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Veteran remembers V-E Day

By Andy Winemiller | The News



World War II veteran Pete Carroll holds a German artist's drawing of him as a 29 year old Technical Sergeant.

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Mississippi Delta.
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it was bad, he simply
thought of the guys "that

didn't get it," and
didn't know what you
were," Carroll says that
to be entered the camp
he was met by a German
old boy who spoke that
dialect.
After the boy explained

the situation, Carroll
was ordered to go to
the kitchen and work
there. Carroll's assignment
was to work in the kitchen
for the next few days.

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Veteran remembers V-E Day

By Andy Winemiller
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Friday marked the 70th anniversary of the surrender of the Third Reich in Europe, or "V-E Day." However, Surry County resident Pete Carroll can remember it like it was yesterday.

The 99-year-old veteran says that on May 8, 1945, he was in a very different world. Carroll says he knew the war was over when he stepped outside a movie theater to find fellow soldiers firing their weapons in the air.

Carroll says his Army experience began with an unlucky draw on Friday the 13th. At age 26 Carroll's draft card was drawn on March 13, 1942. He then conducted training at Fort Bragg and Camp Chaffee, Arkansas. Carroll was then assigned to the United States Army's 6th Armored Division and conducted training in Louisiana and the Mohave Desert.

Though Carroll's unit had initially been training to deploy to the North African theater of operations, he says that on Feb. 14, 1944,

he loaded onto a ship bound for Britain. There his unit became part of a force that was staging the invasion of Europe.

Carroll says that he and his fellow soldiers knew that a large-scale invasion of Europe was planned. However, Carroll says "none of us knew when it would happen." According to Carroll it was evident that the invasion of Europe was taking place when the skies filled with airplanes and gliders on the evening of June 5, 1944.

Carroll didn't arrive in France until July 20, stating that his unit "was a little behind the others" since they were an armored unit. Carroll says he remained behind the front lines for the duration of the war, fixing tanks and other armored vehicles that were supporting the infantry units on the front line.

Carroll says what kept him going through bitter cold hours of work was knowing that his fellow soldiers only miles ahead of him had it rougher than he did. Carroll says that when he thought it was bad, he simply thought of the guys "that

didn't have a warm place to sleep."

When the Battle of the Bulge, the last major German offensive of the war, broke out in December of 1944 Gen. George S. Patton promised two armored divisions within two days to the Allied cause. Carroll can recount his two days of non-stop driving to reach the Allied forces at Bastogne as if it were yesterday.

Carroll says that American forces "just started pushing them [German Forces] back" after that. Carroll said "we didn't see as much combat as others, but we saw just as much snow," as he recounted the Allied advance into Germany. Carroll remembers crossing into Germany on Feb. 29, 1945.

According to Carroll the war gave him "plenty to think about." Carroll remembers seeing Buchenwald concentration camp after its liberation, adding that "you never forget what you saw there." Carroll says that as he entered the camp he was met by a 5-year-old boy who spoke English.

After the boy explained

that he had learned English in the camp as a means of passing the time, he took Carroll and others on a tour. Carroll says that the child led them to a place in the camp and explained that the very place they stood was where his mother, father and brother were killed. The child told Carroll that he had survived simply because German forces had met their quota for the number of people killed in a day before they got to him.

Carroll says there were times following the invasion of Europe that he didn't know who might win the war and times that it seemed like it would never end. However, 70 years after eating chow and heading into a movie theater at war, Carroll can remember the joyous feeling of walking out of that same theater and into peace.

The then-29-year-old Army Technical Sergeant said he only had one feeling, that of excitement in knowing that he was heading home shortly.

Carroll was reassigned to another unit after V-E

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Day and stayed in Germany until the following October. Carroll says he hadn't built-up enough points to get

his trip home just yet. However, he was happy to "walk guard" as he awaited his most fond memory of the Army — discharge.

More than 200,000 U.S. servicemen and women lost their lives in the European theater

of combat during World War II. The war, as a whole, resulted in the deaths of more than 400,000 Americans and an estimated 60 to 85 million total deaths.

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