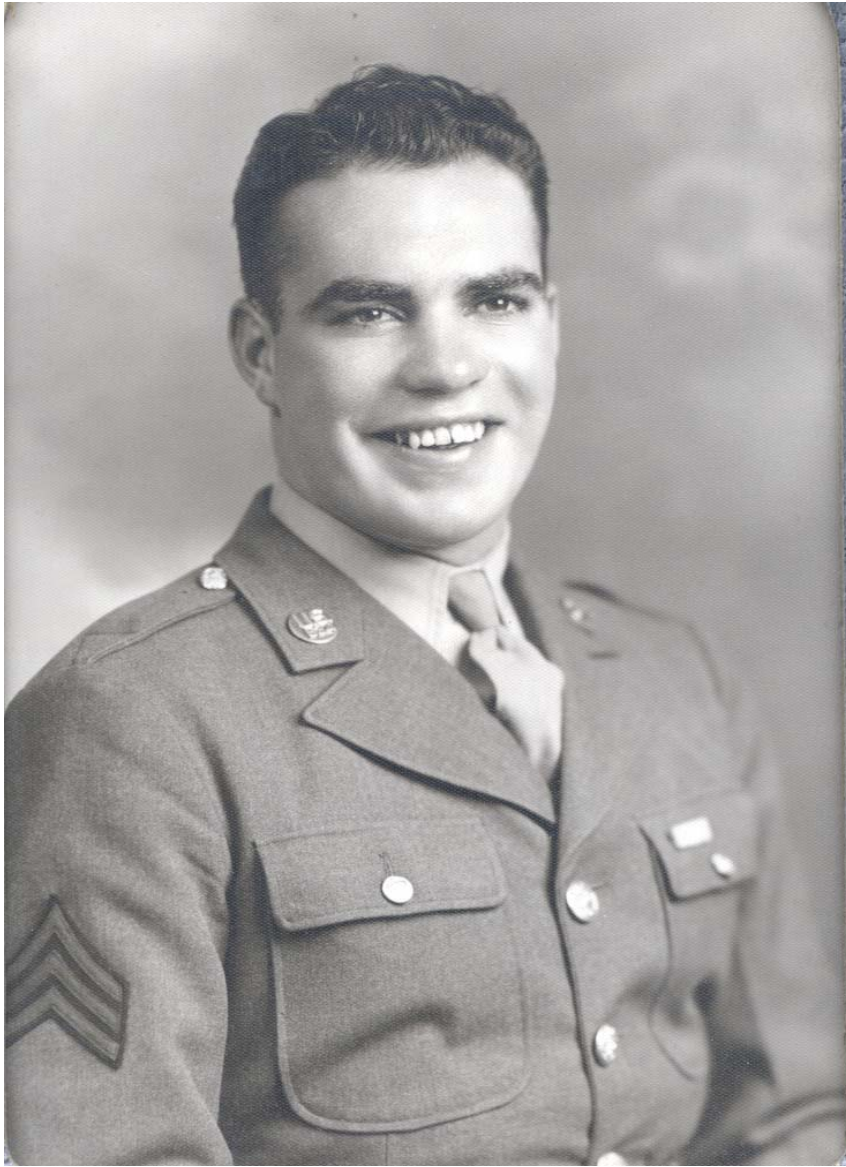


DOUGLAS J LAWLER

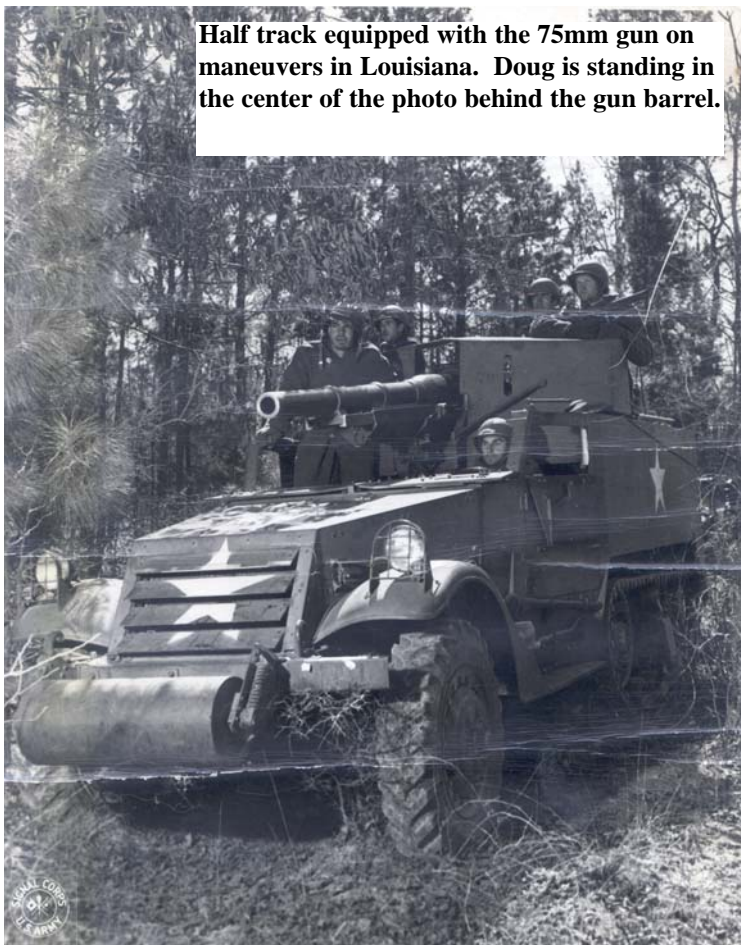


Douglas J Lawler (37025857) entered the US Army on 10 April 1941. He was sent to Camp Clairborne Louisiana for training. Doug was assigned to the 34th Provisional Anti-Tank Battalion in August 1941. They participated in the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers. The unit was redesignated as

the 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion on 16 December 1941. In June 1942 they were sent to Camp Hood Texas for training and to be re-equipped with 75 mm guns mounted on half-track vehicles and 37 mm guns mounted on 3/4 ton weapons carriers. In November 1942 the group returned to Camp Clairborne after participating in the fall maneuvers in Louisiana.



Half track equipped with the 75mm gun on maneuvers in Louisiana. Doug is standing in the center of the photo behind the gun barrel.



During 1943 the 634th was once again re-equipped, this time with the well known M-10 Tank Destroyer.

The 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion was given orders to leave the United States for Europe. Doug left on 28 December 1943. They headed for England arriving on 8 January 1944. After arriving in England they moved to their new garrison in southern England to begin training for the eventual invasion of Europe, D-Day.

Doug's Battalion was not in the first assault on Normandy. After the initial assault, the beaches had to be secured and prepared for the vehicle landings. The 634th landed on Utah beach on 30 June 1944, in the vicinity of Adouville la Hubert France. Companies A & B were assigned to support the 1st Infantry Division. Doug's company (Company C) was assigned to support the 4th Infantry Division. Together they took part in the initial phase to the allied breakthrough west of St. Lo. This was the start of the drive that led to the breaching of the Siegfried line in the Aachen area.

