

## **Robert (Bob) Baron**

**422nd Regiment  
Company Weapons Platoon  
Mortar Section**

**Here are a couple of incidents, as I remember them.**

**In July of 1944 I was hospitalized at [Wakeman General, Camp Atterbury](#) after an operation for a ruptured spleen suffered in a fall. At that time, many of the patients were casualties from the Normandy invasion, and USO troupes of celebrities made the rounds of military hospitals to entertain the patients. One of these groups visited Wakeman while I was recovering from the operation, and included in the troupe was a young film actress named Marcy Macguire. She sang several songs, and after her routine, asked for requests from the audience.**

**In those days, I was living in Hollywood, and I called out, "Sing San Fernando Valley", which she did, and then she asked if I was from California. I replied that I was, and we had a brief conversation about things back home.**

**Later, she walked back to my ward with me. Well, the word got back to my outfit that a Hollywood movie star had come to the hospital to visit me. Something like that is pretty hard to live down (not that I wanted to), so that later when I had a short pass to go home, the guys asked me to bring back autographed photos of movie stars (of the female persuasion, of course)**

**I not only didn't know any movie stars, but didn't know anyone who did. I asked my dad how I could comply with the requests and not lose my reputation. He said that he had a friend in the accounting department of one of the movie studios and would call on him for help. The result was that I got back to camp with a whole fistful of photographs, autographed to company noncoms.**

**My reputation was secure, at least until now, 56 years later.**

**Another story;**

**During the same convalescence, I was in the surgery ward, and near me was a fellow who had gone through operation after operation for what had started out as an ingrown toenail. The poor guy's toe had become infected, and after all sorts of treatment, they finally resorted to a skin graft. That is what brought him to the surgery ward about the same time as the casualties from Normandy started arriving.**

**Picture, if you can, this shot-up casualty of Omaha Beach, finally arriving back in the States, and in the bed next to him was this other post-surgery patient. The "D-day" guy leaned painfully over to the next bed and asked its occupant, "What are you in here for?"**

**Here's one that perhaps will relate to a few riflemen:**

**On two or three occasions, my buddy, "Scotty" Shane, and I were assigned to pit duty at the rifle range. Those who used the range will remember the set up. Concrete pits**

**protected the target crews, while firing lines were set up at various distances, up to, I think, 500 yards.**

**Those in the pits were substantially below ground level, and the targets were attached to frames which could be raised and lowered from the pits. The targets, themselves, were made of paper, and from the bottom of the pit, it was possible for the pit crews to hear the bullets when they struck the target.**

**All this you probably remember, and you will remember that after you fired a round, the target would be lowered below ground level, stay there for some period of time, while the pit crew searched for the bullet hole, applied a patch, and then it would be raised. As it was raised, a disk on a stick would also be raised and be located at the spot where the bullet hit, thereby indicating where you had struck the target. (If you missed, a red flag, affectionately called "Maggie's drawers" would call your attention, (and that of all around you, to your miss.) So far, you say, you remember all this.**

**Well, when Scotty and I were down in the pits (and brainless work it was), we tried to think of ways to make it more interesting and to improve the lower target-hunt for hole-patch hole with paper-raise target-indicate bullet entry point-procedure. First, we tried speeding up the lowering and raising to shorten the cycle time. This did not satisfy us, as it seemed too erratic. What we finally decided on was the following: As soon as we heard the bullet strike the target, one of us would begin a slow, but steady lowering of the target. The other would stand on tiptoe, and as soon as the target came into view, begin looking for the hole. As soon as the hole was located, a patch was glued over. While this is taking place, the target kept its steady motion downward, and once it hit bottom, immediately began to rise. The whole procedure took only a very few seconds, and required some stretching and stooping to follow the target on its downward and upward travel. The net result was that from the shooter's viewpoint, once he fired, the target began to lower and come up again with a smooth motion. It took some time for us to perfect the procedure, as we were constantly striving for shorter and shorter turnaround times. I think we finally got it down to about five seconds.**

**Perhaps, some of the 422nd riflemen will remember the target that was operating differently than the others. If you do, now you know that it was Scotty and Bob, a couple of kids trying to make the time pass a little quicker.**

**And, one more story, not quite about Atterbury, but close.**

**I'm sure most of the guys will remember places in Indianapolis like the Canary Cottage and the Indiana Roof. This story has to do with the latter.**

**During the war, good liquor was almost impossible to find, at least near military installations. As a result, we resorted to drinking all sorts of stuff we wouldn't consider today. One night, a buddy and I planned a trip to the Roof, stopping at a liquor store on the way. (Remember, the Roof didn't sell booze, but made its profit on selling mix.) I don't remember the brand that we bought, but we took a pint of it to the Roof. As soon as we tasted it, we knew we were in trouble. It was B-A-D! Tasting, I remember, somewhere between kerosene and bore cleaner.**

**We were sitting there, bemoaning our bad fortune, when we struck up a conversation with the guys at the next table. Seems they, too, didn't like the liquor that they had.**

**After some discussion, it was decided that we would trade. My buddy and I winked at each other, because we knew how bad ours was, and theirs couldn't possibly be worse. And besides, they had a fifth and wanted to trade even for our pint. WHAT A DEAL! We couldn't lose!**

**Well, trade we did and lose we did, and you can guess the outcome. Kerosene or bore cleaner would have been an improvement! Their bottle was undrinkable, and for want of something better to do with it, I reached up and placed it behind one of the artificial plants located on the shelf around the perimeter of the room.**

**A couple of months later, I was again at the Roof, and wondered....."Could that bottle still be there?" Yep! It was still there. Maybe one of the vets living in the area could tell me what ever happened to the Roof. Is it still there? Is the bottle still there? (Hm, I wonder what aged, 56 year old rotgut tastes like)**

**Bob Baron**

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