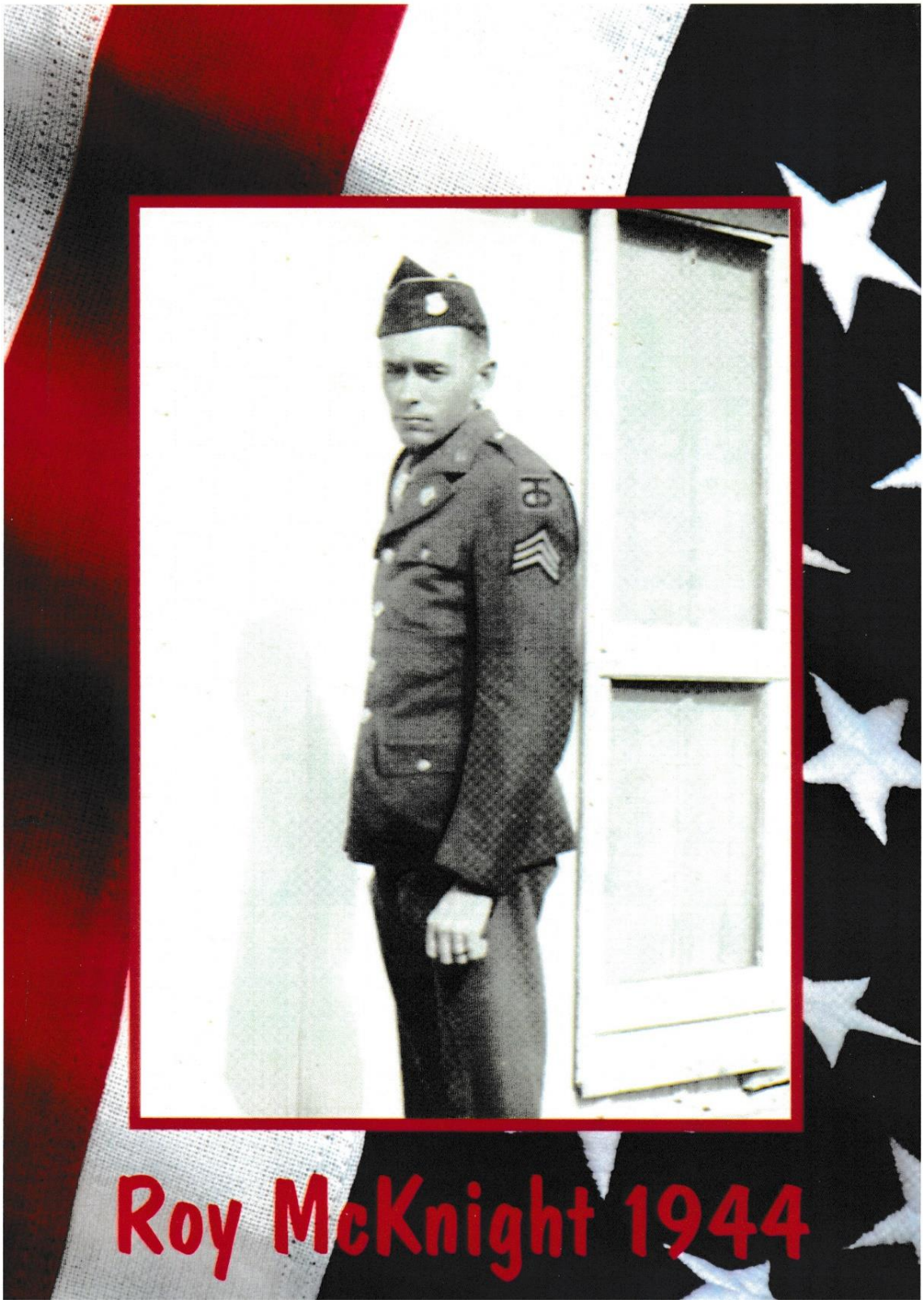
Roy McKnight 1944

Roy McKnight's Life & War Events

By
Barbara Wells (*Roy was her mother's brother)*

This is a synopsis of my attempt to track primarily the World War II experience of Roy McKnight. The work is far from complete, but I would like to share it to ensure that his memory lives on. He made enormous sacrifices for his country—losing his life was one, but probably not the worst, sacrifice that he made. Living the War must have been worse than death.

My information came from multiple sources and I have blended tidbits from interviews, papers, letters, documents, and books into my summary statements. For this reason, I have chosen not to provide references for all of the quotes and sources of information. However, here's where the majority of the information was found:

1. Interviews with James A. Schockley who was with Roy from Fort Dix, NJ, until Roy's death.

2. Roy's official military personnel file (which I obtained from the Military archives in St. Louis, Mo)

3. 90th Division maps and documents owned by Reba Burton. They are from Orville Burton's WWII memorabilia.

4. And, from the following books:

- Colby, John, *War from the Ground Up; The 90th Division in World War II*
- *The 90th Division in World War II* (A collection of personal experiences written by the men in the 90th division. Most of the accounts were written by ordinary soldiers, rather than by officers.)
- Green, Michael & Gladys, *Patton: Operation COBRA and Beyond*
- D'Este, Carlo, *Patton: A Genius for War*
- Patton, George S. Jr., *War as I Knew It*
- Gantter, Raymond, *Roll Me Over-An Infantryman's World War II*
- Lynd, JQ, Dr., *Manuscripts, Letters, & War Documents*

The organization of the Army during World War II remains somewhat elusive to me. I could find no clear, concise, definition of the various military units. However, I have pieced together the following:

I. **European Theater:** Roy fought in the European Theater in France and Germany. He participated in the D-Day landing on Utah Beach.