Company C supported the drive south to protect the left flank of the First Division. In the area around Notre Dame de Cenilly Doug's Platoon, First Platoon, of Company C met a strong enemy counter attack. If the attack was successful it would have severed the American supply and communication lines. The Tank Destroyer crews held their ground, firing 3 inch guns and machine guns into the numerically superior forces. They inflicted heavy casualties upon the enemy and repelled the counter attack.

Company C continued to fight on. They moved into the area around St Pois and Mortain. On 13 August 1944 they were detached from the 4th Infantry Division and joined the rest of the 634th Battalion in support of the 1st Infantry Division in their drive northeast toward La Force Mace. They then moved eastward and on 24 August they moved 110 miles to the vicinity of Chartres. They made the historic crossing of the Seine river on 27 August at Corbel and Melun. Two days later they crossed the Marne at Meaux. On 31 August Soissons was taken from the enemy.

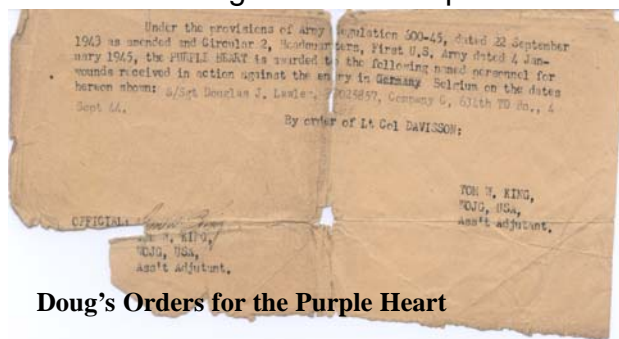




German Vehicles

The average daily move was 20 miles. During the last week of August alone, Doug's battalion traveled 300 miles across Northern France. They met only scattered resistance. The lack of resistance proved the destruction and defeat suffered by the "Great German Army". Evidence was seen along the route in columns of smashed enemy vehicles and equipment. During this time they moved so far, so fast they even went out of the reach of their own supply lines. At times they lived off German rations and ran their vehicles on German gas.

