days.

This day, with out my seeing him, he must have stolen my BOLT, while it was laid out for the field inspection. When I reassembled it, no bolt! I went to the Sergeant and told him about it. His response was "Go to the Quartermaster's office, and get a

new bolt”. This I did, right away. But the Sergeant at the Quartermasters, said they did not have any replacement parts or spare rifles, since the camp was closing right after our training Company would leave in a few weeks.

This, I reported back to my Platoon Sergeant. He said “ok, carry on”.

Now, we continue with the next inspection. A young *shavetail*, *90-day wonder*, *Second Louie*, was doing the inspection. I presented arms and handed my piece to him. He took a quick look (you could not really see the missing bolt), gave it back to me. I released the lever and there was a sharp ‘*Ping*’ instead of the regular sound of the bolt closing. The Officer, knew something was wrong, but did not know what! So he just moved on as my fellow soldiers had a hard time keeping back the snickers. Just another day at Camp Croft.



***Roger with local college girl***

Weekends we would go into Spartanburg, a local Church had a social program for Soldiers, dances, etc. The girls were from Converse College in Spartanburg..



I did well with my training. Tested with a very high score of 169 on the AGCT (Army General Classification Test). They would kid me that anything over 160 was a genius. My buddies who had started college for a year at Harvard University and I all took the OCS (Officer Candidates School) test. My score was 121 with 110 as passing grade. But since the war was now completely over both in Europe and Asia and add to this that after 6 month in Officers school you had to sign up for a two year tour of duty, Ken, my buddy and I both decided not the become officers.



***Ken, Rusty and Roger***

Dad went into the hospital. I got an emergency leave to visit home for two weeks. Spent most of the time in Bangor visiting him. I hitch hiked on military airplanes for this trip and flew back as far as Cincinnati, Ohio on the trip back to base. The last leg was twelve hours on a night train through Tennessee and the Carolinas to get back the Camp Croft. I had missed maneuvers (two weeks camping out in the red mud), which did not bother me at all. The outfit got back in, the same time I arrived back from the emergency furlough. We finished training and had a company picture taken.

Then I received a 21 days delay enroute. Kind of like a vacation before being assigned overseas as occupation troops. When I got to Boston and called Aunt Helen (Harry's widow) She told me, my father had passed on, three days earlier. I missed the funeral, as I was on a troop train going north and the Red Cross could not locate me. This in a way was a blessing, as I can only remember my Dad when he was living, and the three great years I lived with him at the Mansion House in Greenfield, Mass.



***Company B 28th Battalion, Roger second left rear***

After this second time home in Orrington with Mother, I reported to a camp in Virginia for deployment overseas. Before shipping overseas, I had a weekend pass to Richmond, Va.

Part of the guys went to the Pacific, but I shipped out to Europe as replacement troops. Our ship was a converted tourist vessel, which used to sail to South America with 200 people in staterooms. For us 200 officers were assigned the staterooms, and we slept in bunks 5 deep in the hold. There were over a thousand soldiers on this trip plus the officers. There was no place to sit down except on the stairs between decks.

When I got on board, they asked for anyone with experience playing records. Since I use to helping out at the radio station in the Mansion House, I volunteered. This was a good thing as they gave you a pass to go to the front of the mess line to eat. The bad news was, I got sea sick a day out and stayed in my bunk for the next three days.

The trip across the Atlantic was ten days long. We stood in line for two hours to get breakfast, another two hours for a mid-day snack and again two hours for the evening meal. Then add another hour for each meal to clean your mess gear. All together were in line 8-10 hours. The days went along, one after another, with only the rolling seas and a little talk with your shipmates. We arrived at the Port of LaHarve, France and disembarked to trucks, which took us to a tent camp named Philip Morris. Another meal and its long chow line and it was time to go to bed.

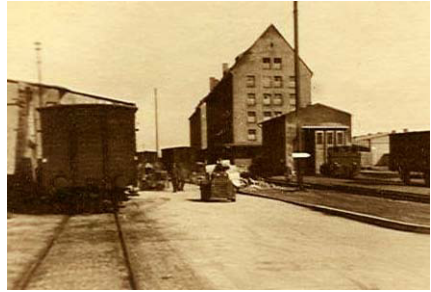
At midnight, they got us up and said to get ready to ship out again. A truck ride to the train station was next. We loaded onto French rail train cars, with separate compartments and an aisle down the side. About 6 of us were in one compartment, some sleeping on the seats that were like benches and some on the floor.

About 7 AM, when we woke up, we could see we were pulling into a railway station. One of the soldiers, who spoke a little French, raised the window and hollered out "where are we?" The reply came back from a station hand - "Parrie".

The army gave us a hot breakfast meal, a ticket for a truck ride to the other side of Paris and told us to be there, no later than five o'clock. Since we were all only eighteen, in a strange city, we decided to take the truck ride first, so as not to get lost. At the southern railway station, we went out in small groups to do some sightseeing. This was my one-day in Paris in 1946.

