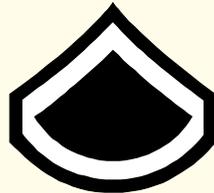


World War II Military Service  
and Experiences  
Of Omer Alonzo Cook



Private First Class

Written and Compiled by Deborah Garrett

2006

## World War II Military Service and Experiences Of Omer Alonzo Cook

Written and Compiled by Deborah Garrett, Granddaughter.  
(Based on “A Life History of Omer Alonzo Cook” by Omer and Interviews 3/9/2004 and 3/30/2004 at age 85 by Deborah Garrett and 10/18/2005 by Clark Cook, son) (Excerpts, in italic, included from “Southern Philippines: The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II” prepared by Stephen J. Lofgren and additional information from “The Jungleers” A History of the 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division” by William F. McCartney, 1948.)

### **Drafted into the Military**

Omer Alonzo Cook was born 27 April 1919 at home on the family farm in Huntington, Utah was twenty-five years old when he was drafted into the military. He knew of only one other person drafted from the county; Rola Johnson from Price. It had been two and a half years since Pearl Harbor was bombed and the war was progressing. The War Department announced in early February 1944 a rotation program; men who were overseas for 18 months would be eligible to return on furlough and be assigned other duties presumably making it necessary to recruit additional men. In addition General Douglas MacArthur was making an attempt to split the Japanese forces who were occupying the Philippines and more troops were needed.



Omer Alonzo Cook 1944-45

Omer moved his wife, Eva, of four years and two young children: Eugene age three and infant son, Don, downtown Huntington to live with Grandma Cook. Then the 5 foot 10 inch 150 pound Omer with brown hair and blue eyes left his life as a farmer and coal miner, and young family to join a National Guard unit. He traveled by bus from Huntington to Price, then by train to Salt Lake City and finally by bus to Fort Douglas, Utah arriving on 13 June 1944. He became Army Serial Number 39 930 809 Private First Class in the 162nd Infantry Regiment. At Fort Douglas, they gave him a complete physical. Omer remembered them lining everyone up in a line, having them remove all of their clothing, and then walk in a line down a long hallway that had lots of doors. As they passed each doorway, someone

would reach out and give them a shot in different parts of the body. He said he didn't know they could give so many shots at one time and felt like a pin cushion after they were done.

After a couple of days at Fort Douglas he traveled by train to Fort Worth, Texas and then by bus to Camp Wolters for Basic Training where he received the Smallpox vaccine. Basic training lasted for approximately seventeen weeks. "It was hot and the chiggers were bad. You could wash your shirt then throw it over a bush and it would be dry in 20 minutes." He was assigned to the 41st Infantry unit and remembered that he was placed on clean-up duty a lot. His memories of Camp Wolters were that it was "hotter than blazes" there. The ground had a sandy type soil, and they would go on long hikes with heavy backpacks. When it rained, the sand turned into mud and they would sink into the mud up to their knees. As soon as it quit raining, it would dry out again, and then they were back hiking on top of the dirt.



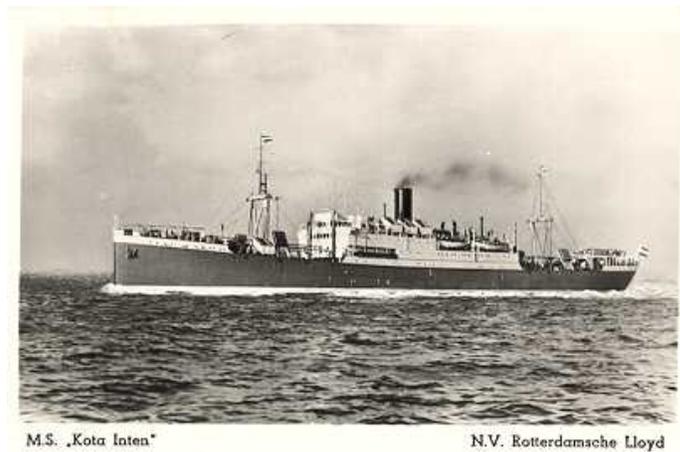
At Camp Wolters, Omer was given an LDS card and assigned to help keep track of LDS boys and give them encouragement. He was the only Latter-day Saint member in his unit and took a great deal of teasing. Captain Lt Hall and a friend, R.C. Mortin, whom he kept in touch with for a time after the war, stuck up for Omer on many occasions. Upon completion of Basic Training, Omer traveled by train to Fort Ord, California. He was allowed a four day stopover in Price to visit with family on his way.