2. **Third Army:** Roy was part of the Third Army, led by General George S. Patton, Jr. I do not know how many men were in the Third Army.

3. **90th Division:** Roy was part of the 90th Division. They had T/O for their logo, which originally stood for "Texas/Oklahoma" as most of the soldiers were from Texas or Oklahoma. However, during WWII, the T/O became known as "Tough Ombres." There were 14,000 men in the 90th Division. The Infantry Regiments attached to the 90th Division were the 357th, 358th, and 359th.

4. **359th Infantry Regiment:** Roy was in the 359th Infantry Regiment. There were 4,500 men in each Regiment. Each Regiment was divided into 3 infantry battalions.

5. **Battalion:** JQ Lynd said that Companies A-B-C-D = Battalion 1; Companies E-F-G-H = Battalion 2; and Companies I-K-L-M = Battalion 3. JQ Lynd said there has not been a Company "J" since the Civil War. No information about why. This means Roy was in Battalion 3. Each of the 3 battalions under the 359th Infantry had 871 men in them. Each battalion was divided into 3 rifle companies and 1 weapons company.

6. **Company I:** Roy was attached to Company I. Each company had 187 soldiers and 6 officers. Each company was divided into 3 rifle platoons, a weapons platoon, and a small headquarters section.

7. **Platoon:** Each Platoon consisted of three rifle squads-36 soldiers. Roy became a Platoon leader November 1944 at the Moselle River Crossing.

8. **Rifle Squad:** Roy was in charge of a rifle squad until November 1944, when his commanding officer put him in charge of a Platoon. A rifle squad consisted of 12 men. 10 of the men would have been equipped with 30 caliber Ml rifles; 1 man equipped with a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR); and 1 man with a machine gun or similar gun.

9. **ASN 38024851:** This was Roy's serial number. His Social Security Number was 443-10-9419. He was known in the army as Technical/Sergeant Lee R. McKnight. He was called "Red" by his comrades. (Joe Burton informed me that Roy obtained his rank of Technical Sergeant before leaving the United States).

Roy McKnight's Life & War Events

1913, September 26	Born at home near Mehan, OK, named Buford Lee Roy McKnight
1920-1923 (Approx.)	Attended Ripley, OK, Elementary School
1924-1927 (Approx.)	Attended Sooner Valley School near Mehan, OK
1927-1941	Roy worked on the family farm and also had another job (Ruth McKnight Wells-Wilcoxson remembers ironing uniforms for him before she got married—they were very difficult to iron)
1939, September 1	WWII began when Germany invaded Poland
1940 (Approx.)	Became engaged to Elizabeth Burton—could not afford to marry her
Early 1940s	Attended basic flying school (Roy was probably hoping to become a pilot—nobody knows the full story about his flying school)
1941, December 7	USA joined the War when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor
1942, March 25	90th Division activated at Camp Barkeley, South of Abilene, TX
1942, April 1 or 3	Fort Sill, OK—Roy inducted into the Army (different dates in different records)
1942, April 19, June 17, July 16, July 26, August 2, August 9, August 14 1942, August 23	Camp Barkeley, TX—Dates of letters from Roy Roy learned close order drill, extended order drill, hasty field fortification, field sanitation, military courtesy, map reading, potato peeling, dish washing
1943, Early	Camp Polk, Louisiana, SW Corner of the State (Swamp maneuvers for 2 months)
1943	Returned to Camp Barkeley, TX (Mock attacks on German Villages)
1943	California army camp (Mojave Desert maneuvers for 3 months
1943, December 1	California—Date of letter from Roy
1944, January 8	Detrained at Fort Dix, New Jersey
1944, January	Men went home to bid farewell to families
1944, March 5	Fort Dix, New Jersey army camp—Date of letter from Roy
1944, March	Moved to Camp Kilmer, NY to prepare for departure
1944, March 22	Left by train for NYC
1944, March 23	Sailed with main body of 90th Division for England. James Shockley said that they were on the Alfona Castle Passenger Ship (that made runs between Africa & England in peace time). He said they cooked mutton and cooked the same mutton over and over on the ship. He said the stink of it would make the men throw up. He said most of the guys lived on crackers and cokes while on the ship.
1944, April 5-9	Group A (Roy's group) docked in Liverpool, England; then to Birmingham; then to Cardiff & Bristol, Wales, then to Dartmouth. (Continued to practice infantry action, such as, mine detection, village fighting, assault on fortified positions, hedgerow fighting, artillery firing, road marches, obstacle courses). The 359th was attached to the 4th Division in Devonshire (instead of the 90th Division). James Shockley said they took very small English trains that were a "novelty" to the Americans. He said they went to Ludlow, Herfordshire, and Wales. Shockley said they got a lot of good training while in England. The hedgerow training took place in Wales. Shockley said that they listened to German radio while in England. He said they played real good music that they liked, like *String of Pearls.* He said the Germans would taunt them by saying they were waiting for them to come over and their wives and mothers would be very sad when they came home in caskets.
1944, May 16	England—Date of letter from Roy
1944, Late May	England, Group A (Roy's group) moved to Dartmouth area

