

Less than two weeks after D-Day, Warrant Officer Robert J. DeMatio hit Omaha Corps, United States 1st Army. It was the first stop on a journey through France, a journey he chronicled in a typewritten history of his “rear echelon” section. father’s route in a Cadillac CTS-V coupe and learns that American power—at

*Beach with the 118th Field Artillery Battalion, 30th Infantry Division, XIX Belgium, Holland, and Germany that wouldn’t end until VE-Day in May 1945, Sixty-six years later, that journal in hand, **JOE DeMATIO** retraces his late least automotive power—is still embraced on the Continent.*

MY FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS





ROBERT J. DeMATIO

*Warrant Officer
Army of the United States
Sept. 11, 1942 - Dec. 28, 1945*

Robert J. DeMatio (left) in uniform; Joe and Greg DeMatio (below) point to their father's landing spot on the Normandy coast. Opposite page: View from Pointe du Hoc, where 225 U.S. Army Rangers climbed toward the German guns; Omaha Beach memorial; British vet Eddie Moore; Cadillac CTS-V coupe parked in Allied camp reenactment.



➤ “D” Day - 6 JUNE 1944 - found us sweating out the radio reports of the invasion. We were rarin’ to go and the time weighed heavily on our nerves, as we had been alerted and told to stand by. After two or three false alarms, the battalion took off at about 0230 on the morning of 12 June 1945. On June 16 we started moving down to Southampton, where we were loaded onto a Liberty ship...On the morning of the 18th, we were lying off Omaha Beach on the coast of France. The water was jammed with boats of all sizes and descriptions. As we came in closer, we could see the hulks of the ships that had been sunk, both ours and the enemy. The beachhead was a scene of orderly confusion. The hillside and bluff immediately before us was all torn to hell from the terrific battle that had gone on there. We were fortunate in being able to run right up close to the shore and were landed in about two feet of water, without getting a thing wet. We hit the beach at about 1900 hours. -RJD

FRIDAY, JUNE 4, 2010 » Omaha Beach to Saint-Lô, France
Robert J. DeMatio reached the Normandy coast in a Liberty ship built in Savannah, Georgia. My oldest brother, Greg, and I pull up to the Pointe du Hoc visitor center in a 2011 Cadillac CTS-V coupe built in Lansing, Michigan, about 140 miles south of Ogemaw County, where we were all born and raised.

Famously, 225 U.S. Army Rangers scaled the imposing cliffs here at Pointe du Hoc, a windswept spit of land dividing Omaha and Utah Beaches, on D-Day. Suffering heavy casualties, they secured one of the first Allied footholds on the Continent. On this sunny day sixty-six years later, as we stand on a concrete German bunker in the bomb-cratered field and gaze down to the narrow strip of beach below, we can hardly imagine the bravery it took for those Rangers to ascend.

Today, two days before the D-Day anniversary, the former battleground is swarming with activity. Walking toward us with



medals blazing is British veteran Eddie Moore, who was in a support regiment for machine guns that landed on Omaha Beach a couple of days after RJD. “A storm kept us away for days,” he recalled as several generations of his family proudly stood by. “We sailed up and down the Channel six or seven times.”

We pile back into the CTS-V and follow our Vauxhall Insignia wagon support vehicle, driven by London-based photographer Martyn Goddard and the fourth member of our entourage, fellow Michigander Al Johnson, to the village of Vierville-sur-Mer, at Omaha Beach. A gregarious young Frenchman, Vincent Hautin, is stage-directing an Allied-camp reenactment. He’s got privates digging foxholes, military-issue tents, and, of course, a small fleet of military vehicles. A former tour guide and now an employee of France’s national park service, he rattles off historical data about the Normandy invasion in perfect English. He even knows the exact day in the summer of 1943 when his three-axle, twelve-man Dodge military truck was built at the Mound Road plant in Detroit. “There are still about 20,000 Jeeps in France,” he tells us, “about five or six thousand GMCs, and at least that many Dodges.”