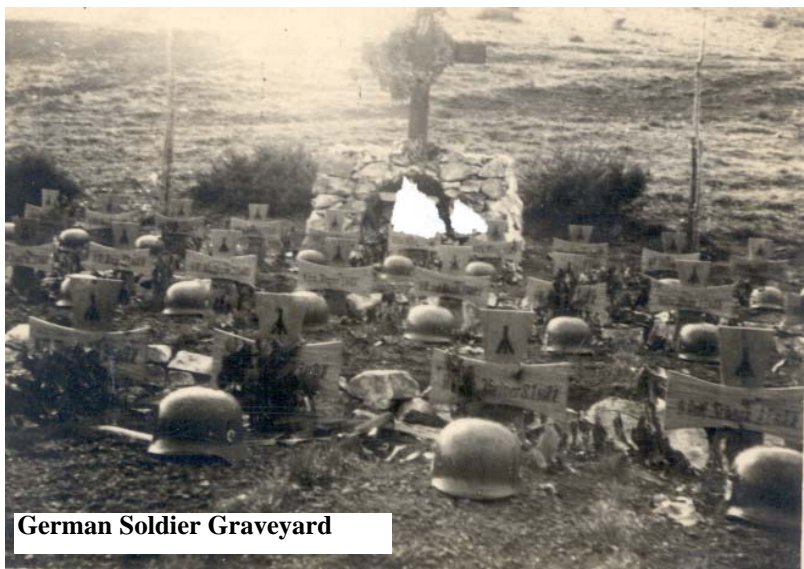
The Battalion's push continued to the northeast, through Laon and the north to Mons Belgium. On 4 September 1944 Doug was wounded in action against the Germans while in Belgium. For this, he was awarded the Purple Heart.



Doug's Orders for the Purple Heart

The battle of Mons cost the German Army terribly. The 634th Battalion was credited with being instrumental in the capture of over 900 German prisoners. Four German Army Divisions were destroyed during the Battle and two others reduced to skeletons.

After the Battle of Mons moderate resistance was met in the rapid advance through Charleroi, Namur, and Liege. They crossed the Meuse River at Liege and from there, they pushed on toward Aachen and the Siegfried Line. Company C played an important role in breaching the Siegfried Line by supporting the lead troops. The line was completely taken on 15 September 1944.



German Soldier Graveyard

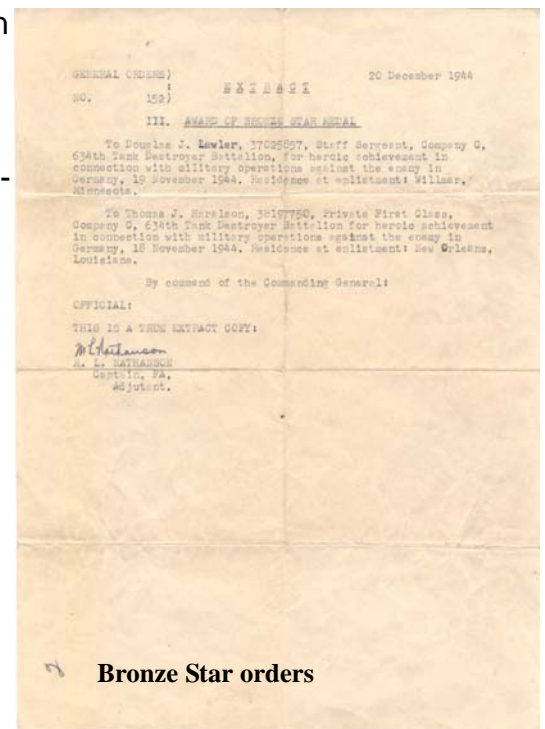
The Battalion worked to close all roads leading to Aachen to cut off all supplies and reinforcements to the Germans garrisoned there. The Tank Destroyers and the Infantry hammered at the enemy occupied buildings and pillboxes. With the support of the 634th, the strongholds were softened up enough for the Infantry to move in and take the areas with minimal casualties. On 10 October an ultimatum was delivered to the German Garrison Commander in Aachen allowing him 24 hours to surrender. No answer was given and on the 11th the battle for Aachen began. By midnight on 17 October the ring around Aachen was closed to sever all supply lines to the Germans in Aachen. The Germans were mounting numerous attacks against the roadblocks to try to relieve the encircled Germans in Aachen. Companies C and B held the lines from Stolberg to Haaren. Aachen was taken on 21 October 1944.

