

# Bringing Brothers Home

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*Home was at the foot of the Smoky Mountains in Athens, Tennessee. There was a local effort in town to recruit more men to help bolster the war effort with much-needed manpower to give relief to our troops overseas.*

I was almost 16. I enlisted partly because I naively thought this might help bring one of my brothers home. All three had volunteered shortly after Pearl Harbor in the Navy, Marines and Seebees.

The other reason I enlisted, I had been riding the rails (hoboing) around the country. I had returned home, and this seemed like a good opportunity to see the world. I was looking forward to another adventure.

By month-end, I found myself at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where I completed basic training. I was sent to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, where I was scheduled to immediately leave for Germany.

The day of departure arrived. I was on the dock, standing in a very long line that was slowly working its way aboard a troop ship.

Before I reached the gangplank, I passed out.

I woke up in the hospital. I have no memory of how I got there, nor how long I was unconscious.

For two days, I was asked all kinds of questions by the doctor. He couldn't quite pinpoint what was wrong with me.

The third day, I was out of my head with such excruciating pain, I knew I had to confide in someone.





During the doctor's next visit, I asked if I could speak to him in private. Much to my relief, his nurse excused herself.

The doctor was mortified when I showed him how swollen I was. I had the mumps, and they had gone south.

He said, "My God, son, why didn't you say something before now?"

I told him I would have, but his nurse was always with him, and I was too embarrassed to say anything in front of her.

It was almost a month before I was released from the hospital. By then, new orders had been issued that would send me to Panama.

I remained there until the end of my tour of duty and was given an honorable discharge. I later served in Korea during

the Korean War, but that's another story.

(Much to our family's relief, all four of us returned home safely at the end of World War II.)