**R.C. Mortin**

Fort Ord is located approximately 110 miles south of San Francisco on the Monterey Bay Peninsula. Its topography made it an ideal location for infantry training. It was also used as a staging area. Omer spoke of life at Fort Ord, "The Poison Ivy was terrible. They took all of us who could not swim and tried to give us a quickie in swimming lessons, but I couldn't learn very well". A post card picturing "Review, Fort Ord, Calif" listed his serial number followed by "Co B 2 Regt AG1RD2" and stated it was taken "just before going to Pittsburg, Calif". Omer stated that he spent three weeks at

Fort Ord and 2 weeks at Camp Stoneman which is located in Pittsburg, California 40 miles northeast of San Francisco among the inland waterways of the area. Camp Stoneman was used as a staging area and rifle range for troop training. Transportation between the two military camps was provided by the Army's small ferry fleet. Omer rode on "Catalina", a former excursion boat. Omer received the Typhus Vaccine sometime in December.

On 20 October 1944 the 8<sup>th</sup> army led an amphibious assault on Leyte Island, Philippines in which they succeeded in splitting the Japanese forces. The army secured Leyte and other parts of the island necessary for air and logistical bases in December.



M.S. „Kota Inten“

N.V. Rotterdamsche Lloyd

**Official Rotterdam Lloyd Postcard  
of Inten. Kota Class ship in service 1927-57**

Omer shipped out on 31 December from Camp Stoneman, California on the troopship "Old Dutch Codogona". (This ship was most likely the Kota Agoeng from Holland and was run by the War Shipping Administration.) The ship went under the Golden Gate Bridge at 12 midnight. (Although Omer stated that he left from Fort Ord it is more likely that he left from

Camp Stonemen making it possible to pass under the Golden Gate Bridge)

Omer stated that "We sailed a couple of days before we ran out of birds. I was told that when you could not see any birds you were a long way from land". The next several weeks were spent in route where the ship changed course many times in an attempt to avoid being detected by the enemy. He remembered that there were "subs all over". And "several times the men were ordered to lay down and be quite. They shut off the boat and there was no sound, nothing. Then when we started up we went like the wind for a while. Most of the time we traveled about 20 knots per hour." He spent a total of 31 days aboard the ship. The troops regrouped at Alandea, New Guinea (Omer stated New Guinea Bay) where American forces had landed and pushed to the western tip the previous July. Omer described New

Guinea as a “war torn sight” and “a hell hole, full of the vilest and wickedest things in the world. Evil was everywhere there. It was sickening”.

### **The Philippine Islands**

(6 February to approximately 15 September 1945)

The Philippine Islands host a tropical marine climate with an annual monsoon season in the northeast from November to April and in the southeast from May to October. The highest point is Mount Apo at 2954m (9692 ft).

*6 February 1945 - MacArthur issued the first order for operations in the southern Philippines, code named VICTOR. Maj. Gen. Jens A. Doe's 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division conducted the VICTOR III and IV operations. Naval support was Vice Adm. Thomas C. Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet. Rear Adm. Daniel E. Barbey's VII Amphibious Seventh Fleets components carried the troops and supplies. (Lofgren p9)*

Omer's military record stated that he arrived at the Asiatic-Pacific Theater the same day 6 February 1945, traveling to Leyte, Philippines on an LST (landing ship tank). He spent two to three days there where the men were divided into companies and “put with men we had never seen before”. At some point Omer was assigned to a Heavy Mortars Unit. He remembers being told “to kill or be killed”. Omer described it as “the biggest mud hole I have ever seen. Tents were pitched all over, nine cots to a tent, but the mud and water was up to the top of the cots”.

From Leyte, he was sent to Mindoro on another LST and transferred to H Company. “They marched us up to our platoons and dropped us off at the various squads and platoons we were assigned to. I was introduced to my squad and squad sergeant, had dinner and immediately assigned to guard duty, guarding the duffle bags as they were all brought up and heaped into a large pile.”

*28 February 1945 -After 2days of air strikes and naval bombardment the first assault moved ashore at Puerto Princessa. (Lofgren p10)  
-Concurrent with the Palawan operation the remaining of the 41<sup>st</sup> division carried out VICTOR IV, the seizure of Zamboanga. (Lofgren p11)*

Zamboanga is on the western side of the second largest island in the Philippines called Mindanao. “Most of the terrain is covered by rain forests

*and contains innumerable crocodile-infester rivers, except for those areas that are lake, swamp, or equally trying grasslands, Within the grassland regions, furthermore, the cultivatable areas contained dense grove of abaca trees that produce not only Manila hemp fiber, but also a vision-limiting, strength-draining obstacle through which soldiers would have to force their way. Exacerbating the problem of movement on Mindanao was the existence of only a few roads worthy of the name. Two were operationally significant. Cutting across the southern portion of the island, from just south of the generously named Highway No. 1. at Kabacan, about midway between Illana Bay and Davao Gulf, the main north-south road, the Sayre Highway, ran north through the mountains to Cagayan and Macajalar Bay on the northern coast.” (Lofgren p22)*

A pre-invasion bombardment began 1 March pounding targets daily in the Zamboanga, Borneo, and Davao areas destroying enemy aircraft personnel and supply dumps. The Victor IV landing forces left Mindoro and Leyte on 8 March.