Omaha Beach stretches several miles, so Greg and I can only surmise where, exactly, our dad actually landed. We have lunch on the veranda of L’Omaha restaurant, near the big monument. Still suffering from jet lag, Al reclines the passenger seat of the Cadillac for a catnap while the rest of us linger over coffee. He awakes to find the Caddy surrounded by people taking pictures of the only CTS coupe in Europe.

In Isigny-sur-Mer, we gas up our General Motors steeds near the mouth of the Vire River, a key geographic marker in the early Allied incursions into Normandy, before heading toward Lison, where the 118th “fopped down for our first night of sleep on French soil, at about 0200 on 19 June 1944.” Greg, the family historian, is obsessed with finding and speaking with people who might have been around sixty-six years earlier. This quest requires diplomacy, because God forbid that we assume some sixty-five-year-old French matron is actually in her seventies and remembers the summer of ’44.





Rolling into Le Grand-Celland.



Clockwise from upper left: On the street in Brécéy, not far from Le Grand-Celland; the CTS-V coupe in a Normandy chateau's courtyard; a mortar shell embedded in the Saint-Lô cathedral wall; the Saint-Lô Memorial; on the way to Lison, where René Le Boeuf was a teenager when GIs liberated the village. His wife recalls paratroopers landing in her childhood village of Formigny.



The narrow, twisty road leading into Lison is lined with the hedgerows that are ubiquitous in Normandy but made fighting so difficult for the troops. I spot an elderly couple working in a garden along the main street of the village. Maybe they qualify for Greg's interrogation. Luckily, friend Pierre Giraudon, who's hosting our entourage at his home nearby, has joined us and serves as interpreter for Monsieur and Madame René Le Boeuf. Asked if he remembers any American GIs in the village, Monsieur sweeps his hand toward the nearby fields: "They were everywhere, in the meadows all around here. They made big holes to sleep in. The German army was on the other side of the Vire, only four kilometers away. I was seventeen years old," he continues, "working on the farm with my parents. An American officer asked my parents not to give the soldiers any milk, because they were drugged, and the milk would counteract that." [Soldiers were commonly given stimulants.] Madame Le Boeuf, for her part, grew up in Formigny, very close to Omaha Beach, and recalls bullets crossing through their house and paratroopers landing in their village.

On 21 June, we closed into the division rear echelon area near Cartigny, about four miles from Isigny, France. We set up our tent and dug slit trenches big enough to bury a horse. Our stay here was long and happy. Some of my outstanding impressions: Steady and constant rain - 10 and 1 and K rations - first helmet baths - plenty of movies - Cpl. Harvey discovering Calvados - the terrific artillery barrage on 25 July - 3000 heavy and medium bombers going over our heads - the hair-raising stories of hardship and danger that

got back to us after the crossing of the Vire Canal - our first casualties - nightly visits by "bed check Charlie" and the curtain of ack-ack our boys threw at him - our first taste of French champagne - and more stories of what a hell it was up on the front lines. On 30 July the rear echelon left the vicinity of Cartigny and Isigny and moved approximately eighteen miles to Saint-Lô, France.

Saint-Lô was the site of a crucial offensive against Germany's Panzer Divisions, which had assembled near the town in a seemingly impenetrable line. The 30th Division was instrumental in what became known as the "Saint-Lô Breakthrough" in late July. We find a pretty, hilly town, but most of the buildings are clearly of postwar construction. A gentleman in the square near the cathedral points out a mortar shell still lodged in the side of the church, which lost one of its steeples.

On 14 August, the afternoon before Dinah Shore made a personal appearance there, we moved from Saint-Lô to the vicinity of Le Celland, France. Our trip to this location was notable for the abundance of destroyed tanks, homes, livestock, vehicles, and the general destruction of the countryside.