For most of the year, I was stationed in Aschaffenburg, Germany. This city of 30,000 before WWII, had been the target of the

U.S. Third Army who destroyed most of the buildings. The rest of my Army Year 1946 in Germany is told in pictures.



### **Bombed Building - Germany 1946 - Repaired Warehouse**



### **Bombed Home - Aschaffenburg - Bombed Warehouse**



### **Major Bombing Damage - Roger with pipe, front gate 1946**

We were assigned to an Army Exchange (PX) Warehouse unit of about 25 soldiers. First the damage to the buildings had to



be repaired. Most of the work was done using Germans hired by the City Government. We worked with teams of 12 German civilian men and one American Soldier, who unloaded the train cars which arrived each week from Bremerhaven, Germany.



***Roger by Police Station, Sergeant Lane, and early photo***



***Roger by the dining Hall, Roger in front of Red Cross Club***

The year in Germany went by very fast. We worked a 5 days and 1/2 day on Saturday, in the office. I had a German Assistant, Henry Schwabacher and two German secretaries. On weekends I hitch-hiked all over Bavaria; Frankfurt, Heidelberg and Stuttgart. A Trip to Munich and Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

I had a great vacation in Switzerland for a week.



***Roger high up on a Swiss mountain***

Most evenings after supper, I would walk into town and visit the Red Cross Club. They had coffee, donuts, three Red Cross girls, movies and shows. Sometimes I played the drums with the band.



***U.S. Antioch Victory***

In December I had an eleven day ocean trip on the U.S. Antioch Victory back to the States, just before Christmas.

I spent a leave with Bob in New York City over the Holidays. Christmas eve, I was at the USO on Broadway, when I was asked to stand up as a witness by a soldier and his bride who were getting married that evening at the USO. After my discharge, I visited in Boston with Ken, my friend from Camp Croft. Ken was a coin collector. I brought him a big bag of large size copper coins from Europe, which I had exchanged for one carton of cigarettes while in Germany. Soon my days in the **Army of the United States** had ended and I was on my last train trip for home in Maine.

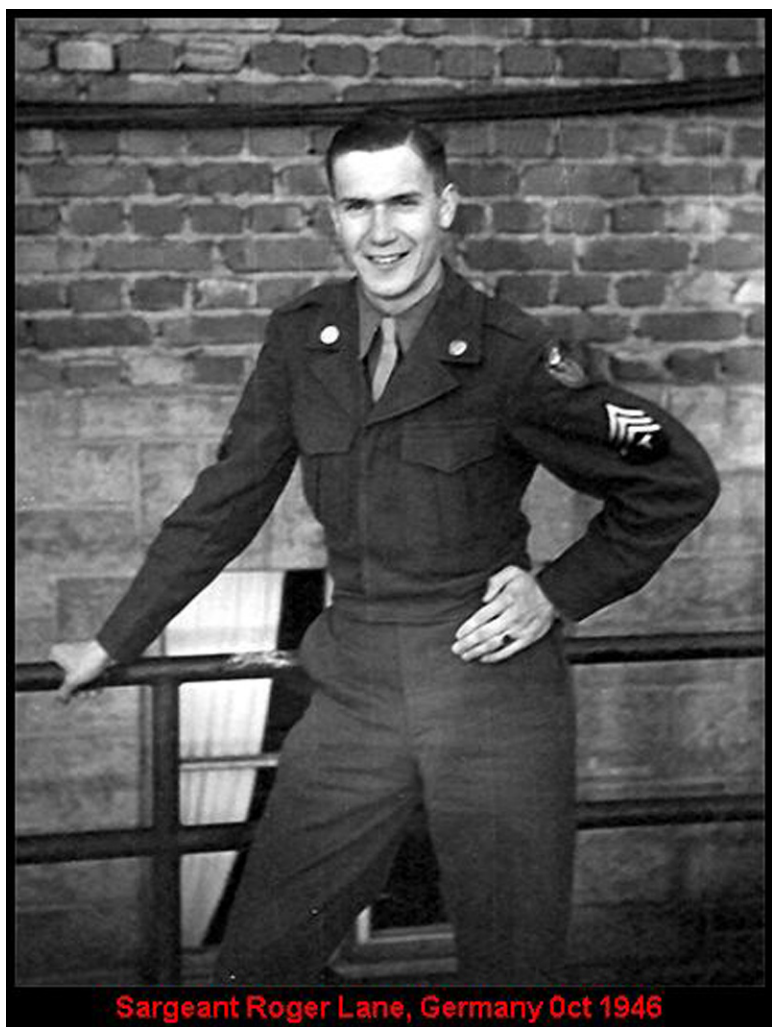


*Visit to New York City - Visit with Ken*



*Victory Medal, German Occupation, Good Conduct  
My Discharge dated December 27, 1946*





Sargeant Roger Lane, Germany Oct 1946