Omer remembered preparing for the invasion. “I was able to watch all the tents torn down. I stood there guarding this while everyone marched out and got on the LST. Then the commander called me to leave and come aboard. I left the pile of bags and waded out to the ship in water up to my armpits, and was immediately placed on guard duty watching the port holes and ramp. This was about 5 o’clock at night.”

*10 March 1945 –Following a 3 day naval bombardment and bombings by the 13<sup>th</sup> Air Force, 162<sup>nd</sup> Infantry with the 163<sup>rd</sup> following landed 3 miles west of Zamboanga City and quickly took control of Zamboanga City. (Lofgren p11-12)*



**Zamboanga Beachhead Invasion**

Assault waves from the 162<sup>nd</sup> Infantry landed at San Mateo west of the city at 0915 and began moving north and west of Zamboanga City. Omer remembered the beach invasion at Zamboanga. “I really didn’t know what was coming off until 4 o’clock the next morning when the prettiest fireworks started I have ever seen. The air force and the

navy were bombing the Zamboanga area on Mindanao. “My LST was driven up about 30 feet from the beach. The gate dropped and all the men were ordered out.” The men jumped off the boats into 20 feet of water and swam to shore. “Our machine gunner lost the machine gun and the Captain was ready to shoot him for it.” Omer lost his pack when trying to swim to shore crawling onto the beach under heavy fire. “The shells were falling everywhere, machine guns were cracking, rifles were firing, and us with our 81 mortars and rifles were hugging the ground, wounded men were screaming; medics were being called. All hell had broken loose.”

Omer carried the first semi-automatic rifle to be issued to the infantry, a M1



Garand Rifle. It weighed just over 9 ½ pounds unloaded and



Photo taken by CrucifiedChrist licensed under Creative Commons. Wikipedia Encyclopedia

was 43.6 inches in length. It was often said to be “the rifle that won the war”. Though Omer’s picture was taken in the Philippines with a rifle, the caption reading “Omer with 25 Caliber long tom and bayonet” it is believed that it was the M1 as his discharge paper notes. The gun officially nicknamed “Long Tom” was a 155mm artillery gun.

*By the end of the second day, the Americans held the coastal plain but ran into strong resistance the next day when they attacked enemy positions in the hills overlooking the plain. (Lofgren p11-12)*

Two blocks from shore Omer reached a cemetery. The Japanese had dug up all the graves thrown the bodies on top of the ground to give them added cover and then dug tunnels all through the cemetery. The tunnels (open trenches) and pill boxes (small enclosed gun encampment) went for miles and miles beyond the top of the hill and into the mountains. “We cleaned them out of one bunch of pill boxes and then went through the trenches to the next and so on. The rain was hard and the sun scalding whenever it showed itself.” There was firepower coming from all directions and at times the Japanese had them pinned down on the ground where it was wet and damp. The mud holes served as cover. “At one point I was in a Cemetery. We were pinned down and crawling up a hill. I was very close to the ground. A frightened Boa Constrictor came up the hill behind me and went right over

my shoulder and gun. I'm not sure who was more scared. We had to stop each afternoon at three or four o'clock and dig in, putting 2 rows of grenades a rod [5.5 yards or 16.5 feet] out from each other to keep the Japs from crawling in; they were everywhere." "Then we would sit in our fox holes until morning with water up to our armpits. We all got jungle rot in all our joints until we could hardly walk."

*Supported by marine aviation and naval gunfire, the infantry fought the Japanese for two weeks in terrain so rugged that tanks could not be used. The Japanese positions were formidable; deep earthen emplacements, barbed wire, minefields, and numerous booby traps. (Lofgren p11-12)*

"There were several prison camps. The ground around them was padded down like cement." In one of the camps Omer came across a Philippine woman who had been hung and left to die. She had a bayonet run through her stomach. "They had used her and when they were done killed her. The Japanese killed many of the prisoners when the Americans came."