SATURDAY, JUNE 5, 2010 » Saint-Lô to Lille, France

South out of Villedieu-les-Poêles, we're cutting through rolling green hills in classic Normandy countryside on D999, a well-maintained regional road. I hit the sport button for the

CTS-V's chassis, and the Caddy is in its element, with a composed but not harsh ride. A guy standing in his driveway gives a thumbs up as we drift by. The "Le Celland" that RJD mentions actually consists of two adjacent, tiny, and very French villages, Le Grand-Celland and Le Petit-Celland. Both are anchored by handsome churches and look like they have hardly changed since 1944.

On 17 August, we moved over still more devastated country to Barenton, where the Calvados ran more freely than ever before and the boys started getting invitations out to dinner. Here we heard the glowing tales of the battle of Mortain and what a good job the division had done.

We can see the church steeple miles ahead as we speed along D47 toward Barenton, where a guy sitting at the stool next to us at a *tabac* tells us about a U.S. memorial just outside town. An American flag is waving over the roadside spot where, on August 8, 1944, three American GIs were killed. A compatriot who survived found the spot in 1999 and in 2006 had a memorial erected. A consistent pattern is emerging: RJD and the 118th were about eight or nine days behind some of the fiercest fighting.

On 24 August we moved through Saint-Barthélemy and Mortain, past the greatest destruction yet. In many places there were as many as six, eight, or ten tanks in a group knocked out.

The road into Mortain is a French classic, a long, gently sloping hill lined with a tall tree canopy. Martyn wants pictures and I am happy to oblige, running up and down repeatedly, smashing the throttle of the CTS-V and igniting its supercharged, 556-hp, 6.2-liter V-8. If people haven't noticed the Caddy coupe's sharply chiseled, American lines, they're sure going to hear this explosive exhaust.

Our new position was 1/4 mile west of Nonancourt, France...we set up in a nice park. This place is to be remembered for all the pretty French girls...We got quite a few fresh vegetables and went to church several times in the village.

We drive about 110 miles through rolling, beautiful terrain from Mortain to Nonancourt. It's 8 p.m. when we pull into the park. A sizable World War I memorial, like many we've seen, has an appended plaque listing locals who died in World War II. The river that runs behind the park becomes a canal in the village itself, which is all old-world charm and narrow streets. While we're setting up for a photo, a group of young people wanders over to check out the flashy American car. "Quelle marque est votre voiture?" one guy asks. "Cah-dee-ahk!" I reply, and he nods with approval. "Hello—beautiful car!" says another bystander.

Dinner is in a restaurant bordering the town square and facing the church. The sanctuary doors are locked but we stand in the entryway and, for the first time, we're certain we're walking in RJD's exact footsteps.

It's nearly midnight as we approach Paris. As the A13 dumps us onto the western edge of the Périphérique, the Eiffel Tower suddenly looms large, sparkling with a million pinpoints of light, and our spirits are lifted. We've got another two hours of driving to our hotel in Lille, but this is when a grand touring coupe like the CTS-V comes through: the Recaro seats give fantastic support hour after hour, and it's always nice to have 556 hp on tap, even though the French police have become notoriously hard on speeders and we're running at only about 130 kph (80 mph).

6 September 1944: As we moved toward the Belgian border, our march was the most enthusiastically received of any, and we disposed of all the cigarettes, crackers, and what have you in our possession. Everyone in the country seemed to be lining the roads. Once in Belgium, we were set up in a huge wood in Antoing, on an estate which boasted a very old and very huge castle and fort. I met a count and countess of Belgium.





No answer at the castle in Antoing, Belgium.



SUNDAY, JUNE 6, 2010

» Lille, France, to Fouron-le-Comte, Belgium

We park the CTS-V in the heart of hilly Antoing on this rainy, dreary Sunday and tromp along the wet, deserted Belgian brick streets. No one answers when I knock on the imposing wood gates at the entrance to the castle and fort that preside imposingly over the town. RJD was here for only two days and managed to meet a count and countess? I can't even score a latte, let alone a tour. Let's move on.

