

Henry Cann (3) So I got to Fort Dix, New Jersey. The first few weeks consisted of washing dishes, standing in line.

I made a test, and I was sent to Fort Belvoir, an engineering training center. It was lucky for me. Most of them ended up in the infantry. As an engineer, you were a more valuable soldier. You weren't used for any dirty work in the field. I based this thing on, when I was a kid I had an erector set. I built things. I got an idea of how wheels spin. The tests in the army consisted of questions like: You have a rope running over 5 wheels, like a transmission belt. You twist them. Which way does the fourth one go. The questions were about building things. And without having any experience I made a pretty good grade. That's how I got into the engineers, which I liked pretty much at the time.

After three months I was transferred back to Fort Dix. I was in National Guard outfit.



I came in the army in April, May of 1941. One of the earliest call ins. No one knew me. I was a good catch for the army. I had no way of saying I didn't want to go.

But, at the same time, what the guys in the country club didn't realize was I didn't mind going. If anyone had a reason to fight Hitler, it would have been me. I was pretty ready for that.

We were the 44th infantry, a division that existed since the First World War. They fought in the Argonne Forest. They had an insignia that designated all the battles they fought in the First World War. I and another Jewish fellow were sent to the 44th from Fort Belvoir.

When we arrived we were the inductees. We were dirt. When we got there a fellow with one stripe ran us over the obstacle course in double time. He acted like a one striped general. He wanted to show us what the real army was like. We were draftees. This outfit was getting ready to go on maneuvers in Louisiana. All the other fellow and I did was clean latrines for two days.

We were there a few weeks. I wasn't interested in going out and standing around. I was interested in going into the office. I figured I could do something. With my background in business. I was more interested in administration than I was in building bridges and breaking them up again. So the first Sergeant put me to work.

The Lieutenant (who later became the Captain) came over and said I'd like these rings sold. In those days they could do that. They sold the rings for \$2.

He gave me the job. I kept track of who paid and how many were sold. So after a couple of weeks he came over and says, "I'd like to take the money for the rings.

I said you get the money if you sign for it here.

"Me sign for what?" He got all excited.

"That's business I turn money over to you. You sign for it. And that's the end of it.

That impressed the man (I later found out.)

A few days before we went on maneuvers, we were already packed, the supply Sergeant and the supply officer and a few muggers got into a fight. They beat each other up, and they landed in the hospital.

The captain came over. He said: you know so much about administration;

you're going to be the acting supply Sergeant. Here's a book. Company's management. It's going to be your Bible. You're going to walk with it, sleep with it, eat with it. I want you to study this thing.

I could hardly pronounce the tools and all to stuff in the place. But you don't turn a guy down. So I became an acting Sergeant.

We went to Camp Clayborne Louisiana. The area is full of quicksand. We staked out an area for our camping ground. When we got up the next day we couldn't find our stakes, anymore.

We spent time in maneuvers in Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, on the way to Texas. Eventually we ended up in Fort Lewis Washington.

Being the acting Sergeant I had to learn all about the supply room. I couldn't find anything. The unit was charged with having so many: weapons, machine guns, axes, shovels. Only a little of them were there. The national army guys, over the years, had taken it home. There never was a check up. There never was a war before.

It was my job to replace it all. I had to find out what happened to it. I couldn't find with the help of the 2 Sergeants. Everything was lost crossing the Sabine River. The report of service said "Lost crossing the Sabine River." which was part of the maneuver.

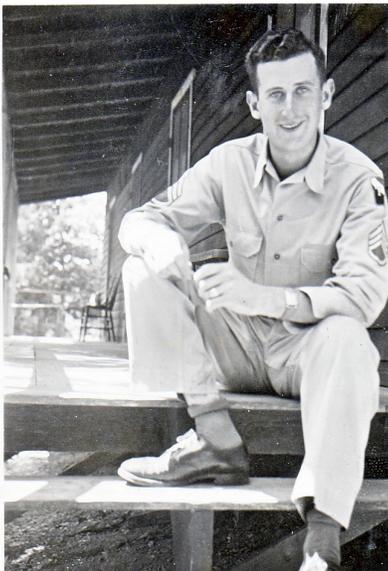
Eventually it was all approved. We replaced all the missing things and brought our company up to inventory roster; we got all the things you had to have. That's all the army required to prove that you didn't have it. They

made you sign it and we requisitioned it.