*23 March 1945 -After heavy fighting, the center of the Japanese line finally broke, and over the next three days the 162<sup>nd</sup> Infantry eradicated resistance in this central sector. Elements from the 186<sup>th</sup> began replacing the 163<sup>rd</sup>. Mopping up operations continued for some time, with total U.S. Army losses numbering 220 killed, compared with 6,400 Japanese dead. (Lofgren p12)*

Omer spent a great deal of time in fox holes at one point being trapped completely for 4 days. The men took turns at a two hour guard. Messages and a watch were passed on a wire from fox hole to fox hole. "When you had the watch, you were on watch." Conditions were miserable. "The water was up to our necks, if you got out you were shot." There was little food and other supplies as provisions had been dropped on the Japanese side and could not be received. We caught one of the chickens running around and ate it raw. "The only possessions we had were the clothes we had on, our rifles, and our guns to fight with. Our shoes rotted off." "I got crud [infection] in my joints." This was sometimes called "jungle rot". As a result Omer could hardly bend his arms or legs.

After several weeks of fighting "we came to a large hill. Five companies had been wiped out who had gone before us. Now it was our turn to advance on the hill. The air force shelled and bombed it for 2 hours before we went up. As we advanced up the hill, we saw dead bodies lying everywhere. It was

halfway up this hill I was my first case of rigor mortis. There ahead of us were two Japs on their hands and knees, rifles in hand, appearing to be crawling up the hill. We fired and fired at them but they did not drop. We fixed our bayonets and charged them to no avail. They were stiff as boards from fright while they were still on their hands and knees.” There was blood running out their noses and when they were pushed over their legs and arms stood straight up in the air. “Well, we finally took the hill, but suffered lots of heartaches.”

Omer also remembered the following experience near Zamboanga. “I was sent on a patrol to a rubber field which the Japs had fenced off with barbed wire and held prisoners. They had many tied to trees, sticking them with bayonets leaving them to die. The trees had been unattended until you could pull on the rubber strings out as far as ten feet.”

*Concurrent with the Zamboanga operation, smaller units of the 41<sup>st</sup> Division were invading the Sulu Archipelago, a long stretch of islands reaching from the Zamboanga Peninsula to North Borneo. (Lofgren p12)*

Control of Zamboanga was finally achieved pushing the Japanese troops and their Indonesian allies out of that area. During this period of forty days the 41<sup>st</sup> division had taken six islands; Palawan, Zamboanga, Basilan, Tawi Tawi, Jolo, and Busanga. It was one of the least publicized yet most sensational campaigns made by a single division during the Pacific War. They had regained 186,000 square acres of territory and controlled the Sulu Sea giving allies bases from which to control Japanese shipping routes. After the battle Omer returned to Zamboanga to a rest camp for approximately two weeks.

Though the 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> divisions were the designated force for the Victor V operations, the 41<sup>st</sup> was held in reserves and the 162<sup>nd</sup> RCT (Regimental Combat Team) was called up 27 April it assist in liberating Central Mindanao. They left Zamboanga 3 May and returned 7 July, three days after leaving Davao.

*April – May 1945 Davao City (on the island of Mindanao) was the islands largest and most important city. “Strong defenses stretched along the shoreline, which bristled with artillery and antiaircraft batteries. Davao Gulf itself was heavily mined to counter an amphibious landing. Inland, the Japanese had prepared defenses in depth in keeping with their intention of*

*prolonging the campaign as much as possible. Anticipating that they ultimately would be driven from Davao, the Japanese also prepared defensive bunkers in the jungle behind Davao to which they could retire. Situated from two to four miles inland, the extensive fortified positions ran from approximately 13 miles southwest of Davao City to about twelve miles north of the city. (Lofgren p22-23)*

*“In the abaca fields visibility was rarely more than ten feet. No breeze ever reached through the gloomy expanse of green, and more men-American and Japanese-fell prostrate from the overpowering heat than from bullets. The common way for scouts to locate an enemy position in abaca fighting was to advance until they received machinegun fire at a range of three to five yards.”*

Omer arrived at Illana Bay near Catabo. At some point he crossed the Rio Grande de Mindanao River (the longest river on the Mindanao Island). “By then things were moving fast. Supplies were brought up and we started across the wide jungle prairie of water, miles and miles of it knee deep. We came to a large river where the natives had water buffalo which were carrying our supplies. We made rafts and the natives hooked the buffalos to the rafts and ferried us across the river. We then drove on to Davao.”

In the Davao area Omer’s unit ran into a whole division of Japanese women. “They were mean fighting hand to hand combat.” This was one of the toughest battles that they ever fought. During the fighting, he came close to being hit on numerous occasions feeling bullets go over his head when lying as close to the ground as he could get. He was scrapped several times by bullets, all over him. One time a shell landed 10 feet behind and didn’t go off. It was 2 feet long and 6 inches in diameter.