8 September 1944: We moved from Antoing to the vicinity of Genappe, Belgium. Here the boys really had a good time with the people, who insisted on wining, dining, and entertaining them. We captured eleven German prisoners, who walked in and gave themselves up.

11 September 1944: We marched by motor to the vicinity of Glons, Belgium. Our welcome was still enthusiastic and the towns began to look cleaner and more modern. Here the boys' "promenading" hit a new high and I was forced to restrict them all for two days. A very pretty Belgian girl attached herself to Hodel and spent most of her waking hours with him. I went to mass in a very beautiful church.

Wow, Bob, give the boys a break! It's one of the peculiarities of wartime that, at age twenty-six, RJD is a bit of an old man, at least compared with the lads in his charge. Warrant officers had varied areas of specialization, but his role for the battalion was essentially that of personnel director. If someone was awarded a commendation or a Purple Heart, my dad wrote the praising prose and handled the paperwork.

14 September 1944: We made a very short move across the Meuse River and into a Belgian army barracks on the outskirts of the town of Visé. The barracks were very luxurious, comparatively, with mattresses and springs, hot showers, rooms for the officers, and maid service. Movies were held nightly. We were allowed to go downtown to the very, very imposing Catholic church.

Noticing a trend here? RJD was always a good Catholic boy, but his endless references to churches are proving very useful to his sons decades later: no matter what else has changed about a given village or city, the churches invariably are still standing, giving us a distinct sense of place as he experienced it.

Crossing the mighty Meuse and into Visé has a sense of occasion, as this small city, celebrating its 700th year of existence, is bustling. There's not much activity at the "imposing Catholic church," but the sidewalk cafés are teeming with Belgians drinking their Sunday afternoon beer. We make two good finds in a square near the church: a small monument to the 30th Division, a.k.a. "Old Hickory," and a good ice cream shop.

21 September 1944: We moved out of Belgium and into Holland, the land of windmills. At our new location, Heerlen, we were set up in a very large and modern school building with electric lights, flush toilets, and some of the comforts of home. Officers' quarters were in the center of town in the Grand Hotel. It was very luxurious, as good as most of ours at home, and lacked only food for the nice kitchen and liquor for the very elegant bar. We knew this setup was too good to last, and soon we were outranked by XIX Corps Hq., who wanted the whole setup for their own.

So the 118th was on the move again. The battalion spent the better part of six months in late 1944 and early 1945 hopscotching among the borders of Belgium, Holland, and Germany. A finger of Holland juts south here between Belgium to the west and Germany to the east, making it easy to drive through three countries in less than an hour, so we're thankful for Europe's open borders. Back in the CTS-V and the Insignia, we head north out of Visé along the Meuse, immediately crossing into Holland and on to Heerlen, which is not so charming as Visé. There's a Tulip Inn that's clearly prewar, but the desk clerk has no idea if it was once known as the Grand. So we move on to Kerkrade, where RJD spent two and a half months, long enough to settle into a routine, if not a comfortable one.

12 October 1944: Kerkrade, Holland, was practically on the Germany-Holland border.



Homage to Old Hickory

The 30th Infantry Division was called "Old Hickory" in honor of Andrew Jackson. Formed in South Carolina in 1917, it was highly decorated in WWI and then served as a National Guard Division from 1925 to 1940, when it rejoined the U.S. Army. In Europe, it was admired by the Allies as the "workhorse of the Western Front" and feared by the Germans, who called it "Roosevelt's SS." What does this have to do with a forty-two-year-old Belgian man? Plenty: Vincent Heggen's tiny village, Fouron-le-Comte, was liberated by Old Hickory in September 1944. The military history buff, whose father sheltered many GIs that month, was bothered that "there was no single museum dedicated to the Division," so he created one in the basement of his own house in Fouron-le-Comte. Heggen's passion for the 30th's role in freeing Europe is evident in the amazing array of memorabilia he has staged in detailed dioramas and in his active involvement in Old Hickory reunions and education. Just up the road from his home, Heggen also created this roadside memorial to Wallace J. Horton, a nineteen-year-old GI who fell to a German sniper while liberating Fouron-le-Comte. — JD



We wondered just how far we were going toward the front lines. We moved into the town, into another school, and found that the position was in a sort of pocket and that the front lines were about a mile from us, or at least a flank of them. No sooner had we pulled in and begun to unload than Jerry laid three shells in close, our first time under fire, and scared all of us -- p-l-e-n-t-y.