(When we went from Louisiana to Texas, We crossed the Sabine River. It was nothing, as narrow as the Meramac. You could throw a stone across it, walk across it.

There was a lot of rivalry in the army. We had a guy from Texas. When we crossed the river a guy got out and said "I'm going to piss on Texas." That got the Texan in the organization mad. That's what really happened when we crossed the Sabine.)

I strictly followed the orders. I was walking with that book. I studied the army. Then I find out the reason I got the job



of Sergeant is because I made the Lieutenant sign when I gave him the money.

In Louisiana I heard the former supply Sergeant and the Lieutenant who were in the fight were coming back. I still did not have my stripes. I was acting Sergeant. In those days being Sergeant was something. You sat at a different table. They served you. It was like a non-commissioned officer. You are somebody. So I complained to the Lieutenant I didn't have my stripes.

OK. I'll see to it.

I got my stripes. Shortly after I got my stripes they came back. The Sergeant was reduced to corporal. The Lieutenant put him in my tent. He was my assistant.

He hated my guts. I was a foreigner, a refugee. He was a real-American. A REAL AMERICAN. A red head. And he wouldn't take no orders from me. He wouldn't stand revelry. He wouldn't do anything. He was drinking.

So I complained to the Lieutenant. I said: "Did you have to put this guy in my tent? You know darn well he won't cooperate with me."

He said: "Sergeant. You wanted those stripes. Now use them."

That was all I needed to hear. I went to that guy at 5 O'clock in the

morning. It was revelry. I said you get your so-and-so out there, buddy. This is an order.

I kept shikaning him a lot. And after a couple of weeks he asked for a transfer. And that made things smoother for me.

I learned a lot about the supplies. I had a weapons Sergeant and three Corporals. Each platoon had a tool corporal. Some of those guys knew their business. If you have help that knows their business, you don't need to know much. You can just pretend you know it.

Then we moved by train all the way to Fort Lewis, Washington.

We were spread all the way along the Puget Sound. They expected the Japanese to come over from the Aleutian Islands. At night, if we saw a light on the Ocean, everyone got excited. All we had was a case of hand grenades. We had a 37 mm gun, but no ammunition for it. They put inserts in there. Like a 22 caliber, to train you how to shoot the thing.

We had a good time in Washington waiting for the Japanese. We went fishing. We stayed for a while.

In 1942 they got orders to move out. I wasn't a citizen yet. I had applied for papers. So the 44th infantry moved into the Pacific and they sent me to Fort Mead, because I wasn't a citizen.

Three weeks later I came to Fort Mead, Maryland. They didn't have any of my papers. Since I was a supply Sergeant, the guy said go to the supply room. The supply officer didn't like my poonim. He was a 30 year soldier. He was finished.

In order to stay in the army he had to take a commission. So the guy didn't like me, for one reason or another.

Fort Mead was a year round, permanent army base. It wasn't established just for the war. He took me up to the Captain. The Captain said: Sergeant, I understand you don't get along with the Lieutenant. So I'll put you in the kitchen. You help the cooks. They had a hospital kitchen.

The man in charge was a staff Sergeant. I had more rank. I was a Buck Sergeant. I went to the kitchen and the guy in charge said: Fine. The Captain sent you down here. Go in the kitchen and help the cooks.

I said: If you think I'm going to peel potatoes with the stripes on, you're wrong.

Back I went to the captain.

So the Captain says: I hear you didn't do what you were told to do.

I said: No sir. That's right. If you want me to peel potatoes as a

Sergeant, you got to give me a court martial first and break me.

You got a reason? Give me a court martial.

Well, He says, you know how it is. You and him don't like each other. I found that out. Go back to the Sergeant and tell him you will spell him.