*30 June 1945 –General Eichelberger reported to Gen. MacArthur that “organized” resistance had ended. Small unit mopping-up continued for some time. (Lofgren p32)*

*4 July 1945 –U.S. Army recognizes the Southern Philippines Campaign ending. Its actually lasted until news of the Japanese surrender in early September. (Lofgren p33)*

Omer returned to Zamboanga where he most likely received the Typhoid, Tetanus, and Cholera vaccines sometime in August. During his time there



Philippine children

the military made peace with the local Filipinos. Omer was able to visit the market “where each Filipino had a booth to sell their commodities. Ships were in the harbor and sailors were throwing money in the water to watch the natives dive for it.” Omer spoke of the Philippine people saying there were three types; the Sea Moles who were fishermen, the Hill Moles or Head Hunters, and the Land

Moles who were General Public. Most people lived in huts some on stilts with open windows and slab floors. The chickens would often times be on top of the house while the pigs were underneath. Others lived in boats that were docked so close together that they could walk between them living “with all their possessions; family, chicken, dogs, etc. They would go out fishing for two weeks at a time bringing the fish in for the markets. The market place smelled terrible. At one booth a man had a buffalo he was cutting up for the people to buy. He would cut off the piece the buyer wanted with a big bull knife. The flies were so thick they covered the meat. They did not bother to wrap the meat.” “One guy had a water bucket, that he had cut the skin off of the fish.”

“There were many head hunters from Borneo (a large island southwest of Zamboanga) among the crowd. Many of the G.I.’s bought wives from them for 35 pesos. They hired the natives to build shacks for them to live in and obtained their food from the army. It was an awful thing to do, but no one could stop them. Their morals were so low.” They would soon have to leave their wives, some of them pregnant, running down the beach, screaming and crying to go with their G.I husbands.

## **Japan**

(Approximately 14 October to 14 January)

*6 August 1945 –Hiroshima (20 Kiloton Little Boy killed 80,000)*

*9 August 1945 –Nagasaki (20 Kiloton Fat Man kills 70,000)*

*14 August 1945 –Japanese agree to unconditional surrender*

*2 September 1945 –VJ Day (Japan signs surrender agreement)*

General MacArthur announced that the 41<sup>st</sup> Division would occupy the Kure-Hiroshima area on western Honshu on 10 September. They would go in as a “peaceful invasion”. Omer stated that he boarded the USS Boston with approximately 3000 men headed for Japan. (No troopship by this name has been located. A Heavy Cruiser with the name USS Boston was stationed in the Far East at this time.) He most likely left during the period 15-19 September. Before leaving the soldiers were given lectures focusing on the Japanese language, climate, geography, and finance as well as customs and morals of the people.

While traveling to Japan the American fleet encountered a Typhoon (century storm) near Okinawa. Omer described it as being “tossed and thrown around like a piece of driftwood”. The men were not allowed on deck. Looking through the portholes one could watch the ships go up and down on the waves. The bunks were stacked six high and went the length of the ship. Omer was on the top bunk. The men were strapped to their bunks so that they would not be thrown out. Omer remembers one guy on the top bunk getting sick and throwing up on everyone below. Omer got one meal during this time. Moving around the ship during the storm was difficult. The men moved in groups tied together. It took four men to hold the hatch door open so one could crawl through to the kitchen. The cooks held onto the rail of the stove the best they could in 3 feet of slush which included; food, water, vomit, everything. “The cooks slid from one side of the ship to the other with each toss of the ship. I held a cup to get some hot chocolate and the cook missed my cup by six feet. I picked up a slice of bread and a piece of lunch meat and made my way back to the bunks.” The storm sunk 12 ships, 222 ships were grounded and 32 were damaged beyond repair. A lot of people drowned. (Omer’s ship most likely arrived in Buckner Bay or Nakagusuku Wan, off the coast of Okinawa, 25 September and went back out to open sea in a Typhoon Retirement formation on 28 September following weather reports. The ships returned 30 September after traveling 250 miles. They left again on 3 October headed for Kure. Buckner Bay was hit head on by Typhoon “Louise” on 9 October.)

Omer arrived in Japan on or around 6 October, four weeks after the atomic bomb was dropped. The Bay near Kure was found to be mined and the first 3 ships entering the harbor were sunk; Omer stated he was in 4<sup>th</sup>.

Kure, Japan is a seaport near the city of Hiroshima with extensive shipbuilding facilities, dockyards, steel mills, tool making, and factories. It is located on the southwest coast of Honshu Island and at the time housed Japan's largest naval base. "We landed and went in with full combat." The Japanese people fled into the hills. The remaining policemen were resentful and stood on the corners and spit on the soldiers.