1944, June 4	James Shockley said they left from Torquay Harbor, which was very scenic. They loaded on June 4th and the seas were rough.
1944, June 5	1St & 3rd Bns, 359th Inf (Roy McKnight) embarked from Devon & Cornwall as a Reserve Regiment of 4th Inf Div. (One soldier with Roy's Regiment said they were briefed on the boat and the men were so nervous that they got diarrhea and could barely make it through the briefing—they could not sleep that night.) (This information is from one of the books, so there is a discrepancy between the June 4th and June 5th dates as the dates they left. I believe Shockley's information is correct.) JQ Lynd obtained a copy of the "Top Secret" orders that were verbally passed on to the soldiers on the ship and were supposed to have been destroyed by the officer. One of the officers saved everything that he could in hopes of writing a book after the war. When he realized he would not write a book before his death, he gave his documents to Lynd. Lynd gave most of the documents to museums in France, but he gave me this document. The soldiers memorized code words that would be used and changed each few days. The code words helped them tell friends from foes.
1944, June 6	D-Day Invasion of France; 1st & 3rd Battalions (Roy McKnight) landed on Utah Beach 1000-1600 (10:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m.) D-Day, and assembled at vicinity of St Martin de Varreville (2 kilometers west of the beach). James Shockley said that he and Roy landed about noon. The sea was rough and choppy and they were about 100 meters from shore when they transferred from the larger boat to the small Higgins boat. He said they put about 20 men per boat into each landing craft. The deck of the boat was wet and slippery. If they were to lose their footing and fall into the sea, they would have drowned because they were so heavily loaded with equipment. He said as they came ashore on Utah Beach, the loud speakers on the American Boats were playing the song *Massachusetts* by the Andrews Sisters.
1944, June 8	Main body of 90th Div arrived Utah Beach, Normandy; began debarkation at noon and completed at midnight. Positions: Turqueville, Reuville, Audouville-la-Hubert, Ecoqueneauville. (Roy was with the D-Day group, not this group)
1944, June 9	JQ Lynd said that the 359th, 3rd BN (Roy) was at the Azeville blockhouses. He said that 169 German soldiers surrendered there and turned over American Paratroopers who had been taken POW. He also said they were at Chateau de Dodinville near Joganville.
1944, June 10	Battle East of Douve River 359th was attached to 4th Div and ordered to seize high ground east of the Douve River near St. Sauveur Le Vicomte & secure a bridgehead across the Merderet River. (Roy was involved in this battle.) According to JQ Lynd, they were "plummeted to death" at the Douve River. According to Shockley, Company I (Roy & Shockley) were able to rest at the Douve River for 3 or 4 days after this battle—if that information is correct, then Lynd's information below would be incorrect.)
1944, June 11	359th moved at night to a position near Fresville. Regiment was severely shelled, which affected readiness to attack the morning of the 12th
1944, June 12	JQ Lynd said the Company I (Roy's company) was stopped at the Chateau de Fontenay by a high wall. He said that Companies I & L were blasted bad and had to retreat. (According to Shockley, Company I was resting at the Douve River.)
1944, June 12	Amfreville was captured by the 357th (Roy not part of this battle)
1944. June 13	Inept leader, McKelvie, was replaced by Maj. Gen. Eugene Landrum.
1944, June	Roy was involved in hedgerow fighting for several days/weeks, and they had little or no training for this type of fighting. They advanced slowly—one hedgerow at a time. Shockley said the Germans that they were fighting in the hedgerows were only 17 1/4 years old. He said they were excellent soldiers.
1944, June	Shockley said that he and Roy were at St. Mere Eglise in June.
1944, June 14	359th attached to the **9th** Div to protect N. flank of the 9th and advance toward Orglandes
1944, June 15	359th at Le Ham, relieved by another unit

1944, June 17	3**57**th captured Portbail, France
1944, June 18	Reached western shore of Peninsula in vicinity of Portbail
1944, June 19	359th moved by truck to position for Cherbourg Battle. Positioned in an area overlooking the road from Cherbourg to La Haye du Puits. This information is from books. (Per Lynd & Shockley, they did not go to Cherbourg—they were just on the road toward it—they were not in the Cherbourg battle.)
1944, June 20	Captain Wagner reported that 80% of his men had been killed or wounded since D-Day. A lot of replacements moved in.
1944, June 23	Roy's heroism earned him the Bronze Star: He led a patrol through intense fire into enemy territory and located mortar positions. The data he obtained enabled the supporting artillery to destroy five enemy mortar and three machine gun positions. This would have been during the battle for Cherbourg, France. The patrol was described as a "suicide mission." It was reported that everyone who went on patrol volunteered for the patrol. At least three patrols went out (2-day missions) and all of the men in one patrol were killed by the Germans. Shockley said that it was quite ominous to go out on patrol behind enemy lines. He especially dreaded night patrols as it was pitch black and he said you just can't believe how dark it would get—he said you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. He said you could feel German eyes on you and knew they spotted you. He said the Germans would often let a patrol go through without killing them because they figured the main body would follow and they would rather kill the main body than the patrols and it often happened that way.
1944, June 25	3**59**th Regiment made it into the streets of Cherbourg and were fighting in the streets. The enemy lost four divisions. (Lynd & Shockley said that Roy's company did not participate in this battle.)
1944, July 2-12	Battle of Foret de Mont Castre—Hill 122 (Abt 20 miles from Utah Beach landing): Much is written about this battle. It was considered the most expensive real estate in WWII. 90th Div had 7,000 casualties in 11 days. The 1st 6 weeks of combat after D-Day involved some of the most difficult, demanding, and costly battles of the war. The battles of Beau Coudray & Mont Castre—Hill 122—ranked with the toughest. The battle began at noon on July 2". One account said the" 359th (Roy's regiment) encountered fanatical opposition in the orchards near Pretot. Close quarter fighting ensued and ended with utter annihilation of a complete enemy battalion." On July 8th, the 359th (Roy's Regiment) and the 358th were ordered to attack the hill. Company "I" (Roy's company) of the 359th Regiment was the first to reach the top of the hill. A lot is written about Company "I" (Roy's company) in this battle; they took 200 prisoners and killed many more. The 358th & 359th Infantry later received a Presidential Citation for their fighting on July 8, 1944. It was reported that "Four days later the 90th reached its assigned objective. For 13 days, without relief, they had battered themselves against a determined foe, and now they dropped wearily to the earth, and slept." Medics reported a lot more combat exhaustion than in other battles to date. "Men sit rigidly, shaking, and crying with faces and eyes filled with horror." One of the battalion commanders could not stand the terrible death and destruction of such a battle and he had to be removed as he was incoherent and babbling over-and-over, "I killed K Company, I killed K Company." This was a pivotal battle because the Americans faced and conquered the Mahlmann Line, which was the Germans' main line of resistance for the peninsula. JQ Lynd was severely injured at Hill 122 and this put him out of the War. (His arm was almost blown off and it was behind his back, so he thought it was blown off.) He was used as a consult for the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, and Shockley's injury is a part of the movie; however, Spielberg put his injury in the D-Day scene. Shockley said that Company I (he and Roy) went straight up Hill 122 and were the first to the top. He said this was the worst fighting that they had throughout the war. He said the