Nightly we were visited by "bed check Charlie" and by day we listened to the shells and rockets whistle over our heads and watched our dive bombers work on the Jerries in Aachen, Germany. This was a beautiful sight to behold. Aachen fell on 20 October, but we could still hear the chattering of machine guns and the cracking of rifles on the front lines. Too close for comfort.


Election day [7 November] elicited, at best, a casual interest. As I write this, on 9 November 1944, I wonder which it will be, winter stalemate or costly push into the innards of the Reich?

The biggest conflict in Kerkrade on this Sunday in early June? On nearby Neustrasse, or "new street," which divides the Netherlands from Germany, numerous Dutch and German flags wave from homes and apartments: the World Cup is about to begin!

4 January 1945: As I again take up my typewriter, which I am wielding in place of a sword for this war, many a round of ammunition has been expended since I made my last entry on 9 November 1944. The rest of November and half of December were used in quietly building up strength on the banks of the Roer River, waiting for the flood waters to recede so that the river could be crossed. It was very quiet both at the front and at the rear in Kerkrade, where our existence was more routine than it had been at any time in combat. On 17 December the big Nazi counterattack against the First Army began, and the battalion moved to Belgium to stop Rundstedt's drive.

Our Christmas was spent in Holland. The nuns went to a great deal of trouble in gaily decorating the halls, stairways, and quarters with sprigs of evergreen and other festive decorations. On the Eve of Christmas, gifts from the Red Cross were given out, some of the personnel sections had parties, with movies and refreshments, and practically every room was an open house. The scotch, gin, cognac, and champagne flowed freely, and spirits and tongues of us downtrodden combat men were loosened.

Martyn's Becker sat-nav sends us on a surprisingly entertaining drive along twisty blacktop through high fields of grain and then on a veritable rally road through woods and villages that eventually deposits us in picturesque Fouron-le-Comte, Belgium. We're here to visit a friend of Greg's, Vincent Heggen, who has a museum dedicated to the 30th Division in his home (see sidebar).



Cadillacs have been sold in Europe for more than 80 years. For 2011, the CTS sedan, wagon, and coupe will be offered, plus V-series versions of the sedan and coupe, the SRX crossover, and the Escalade Hybrid SUV.

As we head into Aachen, Martyn warns Greg that “you’re now representing a conquering army, not a liberating army,” but that doesn’t deter my chatty brother from trying to find people who were here when the Allied bombs fell. At a sidewalk café next to the cathedral, he strikes up a conversation with Carole Steber, a Texan by birth who has lived in Aachen since 1963. She cheerfully volunteers to be our tour guide and leads us to a nearby school that we think might be the one where RJD had an office. I tell Carole that we’re tracking his journey through Europe in a Cadillac. “I moved to Munich in 1955 with my family,” she recalls, “because my father was a periodontist in the military, and he brought along his big white Cadillac with fins. We didn’t realize it wasn’t the right kind of car for Germany. Imagine that Cadillac in Munich traffic!”

We’re on impeccably maintained roads in flat, pretty countryside, much of it dotted with giant wind turbines, as we head toward Straelen, Germany, which RJD reached, “part of the way, anyway, in a new method of transportation, amphibious ‘Ducks,’ 2 1/2-ton, 6 x 6’s, which were roomy and comfortable riding.”

