

**Andy 'Sherry' Clarke  
Veteran**

**Interviewed by the  
Baldwinsville Messenger and the Baldwinsville Public Library**

**Interviewed on 7 December 1994  
at the Canton Woods Senior Center, Baldwinsville, NY**

DT: I'm here today with Andy Clarke who was an artillery man in World War 2, were here at the Canton Woods senior center thanks to their hospitality. I'm David Tyler, the editor of the messenger, and we are going to talk about his war experience.

DT: Andy, where did you grow up and what did you do before the war?

AC: I was born in Port Barden, I moved to Syracuse in 1936 and worked for Crucible Steel Wire Mill on Morrison Avenue until I got drafted in April of 1941. I went to Fort Jackson and took basic there in a horse-drawn artillery field. At that time there was no trucks, no tanks no nothing, just horses. From Fort Jackson we moved to Fort Sill, Oklahoma and was there for a year and a half or so. We were then sent to Camp Cooke, California. Before at Fort Sill they got rid of the horses and gave us trucks, so we took the caissons onto the back of the truck, put the ammunition in the trucks, and went to California. After we got to Camp Cooke, they sent us to Needles, California for desert training with our first tank. It was a little thing and we spent I don't know how many weeks there training for the desert. After that, they sent us to Tennessee for mountain training with tanks, and we got different tanks. So we trained in the mountains down there and then they sent us to what was Pine Camp in New York State, for winter training. We came up here, and did our winter training with different tanks.

DT: They kept you moving around, huh?

AC: I was all over, and then they sent us to Indiantown Camp to be shipped overseas. We left the states in February, landed in England, and stayed there until the invasion. Because we were tanks we had to wait for the beaches to be partially invaded. When we landed, we landed on the fourth day of the invasion with the tanks, which were still under bombardment. I can't remember landing on the beach, I was so scared, or something... I don't know what it was. I don't remember going up on the beach until I got up on a heedful on the farm, that's when I came out of the blackout. We then crossed France, and into Belgium and Holland. We were part of the shelling of Okin, Germany, which was the first German city to be captured; as far as I can recall. My position over there was the tide and supply. I would go back and forth with the truck to get supplies for food and mail. I was supposed to be in convoy, but nobody told me, so I went back and forth with my corporal driver. We made out alright but we were almost captured in France, but the French undergrounds men stopped us and took us around the city where the tanks were,

which were left behind for Germans. The infantry and the rest of us had already passed through there, but when I went back there was still some tanks that hadn't been destroyed. So, in Belgium one day we were coming back from the 'splide abol (?)' and we got strafed by an airplane, we could see the bullets hitting the ground. My corporal jumped out of the truck and didn't turn it off or nothing, so I had to turn it off. I got out of the truck after the plane had passed and realized it didn't hit us, it hit the shoulders of the road, so I called for him and I heard him holler "I'm over here, where are you?" He had gotten ever a 6ft cement wall into a big barnyard. He hadn't remembered how he got over, and he couldn't find his way out. So I had to go around the barnyard and find a way for him to come out. I thought that was really something. The fact that he was so scared that he jumped. So, then we went out into the Hurtgen forest, and we were up there that winter when the battle of the bulge started. We were going down this one road, which we had been down several times and when we got to the bridge over a small stream, the bridge wasn't there anymore. So, I said we will go down and around to the stream to get to the other side. We got on the other side of the stream, and there was about 6 Germans dead in the road. So then, two American soldiers came up and they said that they were on the machine guns guarding the bridge at night when the bridge blew up.

DT: And so they just?

AC: So they just started firing and they killed these Germans and wounded some other ones. One of the Germans was ready to throw the hand grenade that they have on the end of a stick. It had exploded before he got rid of it and it had than exploded his head right off. It made me sick to see all of that stuff. It was my first experience seeing so much of that (violence). So, I was on my way to the depot and the 2 soldiers along with 2 that were behind the building were asking us to "Please, tell someone to relieve us." Nobody had come around, so when I got to the death hole I told them about it and they sent help back to relieve. The Germans that weren't killed went back down to the ravine, dragging some of the wounded. If they hadn't blown that bridge first, the Germans might have killed the guards (American). About 3 days later I went back again; to the depot; I got my supplies and went back to battalion. When I got back to the battalion they asked me when I left the supply depot, and I said about 4 hours ago. They then told me that it had been captured.

DT: You got out of there at the right time, huh?

AC: I couldn't believe it! That's when the Bulge started, up and around (behind us). So I got out that way, so I was lucky. I was one of the lucky ones. We finished our tour and continued into Germany; if you even want to call it a tour; we were then stopped at the Rhine River. We were told to stay there until the Russians took Berlin. So it was there that we watched the German people in mobs; almost like cattle; trying to get across that river from the Russians because they would rather surrender to us than to the Russians. So we took as many as we could (Germans). Our scout planes flew across the river to

take the guns away from the Germans that had surrendered. There were so many guns they couldn't even take off with them all. So I saw Germans hang on to wood, or anything they could hold onto to try to get across that river away from being captured. So then, the war ended and our outfit was assigned to preoccupation until October. So we were occupation troops Germany. We were then sent back to France, and then eventually back home. So I got home in later October.

DT: And so you came right back here?

AC: Yes, I came right back to Amboy

DT: How did it feel to come back home after all of that?

AC: [sighs in relief] At that point the Amboy airport was still there, and every time a plane took off I took cover under tables. It was terrifying, but I got over it after a while. I started looking for work, but I didn't find anything for about 6 months until I got a job for the carrier corporation. I worked for them for a little over a year until they laid me off. So, I went back into the reserves and I served a year in Brooklyn, New York City at a full armed army base as a supply man for troops there. I spent 1 year there and wasn't crazy about New York City.

DT: Not many are [laughing].

AC: Yes [laughing]. While I was there one Sunday morning I got a phone call from a general in Washington DC. I thought, what do they want me for? So, I called them up and they had received a request from the family of, Harry Nicholson, who was killed in Wallendorf, Germany on September 19<sup>th</sup> (44<sup>th</sup> division). They wanted me to be an escort for his body which was just being returned to the states in 1948. I had to travel to Atlanta to take a course in procedures and also met the family. I had once before, because they were worried about if Harry suffered at the time he was killed. I explained to the family that there was no suffering the day he was killed and that he was buried in a cemetery in Belgium. Anyways, I then got discharged from the reserves and sent back to Syracuse and got a job with the Syracuse Developmental Center which was a New York state school at the time. I worked there for 32 years and in 1950, I went back to South Carolina where Harry Nicholson was from and married his sister and brought her back to New York. Well, she liked New York fine, but she didn't like the winters. So we were married for 43 years until she passed away. Now I work part time as a bus driver for 20 years while I was still working at the state school. I then retired from the state school after 32 years, worked at the bus garage for 20 years as a driver, and retired from that when I was 65. The same year I retired from bus driving they decided they needed aids on the handicapped busses, so I took that job and I am currently still doing it. So I have been over there for 32 years, sitting in the same bus seat.

DT: Well, thank you very much for coming in and sharing your stories with us, you have an interesting story and we are lucky to have people like you who went over and fought for us.

AC: I was lucky to get out of there like I did. I'm very thankful.