	Germans also fought hard on the way down, so they had to fight them on the other side of the Hill after they took Hill 122. He said they lost 1,000 rifle men at Hill 122.
1944, July 23	Battle of Seves Island began; 3 American Chaplains caused a spontaneous cessation of fire because of their bravery in removing wounded from the line of fire. A German officer and a German-speaking American arranged a 3-hour ceasefire to allow the removal of the wounded of both sides. (Remarkable story to read.)
1944, July 24	Preparing for the Top-Secret Operation COBRA attack
1944, July 25	Operation COBRA began
1944, July 26	Heavy resistance on the Seves River, including extensive mine fields. Unable to cross flooded river.
1944, July 26 & 27	Enemy pulled out enabling 90th to move farther south to liberate Periers, St. Sauveur Lendelin
1944, July 28	90th was directed to stand fast to let the 8th and the 79th Divisions pass through. During brief rest, the 90th reorganized. Gen. Landrum replaced by Brig Gen Ray McLain. (Shockley said that McLain was a banker in Oklahoma before the war and was an excellent leader. Shockley said that Patton walked up and talked with some of the men and found out that the problem was not the "men" but was instead their leadership and he replaced incompetent commanders and brought in McLain & later Weaver and that's when the 90th started doing very well.) Other records indicate that Patton did not take command until August 1, so don't know if he was running things before he took command or what.
1944, July 29	Brig Gen "Wild Bill" Weaver came to 90th as new Assist Div Commander.
1944, July 29	Entire 90th Division crossed south of the Periers—Coutances Road
1944, July 31	Shockley said that from D-Day until the end of July that they had 100% casualty of ratio of enlisted men and 150% of officers.
1944, August 1	90th Division joined Patton's 3.-d Army
1944, August 1-10	90th Division marched 140 miles in 10 days to Le Mans. Fought 3 tough engagements and the 357th captured Mayenne bridge. In Le Mans, the Americans "received a wonderful, spontaneous, Liberator's welcome from the citizens." (Abt 150 miles from the landing). In 10 days, the 90th took 1,500 prisoners and had 500 casualties. Shockley said that Company I (Roy's company) did not go into Le Mans. They were on the outskirts of Le Mans.
1944, August 10-22	Falaise Gap—Chambois Battle: Most brilliant episode in the Battle of France. Largest steel-ringed trap of WWII, closed by the 90th Inf. Division
1944, August 15	The 90th had a mission to attack north, seize the village of Ommeel and the high ground west of Chambois.
1944, August 15	France—letter from Roy (he had been informed about the July 26, 1944, birth of Barbara Wells and mentioned it in his August 15 letter—indication of quick and excellent mail service)
1944, August 19	Some of the men from the 359th (Roy's regiment) spent the night in the same barn with 3 Germans (who had gone unnoticed). The Germans surrendered in the morning.
1944, August 20	"90th Division was alone at the bottom end of the Falaise Gap, and German troops were pouring through the bottom like water over a dam." 359th (Roy's regiment) fought north and closed the Falaise Pocket by meeting Polish forces that were fighting south. In 4 days took 13,000 prisoners, killed or wounded 8,000 Germans, and destroyed 1,800 horses, freeing 1,000 more. (Closed the gap 15 miles SE of Falaise.) Shockley said that the battle at the Falaise Gap was the only battle where they were shooting at Germans that they could see. He said it was a horrible killing ground.
1944, August 23-31	Sees to Reims: 90th Division moved slightly south of Paris through Montmirail-Chateaudun to establish bridgehead for crossings at Fontainebleau & Montereau over