29 March 1945: During our stay in Straelen, the very successful attack across the Rhine River was launched, on 24 March, by the 30th and 79th Divisions. The rear was privileged to witness the unrelenting and constant air support on its way to aid the attack of our ground forces. At 1300 on 26 March, we moved to the German town of Alpen. Again we were established in one half of a duplex house. Our accommodations in this setup were the best ever.

MONDAY, JUNE 7, 2010

» Fouron-le-Comte, Belgium, to Alpen, Germany

As the Battle of the Bulge was being fought nearby, the 118th spent the harshest part of the winter of 1945 in the Ardennes, first in Spa, where they took advantage of the “world famous mineral baths with the health-giving sulphur in the water,” then in Harzé, “where the people are very hospitable and anxious to make our stay comfortable,” and then Bra, where “we had more snow than ever before, about a foot.”

4 February 1945: We moved in open trucks through a driving rainstorm, through Verviers and the mountains of Belgium, and finally came, wet and cold, to Aachen, Germany. In this formerly beautiful city of several hundred thousand inhabitants, sulphur baths, and beautiful cathedrals, not even a single building had escaped destruction or damage. We were assigned a three-story school building that had been seriously damaged by bombs and shells, located only a half block from the famous cathedral where Charlemagne and 31 other German kings had been crowned.

As we wend our way from Fouron-le-Comte to Aachen, the nav scores again, sending us up a paved hill-climb through the woods at Gemmenich, Belgium, to “Trois Frontières,” the confluence of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. To celebrate the fact that these three countries now reside cheek-by-jowl in harmony, I make a few runs up and down the hill in the CTS-V. Turning off the stability control and lighting up the tires in the hairpins, I’m reminded that 551 lb-ft of torque is never a bad thing.

We roll into Kamp-Lintfort, near Alpen, at 8 p.m., park the Cadillac and the Vauxhall, and get rooms at Zur Post, which provides us the best meal we’ve had since we left Normandy. I’ve been having a good time in the CTS-V on the smooth, tree-lined roads in northwest Germany, but I’m getting antsy for unrestricted autobahn.

9 April 1945: We made a motor march, a long and fairly smooth one, to Hameln, Germany, on the Weser River. Our location in Hameln, of Pied Piper fame, was a former OCS setup, and luxurious it was. The first day was spent in looting the warehouse, which had a complete stock of quartermaster equipment of all kinds... Great stores of cognac, wine, and assorted liquors were also found and imbibed with effects ranging from pleasant to disastrous.

TUESDAY, JUNE 8, 2010

» Alpen to Magdeburg, Germany

We claw our way through the Dortmund industrial metroplex and head toward Hannover on the A2 autobahn. Finally, I spot the discreet little round sign with three diagonal slashes signaling the start of an unrestricted-speed zone. Time to see what this Caddy can do. I fall in behind an Audi A8—or maybe it’s an unmarked S8?—with a likeminded driver.

I select sport mode for both the suspension and the transmission, downshift to third using the steering-wheel buttons, grip the black Alcantara steering wheel tightly, and hit the gas. Al, riding shotgun, fiddles with his iPhone while we hurtle forward; he’s done this enough times with me and knows to be silent. The truck traffic is still heavy, but well-trained German drivers don’t linger

2011 CADILLAC CTS-V COUPE

BASE PRICE: \$64,290

ENGINE: 16-valve OHV supercharged V-8

DISPLACEMENT: 6.2 liters (376 cu in)

