Mr. Watson:

as per your request at the reunion, I'll make an effort to inform you of some of my experiences during WWII.

Following is a letter from Mike Pachuta, who entered our unit from West Virginia Oct. 1942 and was assigned to Co. A, 119th Inf. of the 30th Inf. Div. and stayed with the unit until being discharged after the war ended.

The Regiment entered Normandy and fought as a platoon Sgt. of the 2nd Platoon and fought through most of the major battles that were fought in the ETO. We fought through the hedgerows and I survived the bombing at St. Lowe and then headed for Bastain when engaged Enemy
in a small village and overtook it quiet early, at that encounter, I was awarded a citation for the Bronze Star Medal for heroism achievements on Aug. 6, 1944.

We reached Maintain on Aug. 9th and right into a severe battle with the Germans; and I became wounded in the clash. I had advanced out ahead of the front lines to see what was ahead of us. Then I observed two of our enemy advancing toward our position; I was lying prone, and was ready to dispatch one or both. If I could, just then a mortar shell exploded just ahead of me to the left of my position. I felt the shock and impact of my face and shoulder, it stunned me briefly. I made a quick check of myself and realizing it wasn't bad, I retreated to our position, went
Myself, first aid, then headed back to find an aid station, I found one but they couldn't help me. I waited for an ambulance to take me back to a MASH unit where I did get patched up and the bleeding stopped. I was eventually evacuated to an army hospital in England, I recovered nicely from the wounds, thanks to the wonderful hospital staff. From then excellent care I was declared fit for combat duty and returned to my outfit in Feb. 1945, just in time to make the Rhine River crossing, after that Xing we advanced to the Rhine River and crossed it successfully.

Night after crossing the Rhine, I took a 12 man patrol down river approximately half mile to try and contact the British.
which had crossed the Rhine at the town of Wesel. We had traveled several hundred yards when I stopped the patrol to have a look around. We were passing a dyke on our right. I climbed to the top and came face to face with a German soldier entrenched in a hole atop the dyke, we stared at each other and he started to retreat, I asked him to halt, but refused my order and started to run, I threw a grenade ahead of him and when it exploded six German soldiers came out of the trenches and surrendered.

I had two of my litter men to return back to the Company and disclose our situation and to get us some help out of this mess we were in. We were in the middle of a full Company of enemy...
the two men had gone only a short distance when I heard a shot fired from their direction. Upon one man coming back to tell me they were fired upon from atop the dyke and his comrade was shot, but not fatally, we carried him to where we were cared for his wound and made him comfortable as possible.

Now I had six POWs and a wounded man on my hands. Couldn't go back as far as I had, I decided that we would go back up river the same way we came down. I hunted two poles to improvise a litter by using the poles and German overcoats. It worked very well and the prisoners were to carry our wounded back to the co area. Our intentions were to go back up river and shoot anyone or
anything that tried to stop us all went well and we returned safely.

After the Rhine we advanced to the Elbe River. This was our final objective and where we were to contact the Russians. We finally made official contact and waited there for the fighting to end.

P.S.
The photo was taken on the bank of the Elbe River in April 1945.

Peter
Mike Vachuta