	the Seine River. (Abt 176 miles east of the Chambois Battle) While in Reims, the 359th observed a wedding being conducted at the cathedral.
1944, August 31 1944 September 6	359th stayed at the Reims bridgehead until September 6th. 3rd Army immobilized because of gasoline shortage.
1944, September/Dec	Lorraine Campaign began—Roy was involved
1944, September 8	106th German Panzer Brigade was destroyed by the 359th when it penetrated the 90th Division zone. After ending resistance, Division moved South to help the 7th Army West of Metz.
1944, September 12	90th Div fought its way into Thionville in desperate house-to-house combat. Shockley does not remember being in Thionville.
1944, September 21	France—Date of letter from Roy
1944, September 23	Battles around Thionville to form bridgehead at Moselle River (crossed on September 23). Shockley said he and Roy crossed the Moselle River twice—at Mailing and at Turley.
1944, October 13	France—Date of letter from Roy
1944, October 15	Brig. Gen. James A. Van Fleet took command of the 90th Division. VanFleet ordered noncoms to start leading patrols because prior patrols had been led by officers and so many had been killed that there was a shortage of officers.
1944, October 27	Germans and Americans were both living in Metz. Kept having to take and retake the same areas. City Hall was pivotal. 4 groups of 10 men each from the 90th attacked City Hall from 4 directions. Only 1 group penetrated. 9 of the 10 men in that group were injured. The remaining soldier scorned demands for surrender & covered retreat of his wounded comrades. Shockley described being at Metz. He said that he and Roy were in front of (Gravolot Ft Gene Valot ????) (notes are too cold). He said they lost two of the best men he had ever known on the outskirts of Metz. He "lost it" at Metz when he took a wallet off his dead buddy and a photo of the buddy's family fell out.
1944, October 30	Metz taken after a major assault by the 357th & 359th
1944, November 5	Gen. George Patton gave a pep talk to the officers of the 90th Division. (Roy may have been present)
1944, November 7-8	359th assigned the northeastern end of the forest, nearest to the Mailing crossing site. It had been raining for 3 days and was very muddy. There were no buildings and no place for the soldiers to get out of the weather. The Foxholes turned into icy pools of water.
1944, November 9 approx	Shockley said that Roy was made a platoon leader before they crossed the Moselle in November. Pappy Clang (their platoon leader) lost his mind and 1st Lt. Canray (Carlin? —need to check my notes) put Roy in charge. Shockley & Jake (another soldier) were walking through a cabbage patch and found two Germans on the ground that were almost dead. Jake went back to get Clang to ask what to do. Clang put his rifle to the two Germans' heads and killed them. Shockley said that "they probably would have died anyway, but he shouldn't have done that." Shortly after this, Clang lost his mind and it took four men to carry him to the back. They never saw him again. Shockley said that Roy was a good leader because he always knew what to do. He said Roy had more life experience and more military training than the other men. He said that Roy never talked about his personal life to anybody that he ever saw. He didn't know anything about Roy's family or fiancée. He said some guys were talkative and others weren't. He said that Roy led by example and communicated instructions very well.
1944, November 9-21	First Successful Surprise Moselle Crossing: 90th Division crossed the Moselle River north of Thionville. 359th (Roy's regiment) made night crossing (3:30 a.m.) of treacherous, flooded river (worst in history-river was over a mile wide when it is normally 300 feet wide) into Fort Koenigsmacher. Men sank to their knees while carrying boats through marshy area to the river. Company I (Roy's company) was ordered to protect the right flank of the regiment near Mailing. Americans got separated from one

	another and were fighting in small groups. On November 10th "there were no blankets, little water, little rations. The men were hungry. There were even some wounded German prisoners there as well." The Americans "faced armor with only small arms and courage." One of the worst problems was getting supplies across the river after the infantry moved in. The river broadened to 1 V2 miles by the end of the day. It was November 14th before the bridges were in place. During an epic fight, the 357th seized Ft. Koenigsmacher. The 90th rolled up the Maginot Line. Teamed with the 10th Armd Div, closed the pincer E of the Metz. The Army Commander publicly announced this deed as the greatest military achievement of the war. Shockley said he and Roy crossed the Moselle River twice—at Mailing and at Turley. Lynd said that they were at the Moselle River exactly 26 years after WWI soldiers crossed at the same spot. The French Croix was awarded to those who participated in this crossing (I have not yet tried to obtain one on behalf of Roy).
1944, November 11	It was written that "the 359th, despite dogged resistance & fierce enemy shelling took almost all of the ground that they had lost the previous day in counterattacks.
1944, November 12	It was written that "the 359th, outnumbered & out armed fell back. A hybrid company of I (Roy's Company) and R Platoons, headquarters personnel, security platoon, cooks & clerks, defended the crossroads east of Petite Hettange. Despite lack of armor, cold, rain, & trench foot, the 359th held. One battalion of utterly fatigued troops launched a counterattack and drove the enemy back in confusion.
1944, November 12	359th was fighting at Kerling, France, near Fort Koenigsmacher.
1944, November 14	Frenchman wrote, "the beautiful and valorous 90th Div. would be able to penetrate to the heart of the Maginot Line."
1944, November 14	Bridge was constructed across the Moselle.
1944, November 15	Supplies of blankets, overcoats, clean socks, and food were delivered to the troops. They had been cut off from supply lines for 6 days.
1944, November 21	Germany—Date of letter from Roy
1944, November 24-30	Drive to the Saar: 90th Division fought its way to the Saar River. Approaches to the river were heavily mined. Reached the Saar River by November 29th. By November 30th had cleared the Germans from west of the Saar River. The 90th Div was ordered to make its own bridgehead at Dilligen, Germany, the most dense, the thickest portion of the entire Siegfried Line. (Dilligen is where Roy was killed).
1944, December 1	Gen. George Patton visited the command post of the 359th Regiment (Roy's regiment). Patton recorded in his journal that he went to an observation post to view the river and that the Rifle Companies, such as Roy's position, were operating at 55% of strength. (Should have 193 men, so probably had about 100 men in each company.)
1944, December 6	Germany—Date of letter from Roy
1944, December 6	Saar River Crossing: The Germans had pillboxes on high ground with observation of all approaches. 90th Division crossed the flooded Saar River on December 6th in the predawn hours in assault boats. They caught the enemy unawares. 359th maintained constant hail of fire from west bank of river & drew heavy retaliatory fire in return. Bridging was difficult. Swift current kept snapping cable lines. The Americans were constantly exposed to enemy fire. Footbridge was finally installed to allow more troops to cross quickly before the Germans destroyed the bridge. Americans had to be supplied by boats. No firm line was established along the front. Contact between battalions was non-existent or insecure. Infantry would take a pillbox, move on, and find later the pillbox had been reoccupied by Germans and have to take it again. With no bridge, the American armor was impotent on the opposite side of the river.Shockley said that he and Roy were the only two soldiers from Company I that had not been a casualty of war when the crossed the Saar River. He was depressed about it because he was turning age 20 and felt like his