So I became an assistant mess Sergeant. Which is better, of course, than being a cook. We took turns. The Mess Sergeant went a week to Washington;

I went a week to Washington. (The base was right outside of Washington.)

But I wasn't supposed to go to Fort Mead. Maryland. I was supposed to go to Fort Mead, South Dakota. Fort Mead, South Dakota was an old cavalry camp,

which was a CC camp under Roosevelt. My papers finally followed me and

they said: You're at the wrong place.

So I had permission to go, at my own convenience, to Fort Mead, South Dakota. I visited my friends in White Plains. And eventually, at the end of 2 weeks, I arrived one afternoon at Fort Mead, South Dakota. The first thing I saw in

the camp was a sign that said: "At This Camp Only English is spoken." That was funny. So I went to the office and I said "What kind of a camp is this?"

I found out this was a camp where they put all the guys they couldn't trust.

I had to find out if I was supposed to be one of the "Cadre"--one of the people who ran the camp, or an inmate of the camp.

I was six months late, and it was almost evening, so the guy in charge said: Go to barracks 4A.

Out came a couple of guys who said their uncle lives in Germany, their grandmother lives in Germany.



One guy said: How come you still have your stripes? Were all busted here because we wouldn't fight. (The war had started with Germany, in the meantime.) We all refused to go to Germany. We wouldn't fight our uncles and aunts and grandmothers. When you guys are going to the Veterans Hospitals, we will be marching up 5th Avenue, after we have won the war.

The next morning I went to the Captain, who was an old Army Captain who was in charge of a CC Camp that had been converted to an open concentration camp.

Hery cann (3)I said: What's this? I've been in a concentration camp before. Am I back in a concentration camp?

He said: No, of course not. But, since you aren't a citizen, were waiting for your papers.

In the meantime I discovered there were some Italians and some Japanese guys in there. They had been in the army, and they pulled them out. They were pulling out their parents, who lived in California, because they thought they were a risk, at the time.

It was an "open" camp. We had our days off. We could go to town. We were still in the army. There were no restrictions on us. The only restriction was that only English was spoken.

We had a couple of cooks who came from the Hamburg-American boat line. They were cooks on the ships. And they were cooks in the army. They made army food taste beautiful. We met girls in town. Usually you went off the base on Sunday for food. We would get our girlfriends and say you want to eat a good meal? Come to our mess hall. We never lived so good.

That part was fine, but I didn't like the taste of the whole thing. I still had my stripes, because I wasn't refusing to fight like the others. The camp had about 200 inmates. One fellow's father was a Colonel in the Polish army so he was pulled out of American Officers candidate school. There were Italian guys there who had relations in Italy. They wouldn't fight. Needless to say, the army worked slowly and methodically. And eventually all of these guys ended up going to the Japanese theatre.

I wrote to my friends in White Plains. I wrote to the guy who sponsored me. Could he do anything? I wanted to get out of there. Although it was a beautiful life. I was too idealistic. I didn't like the idea of being in the army and restrained.

My friends in White Plains wrote back to me. How are you back in the concentration camp again? The local police are inquiring. The military police are inquiring. The FBI is asking questions about you.



About 4 to 5 weeks later I was called into the office. A Captain from the Intelligence Office had a thick book on me. He said: Is this right? You came in July 1939? Were you in the Westernland? You're Jewish? We know you're probably not a Hitler spy. But at the last minute a lot of Hitler's spies came into America. So we couldn't take a chance on you. Were you in Florida? (from their point of view I did travel around. I could have looked suspicious.)

He said: Where do you want to go? I was being transferred to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

I wanted to be in the engineers. I wanted to get another stripe or become a Warrant Officer. There was a post open in the Battalion Supply, instead of the Company Supply: to be a warrant officer, or at least a Staff Sergeant, to get another stripe. If I had a choice I wanted to be there.

He said OK.

So I went to Lenard Wood and they put me in Battlion supply. That was in the 75th infantry Division being organized and formed. I worked a half year there. They put a guy named Glidden in, from another company. I did all the dirty work, but this guy had an extra stripe, so he became the Staff Sergeant, and I was demoted to company Sergeant.