After the battle for Aachen the Battalion moved into the Hurtgen Forest and was involved in the battle there. Constant enemy artillery and mortar fire made life in the forest hell on earth. Trees were exploding all over the area from the incoming enemy attacks. The Germans put up some of the stiffest resistance that they had seen to this point. Despite the resistance the enemy was pushed out of the forest. Doug's Company, Company C, opened the way for the Division's advance from Schebenhutte. In Hamich, C Company's Tank Destroyers engaged and defeated German Tanks and held the town against the great odds until the infantry could consolidate their positions. Doug was wounded again on 19 November 1944 during this offensive. During the campaign Doug was also awarded the Bronze Star Medal. In early December the Battalion was relieved and moved back into Belgium for much needed Rest and Relaxation (R & R).

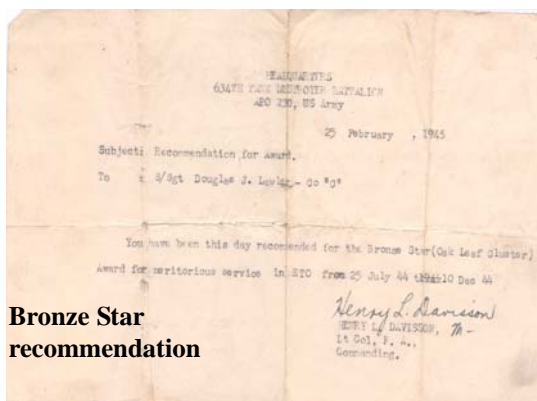
The R & R was short but sweet. On 16 December 1944, the Germans interrupted their rest. The German Army made a breakthrough in the Ardennes, this battle is now known as the "Battle of the Bulge". The Battalion was rushed in to hold the area threatened on the northern edge of the Bulge. The Tank destroyers in the 634th were in large part responsible for the stopping of all of the German attacks in this area during the Battle of the Bulge. During the middle of January 1945 an attack was mounted to destroy the enemy troops within the bulge. Even in the deep snow and cold weather the troops with the Tank destroyers not only retook the captured German ground but pushed ahead and forced the Germans back and took more ground. The drive took the towns of Faymonville, Schoppen, Monteneau, Happenbach, Bellingen, Murrien, Ramsheid, and Hollerath.

The 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion had breached the Siegfried Line for the second time in the War. Doug was recommended for a second Bronze Star for meritorious service from July to December of 1944.

Early in February Doug and the rest of the Battalion moved back into the Hurtgen Forest to prepare for the crossing of the Roer River. The first elements of the Battalion crossed the river on 25 February. After crossing, Companies A, B, and C contributed to the attack pushing towards the Rhine River supporting the infantry with their fire from the M-10 Tank Destroyers. They fought through Lechenic, Gymnich, Metternich, and Mornmeim. On 9 March the city of Bonn fell.



Bronze Star orders



Bronze Star recommendation



Doug's Bronze Star



Doug's Purple Heart



Doug by his M-10 in Bonn

On 15 March 1945, the first elements of the 634th Battalion crossed the Rhine River at Remagen. They encountered resistance as they drove north to the Sieg River. German Army forces fought back with large amounts of self propelled guns and tanks but were steadily driven back. They retreated to the north bank of the river. The Battalion then turned it's attack to the east and on 27 March the enemy resistance capitulated and the southern bank of the Sieg River was cleared.

In a period of two weeks the 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion had traveled over 150 miles, traveling and average of 12 miles a day. They were instrumental in the capture of thousands of German soldiers.

