

# A LETTER FROM NEW GUINEA, JULY 1944

The 32nd Infantry Division wore the Red Arrow when it was activated for service in WWII, as it had in World War I. This Division was created from the Wisconsin and Michigan National Guard. They were the first U.S. Division to fight an offensive action against the Japanese in the Pacific in New Guinea and were involved in 654 total days of combat in the war, more than any other American division.

In New Guinea the battle hardened 32nd Division was thrown into the Battle of Driniumor River, also known as The Battle of Aitape, which occurred from July 10th to August 25th 1944. The objective was to cut off the The Japanese 18th army, commanded by Lieutenant-General Hatazo Adachi from its sources of supply. The 32nd Division was assigned to guard the eastern approaches to Aitape on the Driniumor River, 20 miles to the east.

On the night of July 10th, an assault force of perhaps 10,000 Japanese attacked en masse across the Driniumor. Despite suffering appalling casualties from machine guns and artillery, the Japanese pressed on and forced a major breach in the American line. A veteran of this battle stated that the Japanese bodies had piled up in front of their machine gun so high that they could not fire over them. They had to leave their fox holes and pull bodies out of the line of fire so that they had a clear line of fire upon the enemy. This occurred during the numerous Japanese attacks. After a harrowing fighting withdrawal through the jungle that night, the defenders managed to regroup where possible and by the 13th were counterattacking to try and seal the breach. The remainder of July saw heavy fighting west of the river as platoon and company size units clashed in the jungle. Heavy pressure was maintained upon some pockets of American troops still clinging to their positions at the river as they became encircled by Japanese troops, determined on wiping them out. By the beginning of August, however, the Japanese drive was spent and they were flung back over the Driniumor.

Four Americans were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously for their actions in this battle. Two of them, SSG Gerald L. Endl and PVT Donald R. Lobaugh were from the 32nd Division.



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Battery B, 120<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery  
32<sup>nd</sup> Division  
New Guinea  
July 19, 1944

Dear Sister,  
Will try to write you a letter this P.M. in regards to one that you sent me some time ago on the subject of "B" and "myself". I say I am going to write, well, I will attempt it, providing these big guns of ours doesn't blow me out of here as the gun crews are firing them and the concussion is terrible. It's impossible for me to describe the noise they make, but, it isn't very pleasant on the ears and head. Have had one boy who received a bursted ear drum from the concussions and was evacuated from here.



So much for that, and now I'll continue on with what I was going to write about. I guess you will recall now what I am referring to. At the time I wrote to you on this subject "my morale" was really down and so disgusted with the present life I'm leading that I wrote just like I thought, or attempted to do the first time I got home. It's really impossible to explain the feeling or thoughts that one has when in that mood. Perhaps you have experienced something like it yourself sometime or other when it seemed everything was against you.

Speaking for myself when in that mood, I get to thinking of the odds against me, for example: All the good times I've missed out on in the past nearly four years which is the best part of my life and no idea how much longer time I'll still have to serve.



There's no future in it for me, and I'll not be any further ahead than when I came in, and nothing to fall back to when I get out. This may be a bit silly, nevertheless I still think of it and that is my age and it is for certain my health will never be what it was when I came in. These are just some of the things. I know I shouldn't think of the odds and the past, but how can one remedy it when you cannot think of the future with the rough road ahead, with no signs of the end of it. It sure puts in the spot and not knowing which way to look at things. Well I've said enough for that. Just hope the future brings something good for me and the other boys over here. I'm safe in saying that nearly, if not every boy looks at things the same way as I sometime or another.

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But to go on with the subject, I really haven't planned to get married when I got home, but have only given it a thought. Of course what I have wrote was only my idea and I have hers yet to learn. With conditions as they are here at the present time, I don't give it a thought as one never knows how much longer one will remain on this earth as they're falling fast. If I am fortunate enough to get back I'll have time then to consider the subject.

Last night Olaf A's outfit shot two "Japs" with a machine gun approximately one hundred yards from me – the third one got away. They were carrying explosives presumably to blow up our big guns. The situation now is really getting tough and worse than any time yet, that is, since I've been in combat. Never did we think there were so many Japs in this area left. They have a lot of equipment, and many mountain guns which they are using against our troops now. When we came in here we thought we came in to mop up what few stragglers there were left, but that isn't the case. The big event is to take place yet and I think each and every one of us is going to see and experience a lot before it's over with.

You can see I didn't make scarcely any comments on the subject as I realize I sorta was jumping to conclusions. Wish I had never mentioned it, but at that time I was quite certain of coming home. Conditions have changed immensely since then so now it is a different thought.

I must close and mail this letter as I have been over a week getting it done. Today is the 25<sup>th</sup> of July.

All my love,  
E

NOTE: E is now 93 years old, with children and grandchildren who love to visit him. He is physically fit and raises a large garden and numbers of flowers each year. In New Guinea he contracted malaria, and dengue fever, which still affects his health. Many of his fellow soldiers of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division are now gone, but most returned to Wisconsin and led useful and productive lives. We remember them now as "The Greatest Generation".