My company officer was Francis W. Pershing, the son of General Pershing.

He was quite a guy . He could have started as an officer, but he came up through the ranks and then went to officers candidate school. He was captain, but he was running the battallion. I reported to him. He said: take an inventory of the company supplies. As soon as you straighten it out, you get your other stripe. (I would have gotten it anyway.)

I met Senta in 1943. In 1944 our outfit was transferred to Fort Breckenridge Indiana. After that we went to Europe. I met Senta in the Caves, in Waynesville. She came there with the USO. I was on the bus. She came there with a date. The bus was full. I got up and gave her my seat. 2-3 months later I had a pass. I went to the USO at Soldan High School. I was at a dance.

A girl friend of hers asked Senta to take me "off her back." The girl friend had another date.

Senta recognized me. We went to Sentas house. She was German. I was German. We had the same accent. She took me home. We went to the Coffee Pot on Skincker, at Delmar. We had our first meal together. Then I was invited to their house. They lived on Maple Ave.

2 to 3 Sundays later I had another date. I hitchhiked from camp at 5 O'clock on a furniture truck. I came to the house at 7 in the morning. I rang the bell. Her father said: you don't see this guy until 8 or 9 o'clock. No one comes to the house this early in the morning. So I sat on the steps and waited.

Soldier on bus 1943



On X-mas eve, 1943, I had a furlow. I came to St. Louis on the way back to camp. I wrote her I'd be in St. Louis on my way back to Rolla.

"Can I see you?" I thought maybe she would invite me home for X-mas.

She met me at the station. We ate at a hotel on 12th street.

She said, It was nice seeing you. I had a nice lunch.

She said at 4 O'clock I have to meet another guy, a butcher from Chicago.

I returned to camp that night quite disillusioned.

(We were on maneuvers then near Schreveport. Our unit wasn't permanent. I remember I wanted to send Senta my picture; so I took 3 or 4 guys and spend half a day going through 300-400 barraks bags, until I found mine, so I could find my picture and send it to her. You do things like that when you are in love.)

Senta and I met in 1943, in November. We were serious between December and August, 1944. And in August we got married.

After the X-mas when I saw Senta, I was mad. I kept writing to her.

The other guy ws a civilian so he didn't have a chance.

In the meantime I was a staff Sergeant and I made a better appearance than a civilian, even though he was making more money. A girl wouldn't go out with a civilian, at the time, if she could have a soldier.

We used to walk in the fountain park. Then I would be invited to the house. At home they used to have a French door between the bedroom and the living room. They never closed the French door completely until we were engaged. It was a proper engagement. We went on my knees and asked her father for the hand of his daughter.

The father was a very nice, likeable fellow. The mother was the boss. To me he was an old man, sixty some years old. He passed away in 1948. He was heavy, like all the German Jews. In order to show you were well to do you had to be fat. Maybe that was true in other countries too. The women were heavy, the men were heavy. All Senta's uncles were fat. I had uncles who died of diabetes. Senta's father wasn't strict. He was German. You respect the elders. You don't talk back.

You respect your parents. Whether you loved them or not you respected them. I don't know how it is now in Germany. Maybe it has changed there, too. I remember only one time in my life that my father would hit me. Then he had to run after me to catch me. You wouldn't touch anyone bodily.

We got married in the Kingsway Hotel. They tore it up afterwards. We didn't have much of a wedding. A couple of



friends of Senta was there. Uncle Bruno was there.

We got to Breckenridge. We were married in August, 1944. We moved into the guest house. (There were three of them.) You were allowed only 3 days in a guest house, so for a couple of weeks, we had to change the guest house every three days.

After a couple of weeks we got a room in a small town outside of Breckenridge; Morganfield Kentucky. They took a room and divided it into four with rope. They hung blankets. They sold 4 parts of the room to soldiers.

We were lucky. We got an attic. We had a heating plate. The woman told us she would never rent to Jews, but in our case she made an exception. We lived off the post. I had an assistant in the supply room. I had quite a bit of free time.