In the early part of April the Battalion moved east crossing the Weser River at Beverungen and continued to the Hartz Mountains. They crossed the Leine River and met weak resistance. They took the towns of Dassel, Northeim, and Einbeck. The operation did meet some times of stiff resistance. The Hartz Mountains were defended by four German Corps. The Germans had downed trees to block the path of the oncoming American troops. They used tanks and self propelled guns also to fight against the 634th. Many towns were taken with no resistance. Osterode,

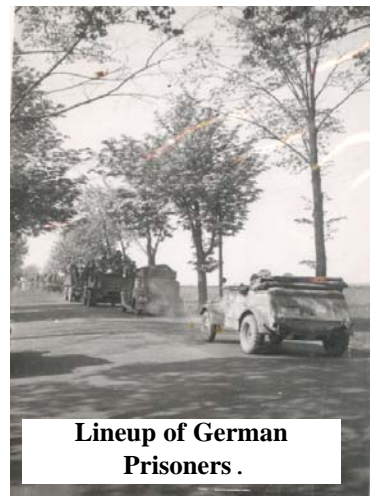
Destruction of War



Benneckenstien, and Tahle required hard fighting to take.

The operation achieved a huge payoff on 20 April when more than 10,000 Germans were taken prisoner and the Hartz Mountains were taken. The 634th Battalion is attributed with the capture of 1,700 of the total prisoners taken. German Generals and officers were a common sight in the prisoner camps.

After the Battle for the Hartz Mountains, the Battalion moved more than 200 miles and by 23 April were in the northwestern part of Czechoslovakia or just outside the border in Germany.



Lineup of German Prisoners .





Doug was sent back to the United States after the German Surrender and arrived on 26 June 1945. He had spent 1 year, 5 months, and 29 days over seas in the European theater. He rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant. On 13 July 1945 he was discharged from the US Army at Fort Snelling.

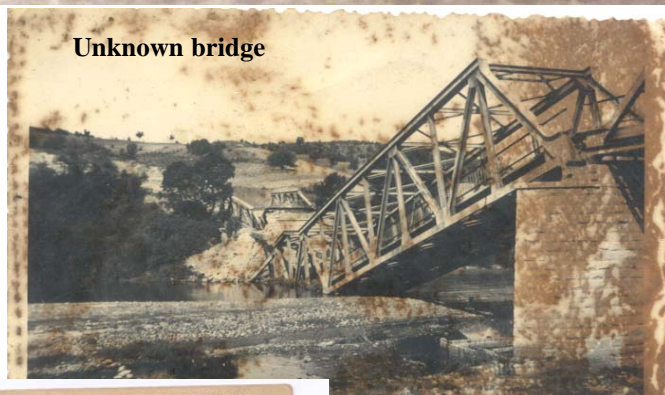
Not all of the fight was out of the German Army yet by the last days of the war. Some areas they gave up with little resistance, and in others they fought frantically. The 634th continued the push into Czechoslovakia and were well into the country by the time Victory in Europe Day (VE) came on 8 May 1945. The Battalion had completed 306 days of combat, almost continuous. They had Three days off in August and four days off in December. They had destroyed 55 German Tanks, 12 self propelled guns, 18 armored cars, 76 general purpose vehicles and 25 anti-tank guns. They neutralized 49 pillboxes, 80 machine gun nests, and 189 strong points. The Battalion fired 17,855 rounds of three inch ammunition in combat.



Overturned tank



Unknown bridge



ENLISTED MAN'S IDENTIFICATION CARD	
European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army	
This is to identify DOUGLAS J. LAWLER	
whose description and signature appear herein, as a member of the United States armed forces, serving in the European Theater of Operations.	
Grade	Staff Sergeant
Home address	25th St. N.E., Willmar, Minn.
Birthplace	Willmar, Minnesota
Birthdate	18 Feb 1919
Weight	170 lbs.
Height	5' 6"
Color hair	Dark
Color eyes	Brown
Complexion	Ruddy
Scars or distinguishing marks	None

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Receives Second Award for War Service



—Noland Studio Photo, Willmar

After having been awarded a bronze star for heroic action while serving in Germany in November 1944, Staff Sergeant Douglas Lawler of Willmar is here shown receiving the silver star. The above photo was taken during the presentation ceremonies at a recent meeting of the Willmar Kiwanis club luncheon. The actual citation for the recognition appears to have been lost in the mails, however, the recommendation for award follows:

"Headquarters 634 Tank Destroyer Battalion, A.P.O. 230 U.S.A.
June 25, 1945

RECOMMENDATION FOR AWARD

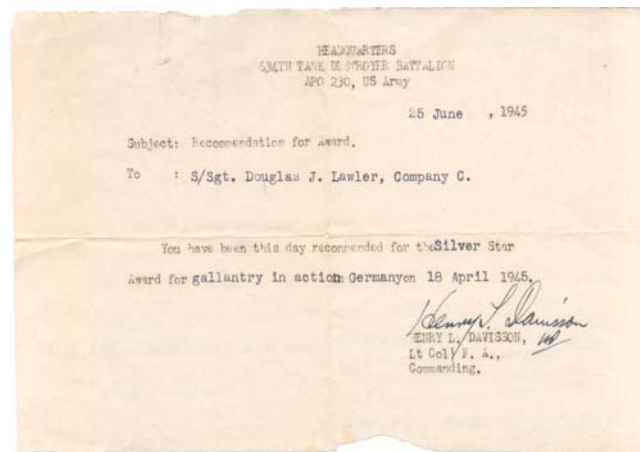
To:

Staff Sergeant Douglas J. Lawler, Company C.
You have been this day recommended for the Silver Star award for gallantry in action in Germany on the 18th of April, 1945.

Signed: Lt. Col. Henry L. Davisson
F. A. Commanding.

After the war and Doug was home, orders came through stating Doug had been awarded the Silver Star for actions against the Germans on 18 April 1945.

The award was presented to him at the Willmar Kiwanis meeting and photographed for the Tribune.



SOUTHERN GERMANY EDITION
Saratoga, May 15, 1945
Volume 1, Number 5

THE STARS AND STRIPES

Daily Newspaper of U.S. Armed Forces
In the European Theater of Operations

Library still
don't count
U.S. MAIL PERMIT NO. 1000

U. S. Lifts Curfew, Track Ban

WASHINGTON, May 11.—Lifting of the ban on travel and dog racing and the end of the midnight curfew for night club patrons were announced by Fred H. Vinson, Director of War Relocation, today on the basis of the victory in Europe.

The ban on dog racing, which was imposed in 1942, and the curfew for night club patrons, which was imposed in 1943, were announced by Vinson today.

Vinson said that the lifting of the curfew and the track ban would be effective on June 1, 1945.

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In Bed With a Lady, But She Was So Cold

WITH THE 8TH DIV. May 11.—After divisional headquarters was set up in a 10th century art palace, Pvt. John Adams, of Nashville, Tenn., was the first to be killed.

The body was a dark-skinned man, rather old, Pvt. Richard Young, of St. Louis, Mo., had placed a lit cigarette in the man's mouth while he slept.

All But 400,000 in Army Will Quit Europe for U.S. Or Pacific Within a Year

Luftwaffe fliers give up on U.S. field

Most to go home for discharges or furloughs

WASHINGTON, May 11 (AP)—The War Department is putting into effect plans that are expected to move every American soldier, except 400,000 troops, from Europe within the next 12 months.

The United Press said wounded men and liberated prisoners of war would have priority for return to the U.S. and that most troops destined for the Pacific would proceed via the U.S. and return (enough of 30 days or longer).

3-Month Schedule

Maj. Gen. Charles P. Gross, commanding the Army Transportation Corps, outlined this schedule for movement of troops by air and sea:

1. Approximately 140,000 men, for an average of slightly more than 30 days, will be withdrawn during the next three months.
2. Approximately 100,000 men, for an average of 30 days, will be moved out during the next three months.
3. Approximately 60,000 men, for an average of 30 days, will be moved out during the next three months.

B-29s Blast Airfields On Honshu

One hundred to 150 Superfortresses pounded the western coast of Honshu, and that 20 others bombed the city of Tokyo.

The B-29s were the first to be used in the Pacific since the war began.

Nazi Fliers Land to Surrender In Midst of a Victory Review

First west to get away from the Russians, seven German pilots landed in the U.S. on Tuesday night, and were taken to the U.S. by the U.S. Army.

The pilots were taken to the U.S. by the U.S. Army.



German Mauser Bayonet, brought home by Doug and donated by his Wife, Myrtle in October 2006

German Hitler Youth Knife brought home by Doug Lawler. The Hitler Youth was a patriotic organization for young kids.



Belgian model FN M1905 .25 Caliber Pistol, brought home by Doug Lawler, donated October 2006.



Russian Model TT-33 Army sidearm. Brought home from World War II by Doug Lawler. Donated October 2006.