HORSEPOWER: 556 hp @ 6100 rpm

TORQUE: 551 lb-ft @ 3800 rpm

TRANSMISSION: 6-speed automatic

DRIVE: Rear-wheel

STEERING: Hydraulically assisted

SUSPENSION, FRONT: Control arms, coil springs

SUSPENSION, REAR: Control arms, coil springs

BRAKES: Vented discs, ABS

TIRES: Michelin Pilot Sport PS2

TIRE SIZE F, R: 255/40YR-19, 285/35YR-19

L x W x H: 188.5 x 74.1 x 55.9 in

WHEELBASE: 113.4 in

TRACK F/R: 61.8/62.8 in

WEIGHT, DIST. F/R: 4237 lb, 53/47%

EPA MILEAGE: 12/18 mpg



in the fast lane. In fourth gear I'm well above 125 mph and the big V-8 isn't the least strained. In fact, it sounds like it's having a splendid time, as am I. An upshift to fifth prompts a nice chirp from the supercharger. At about 130 mph, there's a little shot of warm air out of the vents as the A/C takes a short break. Tailing the Audi, we rocket to 150 mph, run for a stretch, and then brake for traffic. Hard. And repeat. The Brembos are unfazed. In one final, glorious lunge before we run out of unrestricted A2, I see 165 mph on the speedo. I'm still exhilarated from this run when we arrive in charming, if touristy, Hameln for lunch.

17 April 1945: The Division Rear Echelon, numbering personnel sufficient to utilize, with their equipment, 78 quartermaster trucks, made a move of approximately 120 miles along a route which paralleled one of the main "Autobahns," passing through Brunswick [Braunschweig]. Part of this uneventful move was on the superhighway itself. Our new location was in the town of Hillersleben, about 10 or 15 miles from the Elbe. We were established in fine concrete barracks, which boasted lights, hot showers, flush toilets, and adequate office space. There was an excellent drill field below our windows, which provided a first-rate softball diamond. There continued to be a rather copious supply of intoxicants on hand, but most of the men and officers seemed to be settling at their level, and there was little evidence of the inebriety which had been rampant during the first influx of the stuff.

The barracks are now abandoned and dilapidated and more than a little spooky. They fell into Russian hands in 1949 and clearly haven't been used in at least two decades. The windows and doors are gone, and as we step carefully through the rubble and brush against the peeling paint, it's stunning to think of all the German, American, and Russian soldiers who passed through this complex in the twentieth century.

This lazy life continued until 30 April 1945, when the personnel sections were returned to the battalions, which were situated in modern apartments in the city of Magdeburg, on the Elbe.

We were given a couple of apartments consisting of seven rooms and two bathrooms, where we set up in style. While in that location the chief activities were softball, volleyball, drinking, and ogling the beautiful babes who walked constantly up and down in front of our building.

V-E Day, May 8, was observed very quietly by this battalion. The fighting had been over for days and the arrival of that great day, that long-awaited day, saw no change in our status. With this entry, on 9 May 1945, with the peace declared in Europe, this little history is closed out until further notice, as the destinies of "Creek Rear" are tied up inseparably with those of the rest of the battalion and will be recorded in the battalion history.

RJ DeMatio, WO

My dad was drafted and inducted into the Army of the United States at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, on August 5, 1941; was commissioned as a warrant officer on September 11, 1942; arrived in Liverpool, England, on February 22, 1944; left the continent at Marseille, France, on a banana boat in September 1945; arrived in Detroit on October 4, 1945; watched the Detroit Tigers play the Chicago Cubs in the World Series on October 5, 1945; and was officially discharged on December 28, 1945.

Having spent four years traversing the southeastern United States and Europe on behalf of the war effort, my dad had little desire to travel after he returned home and instead devoted himself to the tasks of establishing a dairy farm, resuming his teaching career, and raising a family of nine. Greg was the oldest of six sons; I am the youngest. RJD, who died in 1978, always used to say that he had seen plenty of Europe during the war and had no interest in returning. I can now better understand his reluctance to go back, but when I was growing up in the 1970s, I wanted nothing more than to get off the farm and see the world. My career at AUTOMOBILE MAGAZINE has afforded me that opportunity in spades, and I've been able to do it from behind the wheels of some of the coolest cars of the past two decades. After some 1500 miles retracing my dad's route across Europe, I'd count the Cadillac CTS-V coupe in that company. I only wish RJD had been along for the ride. **AM**