

FOREWORD

I undertook this writing in July 2006, sixty-one years after the end of the events described herein. I decided to do so at the urging of my daughter, Carol, and my son, Jim, who had long wanted me to record my experiences in the Army of The United States during the years of the Second World War. To begin, I chose to describe the period we spent in Czechoslovakia after the end of the war in Europe. This was a relatively pleasant time, and therefore easy to describe. When that segment was finished, it was time to go back to the beginning in Sheldon, Iowa, and set the background for the two years and eleven months spent in the service of the nation, and actually the world.

I was surprised, after beginning, at the amount of material I was able to recall. I had kept no diary during my service time, but much of what is described was sufficiently dramatic, dreadful, or exhilarating to create strong memories. My lifelong deficiency in remembering names is apparent. The men among whom I served were nearly all good comrades, and deserved mention by name, which I was not often enough able to afford.

While I have written at length about my own military years, I should take this opportunity to remind the reader that tens of thousands of other men endured difficult combat for far longer than my own experience. For instance, men who served in various national guard units which were federalized at the beginning of the conflict, such as the 34th Division (Iowa-Minn.) or the 36th Division (Texas,) spent much more time in actual fighting than I did. Their deeds North Africa and in the Italian campaign, including the Salerno and Anzio beachheads and bitter winter warfare in the mountains, are legendary. Their stories

have been only partly told, and the remainder should be recorded before all are dead and beyond reach. That task remains for one or more of them to undertake.

As for me, I have done my best to put before the reader as clearly and completely as I could my own observations and adventures. I was more fortunate than many, and I am grateful for that. From this viewpoint, six decades later, I regard the whole episode as having been beneficial in the long run, because I came away with a great deal more understanding of people and events than I could have gained otherwise, in my job at the Sheldon post office. At any rate, this whole story took place long ago and far away, or as my son Jim might say, "in the days of yore."

Don Parks