	time was overdue to become a casualty. He said the life expectancy of a soldier was one month on the front lines and he and Roy had survived six months.
1944, December 9	359th (Roy's regiment) crossed the River shortly after midnight and joined the battle. Men limped into battle with swollen feet from trench foot.
1944, December 11	US Air Force dropped medical supplies for troops. Ferry & raft were placed into operation. Tanks and jeeps trickled into the fight. There were 5 days of vicious fighting without contact with 357th, 358th, or for 2 days with the 359th.
1944, December 11-12	Roy was missing in action as of December 12, 1944, which would have been during the Battle of the Saar River Crossing (Reba Burton has his Purple Heart). This is also the official recorded date of death. Some of the military records indicate that his death occurred on December 25, 1944. This information is incorrect. After the war a soldier who was with Roy wrote a letter to Jasper and Georgia about Roy's death. Bud McKnight remembers seeing the letter, but nobody in the family seems to have it. Bud thinks the soldier's name was "Smith." Shockley related the following story about the events surrounding Roy's death. Shockley had a minor wound in his Achilles tendon and had been bandaged up and sent back into combat shortly before December 12th. He had also been issued a new pair of combat boots, which ripped open at his wound and kept it irritated. (That was his first injury). Shockley said that when they crossed the Saar River, they did not have too much trouble. However, on December 11, 1944, remnants of several American platoons were together in a German pillbox about a mile from the Saar River. The pillbox was as big as a house. It was a concrete bunker with a steel door and the only opening was a slit about 8" high and 16" wide. They used this opening to shoot the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR). They were about out of K-Rations and ammo at the bunker and were trying to find supplies, so in the late afternoon Shockley and Ford (another soldier) went about a mile to the Saar River where they had crossed into Germany. They didn't realize at the time that they were surrounded by Germans. There were dead bodies everywhere and it was "spooky" getting back to the river. When they got there, they found 1st Lt Canray & another soldier (he did not know his name) in a foxhole. Canray & the soldier in the foxhole were "very frightened, upset, and confused" and told Shockley & Ford that they did not have any K-rations or ammo. The guys in the pillbox were the last in that area to hold out and Shockley and Ford were told that "things were real bad" and they were ordered to quickly return to the pillbox. When Shockley & Ford got back to the pillbox it was almost dark (December 11) and they saw three Germans on top of the pillbox in the dim light. The Germans were about to detonate explosives. Ford was "trigger happy and killed all three of them" before Shockley could get his gun off his shoulder. Shockley & Ford hurried in through the steel door to join the other soldiers in the pillbox. From dusk until 2:00 am, the shooting and shelling never let up. Shockley said they had been surrounded before and always got out of it, so he thought they would get out of this too. On December 12, 1944, at 2:00 am, Roy had been shooting the BAR and it was Shockley's turn and Shockley had just relieved Roy. They took turns an hour at a time. This is when the Germans launched an expendable bazooka shell (anti-tank grenade) at

them. The blast ripped a hole into the pillbox and injured Shockley, Roy, and others. Roy had been a little behind Shockley at the time of the blast and the force of the blast blew Roy all of the way back against the back of the bunker. Shockley had a hand injury where the BAR was blown around his finger. He was also temporarily blinded by the blast and he was blown back too and yelled out that he was blind. Everybody in the pillbox was yelling. When Shockley's sight came back, he noticed that Roy had two little holes in his neck from shrapnel and although the wound did not look too bad, the shrapnel must have hit him at a critical place because he was gurgling and blood was bubbling out of his mouth. Roy was in a state of semi-consciousness, but did not say anything at all after he was hit. They did not have a medic with them and did not have morphine. However, because of Roy's state of semi-consciousness and inability to speak, Shockley did not think he felt pain.

The Germans brought an American POW to the pillbox window to tell the Americans to surrender right after the blast. The Germans said that the next blast would kill everybody in the pillbox and the Americans knew that it would have. Shockley said that the American POW used as a shield to bring the message was shaking.

A 2nd Lt was in command in the pillbox and Shockley did not know his name and had never seen him before. He was brought in as new officer on the 6th of December. They talked about surrender among themselves and the 2nd Lt decided to surrender. They opened the door and the Germans came in.

After they surrendered, Puckett (a soldier from Kentucky) and Shockley carried Roy about 200 yards to a slit trench. They laid him down in the slit trench as there was no sign of life at that time and they were marched toward Dillingen as POWs. They were exposed to American artillery shelling where they were and as they were marched away.

A German captain interviewed Shockley in perfect English. He did not ask Shockley questions, but instead told him that he knew that he was with the 90th Division, 3`d BN, I Company. He also told Shockley that they had taken 33 men captive from the pillbox. Shockley told his German interrogator that there was a soldier with mortal wounds (Roy) back in the trench and the captain said they would take care of him. Shockley thinks that the Germans buried Roy in his first grave in Germany.

Shockley said that the Germans that took them captive "were good guys just like us." He also said they had "In God We Trust" inscribed on their belt buckles in German. The Germans who took charge of the POWs later were not such good guys, however. He said they were about 60 years old (much older than the soldiers that captured them). Also, the German civilians would try to spit on them and kick them when they could as they were moved from one POW camp to another. (Shockley said he could understand that since the Americans were bombing their cities.)

