

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE FRIENDS AND FAMILY OF **EARNEST CARLSRUD**



Earnest was one of many young men who was an ordinary person flung into the calamity known as World War II. There are vast distinctions in people when they are faced with life and death experiences. After all, we are all different and merely human. Some ordinary people do extraordinary things when faced with the ultimate danger.

Earnest Carlsrud was a true American War Hero -- He became known as Meathead to his fellow soldiers following one episode on the front lines in France as an observer for his machine gun section. Peering over hedge row at the height of a German counter attack, he was hit in the forehead by a German sniper. The bullet pierced his steel helmet and the helmet liner, entered his forehead, and stuck in his skull. Afterwards, he asked the officer next to him to pull out the bullet. That incident coined for Earnest the affectionate nickname of "Meathead". After a front-line medic wrapped his head with a bandage, he looked like a mummy. But he refused to go back to the rear hospital. He stated that he wanted to shoot the German who shot him.

Can you just imagine someone wounded who would pass up being properly treated for injury and concussion and turning down a chance to go back for a little rest and relaxation? Well, Earnest Carlsrud did. He wanted to stay with his platoon

because he knew he was badly needed. Through his leadership, he saved many lives, including my own. He was a fearless, courageous soldier, one that you felt good about knowing, having every confidence that he would not cut and run, but would back his fellow men to the end, if necessary.

As any front line rifleman who has survived many weeks of continuous artillery shelling, great hunger, sleeping in the open air under all kinds of weather, meeting new replacements daily who were sent to fill the company's ranks due to attrition from wounds or death, and always under terrible stress, we all prayed to our God to spare us of a terrible death or mutilation, and in this prayer we prayed for that million dollar wound that would take us from this hell hole to a place of safety, rest, and quiet. There were no atheists in the fox holes.

There were good times after the war in Sicily overlooking the Mediterranean Sea; drinking wine, singing *Beautiful, Beautiful Brown Eyes* and all the other songs we could remember. Also in England, preparing for the invasion, there were a lot of good, hard-drinking times, when we supported the English pubs with guys like Big Jim Gorham, Jim McPhee, Sullivan Lee and many others.

At the breakthrough at St. Lo, France, we broke through German lines, stopping after dark, exhausted. I was with a mortar squad at the back perimeter of the 9th infantry Battalion and was sleeping in a house at the edge of a French village. When a truck and troop convoy came through the town, led by an American jeep, I walked out to greet the driver of the jeep to ask for canned food rations. However, I made a grave mistake. This was not an American supply column, but a large

force of German armored infantry. I was immediately captured, as was Sgt. Carlsrud, along with several men from our platoon, and an American tanker crew laying sound asleep outside their tank--approximately 13 GI's.

At that time, the American forces realized they were being attacked from behind. The night was filled with tracer bullets. We, the captured, were marched back behind German lines for several hours. There were several armed Germans in front of a column and one German brought up the rear. I whispered to Meathead that "he (the guard) was pretty far behind me" and Meathead told me to watch him. As we went around a curve in the woods, I informed Meathead that I could not see the guard, to which he replied, "Let's go for it." We eventually made it back to the American lines--just the two of us. The others were never heard from again. We think they were shot to death.

That evening we were both wounded. Meathead had extensive bullet wounds to the elbow area, but we were survivors; able to come back home to friends and family.

When I look back to that time, I know that without the leadership of Earnest Carlsrud, that I would not have gambled on trying the escape. And I firmly believe that I would not be here today were it not for Sergeant Earnest Carlsrud!

By,

Russell E. Lomax

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Russell E. Lomax". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

P.S. As Earnest Carlsrud's children and grandchildren grow and search for heroes and role models in their lives, they need look no further than their Dad or Grandparent.