"We took over an army camp and barracks." His unit went to various places on different assignments. Omer's first assignment was to guard a mile long railroad tunnel full of supplies. A two to four hour guard was placed at both ends of the tunnel. "I was placed on one end alone for four hours with my nearest buddy a half mile away. The Japs were coming back to their homes. They didn't bother us, but I was frightened of them anyway."



**Hiroshima 1945-The X marks where Omer found his souvenir.**

At one point Omer went into Hiroshima, 18 miles northwest of Kure possibly on a reconnaissance mission. His photographs are dated 20 October 1945. What he saw was a very memorable sight. Everything was destroyed. The bomb went off in the air resulting in no crater on the ground. "Close to the ground was intact. Cement roads still solid." There were four big stone buildings with walls 4 ft thick still standing. The roof, insides and windows were all gone. "My friend, Glade Greenhalgh and I found what looked like a bicycle shop." One skeleton of a woman really stood out. Her gold teeth attracted Glade which he extracted for a souvenir. Omer found a purse near by that looked good yet when he picked it up it fell to ash except "a mixed up ball of metal". It had a

little money, scissors, tweezers, hairpins etc. Survivors began to come out of the hills after troops were there for a while. They were hungry and salvaged garbage. Many had radiation sickness. By the time Omer left the area, he had gone all through Hiroshima City.



**Hiroshima 1945- Souvenirs**

Omer was sent to Onomichi approximately 40 miles east of Kure on or about 28 October where occupation, reconnaissance, and destruction of war material were being conducted. At the rail yard Omer was assigned to the guard a P.X. car on a train. "The car was loaded and then I was to ride inside this car until it reached its destination. I soon found myself alone in the car and the door locked from the outside. I felt the car being moved back and forth in the yard. I could hear Japs outside rap on the door with a lot of commotion on the outside. I was scared. Then the train started to move. I was in this car a day and a half before the train got to its destination and the army released me from this duty and took me back to my outfit." At night they parked the cars and there were no engines, so they used a big ox to switch tracks.

Occasionally Omer and Glade had time to explore. One Sunday afternoon they went on a walk up a canyon. They came upon a building where a Shintu church service was being held. As they approached the dogs were called off and they were told to take off their shoes, empty their pockets and leave their weapons. "We thought, boy that's the end of it!" They took them inside and found four rows of people all kneeling on the floor. Omer and Glade joined them. When the group bowed their heads they did the same. The preacher stood in front. At different points he would hit a big brass ball which would make a loud chime and the congregation would all grunt. This went on for about an hour. After the service the Japanese guard, speaking English, asked



Omer and Glade

them how they enjoyed the service then they were given back their belongings. They continued on their way following the trail that had steps further up the mountain to a large cemetery. "The poor people were buried at the bottom, and then farther up the hill, the richer the people. There was a cement sidewalk and every little ways up some steps. In the middle was a large Buddha statue. It was half full of money and rice which people had been putting through the stone God's mouth. At the top of the cemetery we found two temples that were about fifty feet apart. There were two women and a child there worshipping. The one woman held the small child in her arms. I had a large sore on its leg. In the Temple there was a font of water in

which the women bathed the child's leg and then prayed. At the Buddhist God she would wash water over the baby; washing its feet, and then carry it to the temple where she would bow and grunt. This went on for a half an hour to an hour. It is unknown what religious meaning this act had. Omer and Glade found this whole experience interesting and showed them of the faith the Japanese have in their Buddha.

On 31 October 1945, Omer received the Combat Infantryman Badge. His discharge papers note the following: GO #26 HQ 162nd Inf 31 Oct 45 Marksman Rifle M-1.



Tom Mizoue 1945

During Omer's time in Japan, the people became quite friendly with the soldiers. An artist by the name of Tom Mazui sketched Omer's picture.



Omer also helped locate LDS boys and held Sunday Meetings each Sunday under the direction of Chaplain Darley of Ogden, Utah.