Shockley said that the pillbox where Roy was hit is no longer there. He went back to Dillingen, Germany, in 1984 (40th anniversary of D-Day) and could not find the pillbox. He said that the area is off limits because there are still a lot of armaments from WWII in the area, which are still unexploded. He said they were dredging the Saar River in 1984 trying to take shells out of the river. He also said that many of the pillboxes were underground and you might step on one and not even know it.

1944, December 12	358th was blocked by German Pillboxes from joining up with the 359th.
1944, December 12	A Priest wrote: Still lots of shells and we are constantly dodging them. The safest place is in the cellar. Lt. Gerard, S-2, tells us we are surrounded by Germans, but that our arm surrounds the outer perimeter, so it is a question of who guards whom? Lt. Shereran was evacuated. Mason went to Regiment. Battalions 1 and 2 are ordered back from their forward positions. We now have our own tanks on this side of the river. The 358th has part of the town of Dillingen. Chap. ____ evacuated himself for battle fatigue! I was surprised when I went into one of the cellars and saw Chap. Spraggins sitting on a bed with a tag on his uniform that he had made out himself. He is a little older than the rest of us, and I supposed he could not take the bombardment.
1944, December 13	Conditions described by a Colonel: "Can't hold out much longer unless replacements are received…Company strength running from 40 to 70 (out of 193), every day more men falling out . . . Trench foot is the cause of most casualties . . . some men are so bad they can't wear shoes and are wearing overshoes over their socks. These men can't walk and are being carried from sheltered pillbox positions at night to firing positions in the daytime. The men across the river are so weak from lack of food and rest they are of no great value. They have been cut to as little as one half a K-ration a day".
1944, December	Battalion Surgeon wrote: Early in December we entered Germany again and closed up to the Saar, but did not pause there long. The Division was ordered to cross the river and take Dillingen in one of the strongest and widest parts of the Siegfried Line, at a place where the Siegfried Line came right down to the edge of the river . . . Then followed two weeks of bitter fighting in miserable cold. Slowly the Americans inched forward, knocking out scores of pillboxes and taking most of Dillingen. Dillingen itself was a fortress, studded with many camouflaged pillboxes. An innocent-appearing jewelry store, a hardware store, a railway ticket office and many other such buildings scattered through town turned out to be steel and concrete pillboxes ..."
1944, December	A Colonel reported, "now they are so far into the Siegfried Line they are running into trouble . . . they are cut off from regiment with no supply capability and no communications except by Lt. Higgin's liaison radio. . ."
1944, December 14	Gen. George Patton wrote about the Dillingen battle: "The 90th Division had been doing a magnificent job moving on east of the river, in spite of the lack of a bridge. Also, their rifle strength was extremely low, but they were cheerful & were killing an enormous number of Germans." ("Cheerful?" I doubt it!)
1944, December 15	The armor-supported infantry stormed and took Dillingen, Germany.
1944, December 15	The Morning Report lists Roy and 75 others as MIA. (Shockley & Ford were among the MIA that day.) I located addresses on several of the MIA and sent letters to them to see if they remembered Roy.
1944, December 21-22	Division was ordered to withdraw on December 21-22. "The chemical officer secured a chemical smoke company for the operation across the Saar River. This unit smoked the Saar crossing site for several days before we were ordered to withdraw to fight in the Bulge." John A. Cochran of the 359th wrote: "We did not understand the order because Dillingen had cost us so many casualties . . . we made it out and headed for the river, where we were to cross on a footbridge and be taken to safety. When we got to the river, there was no footbridge. It had been removed earlier."
1944, December	"9 Battalions & 100 organic vehicles were crossed, sustained, and subsequently withdrawn without bridging facilities in rain, snow, and ice with the enemy counter attacking as many as 23 times in a 24-hour period. Pachten & Dillingen fell to our forces & a threatening salient had been torn into the Siegfried Line before the 90th
1944, December 29	Family notified that Roy was missing in action.

1945, January 5	Battle Casualty Report completed: Indicates that Roy McKnight was Missing In Action as of December 12, 1944, and that Georgia McKnight was notified on December 29, 1944. Roy was in "Germany9" area when reported missing.
1945, January 9-29	The Battle of the Bulge: Although it was commonly believed by family members that Roy was killed during the Battle of the Bulge, if he was killed on December 12, 1944, his death occurred before the Battle of the Bulge began. (The date of death may be in question since some reports in his military file estimate the date of death as December 25, 1944).
1945, April 14	Form completed indicating that Roy's body was tagged at O.S. Mil Cem, Butzbach, Germany. Diagnosis "D.V.O." "Too Decomposed". Treatment "2 OD." Estimated date of death was December 25, 1944.
1945, April 15	Inventory Form was completed regarding the possessions found on Roy's body as follows: 1 infantry Combat badge; 1 ring, silver color; 1 pocket watch, Elgin; 3 French coins = 5 Francs; 108 Francs in Currency. Money turned in to Lt. Col. Chas S. McCormick, Jr., signed by Stanleigh D. Acton, 2' Lt. Roy's death was estimated to have occurred December 25, 1944.
1945, April 15	Report was completed regarding Roy's 1St burial. The report indicates that his identification tags (dog tags) were the means of identification and that one tag was buried with the body and one tag was placed on his marker. A copy of the tag is with the report-it lists Georgia McKnight as the next of kin. This report lists the names of the soldiers buried on the left and right of Roy and gives the location of his grave as Grave #28, Row 2, Section C, Military Cemetery Butzbach, Germany. Report says that he had a cross as a marker. This report was signed by Stanleigh D. Acton, 2nd Lt.
1945, April 20 (26)	Military letter notifying family that Roy was killed on December 12, 1944; buried in the Military Cemetery in Butzbach, Germany. (The date of this letter was probably a typographical error and it was probably typed on April 26 instead of April 20 because the military file indicates that Roy's death was confirmed on April 26, 1945-see below).
1945, April 26	According to a War Department Report dated May 1, 1945, it was determined on April 26, 1945, that Roy was dead.
1945, April 27	Telegram sent by military notifying family that Roy was killed on December 12, 1944
1945, April 28	Telegram received by family about Roy's death
1945, April 30	Hitler committed suicide
1945, May 1	According to a War Department Report dated May 1, 1945, it was determined on April 26, 1945, that Roy was dead.
1945, May 9	Germany surrendered
1945, July 12	Army Effects Bureau Inventory indicates that Roy had $2.15 due or on his body.
1945, August 13	Letter from War Department about awarding the Bronze Star for heroism on June 23, 1944 (Rena Burton has the Bronze Star).
1945, August 29	Report completed about Roy's possessions, which were shipped home-they included miscellaneous articles, souvenir money, watch. The report has a notation that the 108 Francs inventoried upon finding Roy's body was missing when preparing his possessions for shipment home. The report further indicated that Roy's watch was damaged.
1945, September 1	Report of Burial (2nd burial) was completed by Cleon E. Wells & Kenneth Durr. This report indicates that the date of death was unknown, but estimated to be December 25, 1944. (This would be in error as he was killed on December 12, 1944, approximately 2:00 a.m.) Place of death is listed as Dillingen, Germany. He was reburied on September 1, 1945, at 0845, in the U.S. Military Cemetery at Margraten, Holland VK 645482, Grave 278, Row 12, Plot 000, Cross Marker. This report indicates that one tag was buried with the body and one was placed on the marker. The same two

	soldiers that were buried next to Roy in Butzbach, Germany, were moved with him and were buried beside him at Margraten.
1945, September 2	Japan surrendered.
1945, September 8	Kansas City Quartermaster report was completed verifying that Jasper McKnight was Roy's next of kin and that Roy did not have any outstanding debts that needed to be paid.
1945, September 11	Date of Letter from C.R. Quinn to Jasper McKnight sending $2.15 found on Roy's body and notifying Jasper of the future return of personal effects.
1945, September 11	Report completed regarding the shipment of Roy's possessions home.
1945, September 17	Shipment date to send Roy's possessions home
1946, March 30 1946, December	Letters from Miss Wiehelmeagia Scheenen in Limburg, Holland, who adopted Roy's grave at the Margraten Cemetery in Holland.
1947, December 5	Thomas B. Larkin sent a letter and a "Request for Disposition of Remains" form to Jasper McKnight on December 5, 1947. Jasper had 4 choices that he could have made. He requested that the remains be interred in a permanent American Military Cemetery Overseas. If the remains would have been returned to the USA, it appears that the McKnight family would have had the responsibility for funeral arrangements in the United States. It is unknown whether the cost of a funeral was the reason for Jasper's decision, or whether he thought it would be Roy's preference to be buried with his fallen comrades, or whether he simply did not want the family to grieve again three years after Roy's death by bringing the remains home for a funeral. The family believes that all of these reasons were why Jasper chose to leave Roy's remains in Holland.
1948, September 1	Roy's remains were disinterred for the 2nd time from the grave in Margraten Cemetery, Holland, Plot 000, Row 12, Grave 278. His identification tags were verified by William J. Wood, Capt. FA. USAGF.
1948, September 2	The Disinterment Directive indicates that Roy's remains were prepared by embalmer Emerson W. Walker for the 3rd burial. The report says that the condition of the remains was "Advance decomposition. L/Radius Missing." He was buried in a "Uniform & Mattress Cover." The casket was sealed by Emerson W. Walker and was marked by Bev B. Watson, Clerk Recorder. All plates, tags, and markings were verified by Don O. Tohill, 1/Lt FA.
1948, December 10	According to the Disinterment Directive, the flag used during Roy's 3rd burial was sent to the next of kin on December 10, 1948. (Unable to locate a family member who has this flag, but family members remember that it was shipped home.)
1949, February 8	Letter from Thomas B. Larkin that Roy's remains had been permanently interred in Plot A, Row 15, Grave 25, Margraten U.S. Military Cemetery in the Netherlands, 5 miles east of Maastricht, Holland. (This is the 3"I and final resting place.)
1958, July 2	Letter awarding Jasper McKnight, dependent father of Roy, $75 per month
1964, January 2	President Lyndon Johnson signed a certificate in memory of Roy McKnight's service and mailed to the family. (Reba Burton has the original of this certificate.)

LEE ROY McKNIGHT, Technical Sergeant, U. S. Army. Home address: Stillwater, Payne County. Mr. and Mrs. J. W. McKnight, parents, Rt. 4, Stillwater. Born September 26, 1912. Enlisted April 1, 1942. Decorations: Order of the Purple Heart; Bronze Star. Attended public school at Ripley, Oklahoma. Engaged in farming with his father west of Ripley before enlistment. Sailed for duty overseas in August, 1943. Veteran of the Normandy landings on D-Day. Bronze Star citation reads in part: "…..when an infantry battalion was harassed by enemy mortar fire, Technical Sergeant McKnight, squad leader, led a patrol through the intense fire into enemy territory and located the mortar position. The data he obtained enabled the supporting artillery to register on enemy positions." Killed in action at Butzbach, Germany.

March 4, 2003 Margraten Cemetery, Holland
Robert Wells at uncle Roy McKnight's grave