### Returned home

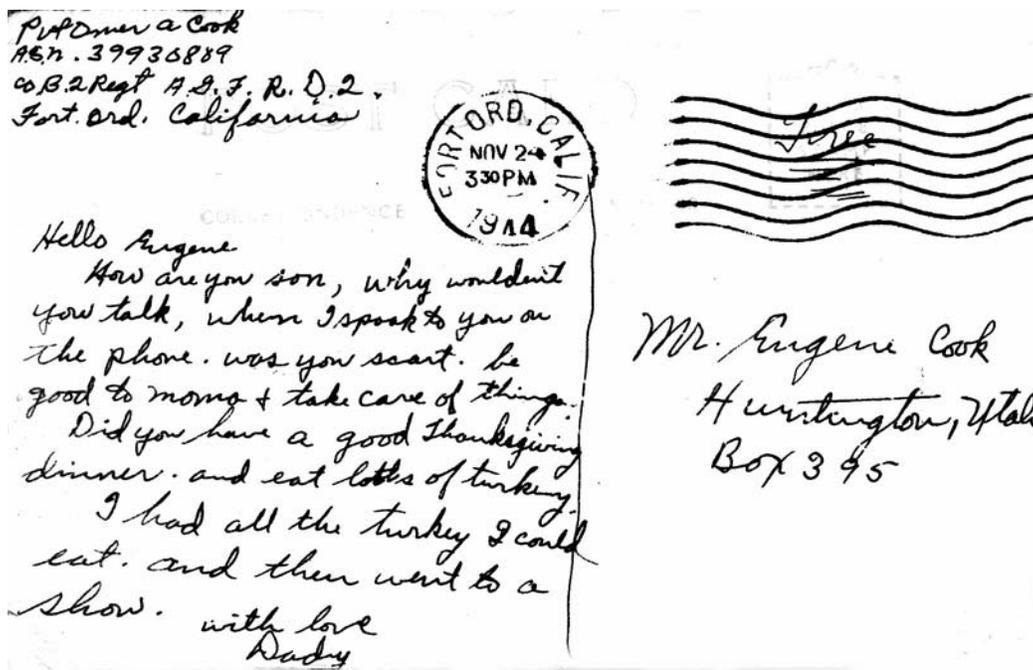
On 15 December 1945, the 41<sup>st</sup> unit was demobilized for "convenience of Government RR 1-1". A short time later Omer was sent further east to Osaka, Japan for processing. A picture in Omer's military photo album with the inscription "Shinko - Kobe, Japan" states on the back "Left foreground - my quarters - building in background - Shinko - where I work" is unexplained as to what he did there though Omer did say he went to Kobe. Kobe is approximately 16 miles west on the Osaka Bay from Osaka. On 31 December the 41<sup>st</sup> unit was inactivated. Omer boarded a boat headed for the United States. He arrived in Seattle, Washington on 19 January 1946, and spent a couple of weeks. He then went to Fort Douglas, Utah for two to three days. Omer was given an Honorable Discharge on 25 January 1946.

Omer stated that the "Army had wanted him to go to Korea instead of home". On 15 August 1945, Korea was divided into US and Soviet occupation. The Korean War did not begin until 25 June 1950.

Omer received \$300 for mustering out pay in increments of \$100 each. He was also given the choice between a train ticket or money to assist in his travel home. Omer took the ticket and went to the train station. He was denied passage however as the rail attendant said, "you're released we can't pay your way home." He ended up paying for his own way home. Omer arrived in Price by train and then took a bus to Huntington where Eva and his two boys were waiting for him.

### Military Life

Meals were usually K rations which were carried when able or otherwise eaten at camp. News from home was always welcome. When letters came through there was a whole stack. There was not much entertainment. The big shows took place at the large camps. They were always busy. A lot of the soldiers were immoral and spent spare time being so. Pranks were often played and seemed to all be dirty. Omer never got leave while away. For luck he prayed often and always felt his late father's presence with him protecting and comforting him.



Postcard sent to Eugene from Omer prior to leaving California November 24, 1944.

Postcard Omer received while at Camp Wolters.



The postcard reads:

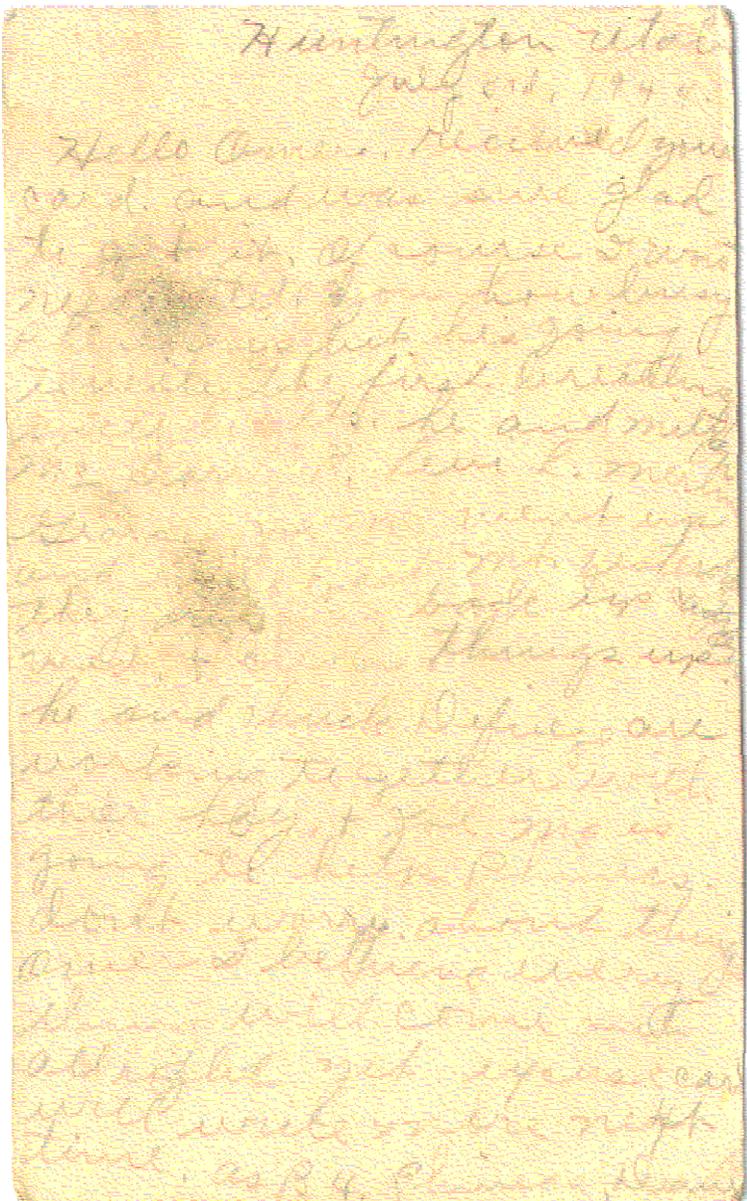
From: Deane Cook  
Huntington, Ut

To: Pvt Omer A Cook  
39930809  
Co-C-60BN-1PL  
Camp Wolters, Texas

Huntington Utah  
July 3rd, 1944

Hello Omer. Received your card and was sure glad to get it. Of course I won't need to tell you how busy Phineas is but he's going to write the first breathing spell he gets. He and Milton, MS Darr, R Levi, L. Merlin Granger Joe me went up and rode East Mt. yesterday. They are going back up Wed. and clear things up. He and Chuck Defreize are working together with their hay. And Joe me is going to help Phineas. Don't worry about things Omer I believe everything will come out all right yet excuse card. Will write more next time.

As B4, Phineas, Deane



### **After Military Service**

Omer was glad to be out of the service yet concerned about his friends still overseas. Only two men returned home from his group. He quickly resumed the life he missed while in the service. A son, Philip, was born the following year. He went back to work farming and in the coal mines. It was difficult at times. While away the coal mines were unionized and many workers already had seniority. The phrase “last hired, first fired” was well known. Omer often felt he was on the “bottom of this list” all his life and “never could get on top”. Omer remained in the Military reserves for 10 years and was nearly drafted again before his time was up. He met with a veterans group once a month and eventually joined The American Legion Veterans Organization after moving to Orem, Utah approximately 10 years later. They held social events and sponsored school children and other projects.

Omer “dreaded even talking” about the war and his memories. He even said “don’t make another bad name for me” though he served his country in it’s time of need to the best of his ability. Omer was just short of the two year minimum for military aid and did receive recognition for his service.



**Omer Alonzo Cook , 2005  
Photo taken by  
Weston Cook, Grandson**

## Decorations and Citations



Omer Alonzo Cook Military Pins

### Top

- 1) Boy Scouts of America

### Center

- 1) Ribbons from left to right

--Good Conduct Medal 600-68 (one year of service after 7 Dec 1941, while US at war)

--Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Ribbon (personnel for service within the Asiatic-Pacific Theater between 7 Dec 1941, and 2 March 1946.)

Bronze Star denotes an additional award

Bronze Oak Leaf for 2<sup>nd</sup> and subsequent entitlements of awards

--Liberation Service Ribbon with one Bronze Star (Philippines) (1945/46)

Bronze star indicates participation in designated campaign

- 2) Pin from North Emery High School. The back is inscribed with "O.C. 38" most likely for Omer Cook 1938, the year he graduated, at age 19. Note: Omer spent an extra year in high school after contracting Scarlet Fever his junior year.

### Bottom

- 1) Combat Infantryman Badge – Army

- 2) Luggage tag

Military record also states the following which may be included in the above descriptions:

--Bronze Arrowhead

--Victory medal



**41st Division Patch**

The Brigade “Jungleers” originated in Oregon in 1887 when the Summers Law established the Oregon National Guard. In 1917 the 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division was formed, named the Sunset Division. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Oregon Infantry became the 162<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment. In 1940 the 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division was inducted into Federal Service for WWII. It was the first American Division sent overseas after Pearl Harbor, the first Division trained in Jungle Warfare. It spent 45 months overseas (longer than any other Division) and earned the title of “Jungleers”.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/41in-bde.htm>