



## Hails “Doc” Taylor – Anzio Combat Veteran Christian – Long Version

[Tyler County Booster](#) (May 30, 2013), 4-5B: published version, [www.PeciousHeart.net/message/2013-Taylor.pdf](http://www.PeciousHeart.net/message/2013-Taylor.pdf).

*long version:* [www.PeciousHeart.net/message/2013-Taylor-long.pdf](http://www.PeciousHeart.net/message/2013-Taylor-long.pdf).

Jasper Hails “Doc” Taylor said, “I never thought a time would come when one just could not go where one wanted to go.” No modern city kid can understand that.

Doc’s sorrowful sentiment weaves itself gently between an infinity of splendid and often sublime memories of ranging through the woods and “creek bottom” that he has loved dearly for over seven decades! His portion of Hickory Creek. He’ll be 91 this year, and his long quick stride has passed into a slow walk. His sardonic wit groans under his son’s admonishment that, “no,” he cannot go to the creek bottom *alone* anymore. Yet his large calloused hands seem as capable as ever.

Doc was born in Port Arthur, Texas, “but life started when we moved up here to Warren,” he said. “I was 12 years old.” He graduated from Warren High in 1940. “A paradise wilderness, open range everywhere – I loved it!” Doc said, vigorously articulating as a preacher might in some poignant turn in a sermon, twisting his big fist.

“Never wanted to leave it! Still don’t!”

Straightforward but not callous. Clear as crystal, with a fire kindled from long-simmering coals of deep moral conviction. Doc loves God, his family, and his country. He lives a few miles south of Warren, which was a gravel road just a few years before his parents built a little place on the west side of Hwy. 69.

There was no electricity. “Liked to killed momma. She was not used to that.” Doc smiled. “I was in hog heaven. Never wanted to go back to the city. Fishing, hunting, shining fish, giggering frogs.” Shinning fish? Doc nodded. “You bundle a bunch of strips of lighter pine and light the top. Fine torch. Hold it over the creek as you walk the shallows. Hit the fish with your knife. Or shoot the .22 into the water, which would stun the fish.

“I’d come home from school, do my chores, milk the cows, feed the chickens, draw the water, and cut wood for the night (in the winter). Then to the creek, Hickory Creek, or hunting in the woods. I fell in with the Foxworths, Melvin, J.O., L.G.; and Carl Creel. And Bob Larson and I became lifelong friends; he’d come over and stay for the summers and



holidays. We hunted all over this place. Walked everywhere. Down at the creek was THE favorite place.”

Doc married Peggy on June 9, 1958, and built a house across from his parents on the east side of Hwy. 69. They still live there, and their son Hails built a house a little deeper into the woods on the same place; they share the same driveway and look out for each other.

Before finding his love, though, he had to go to war. Little did he know.

“I was intensely interested in electronics,” Doc said, “and I taught myself from encyclopedias and anything I could find. I went to Port Arthur and bought a bunch of scrap radio parts and brought them home. Few people had radios up here at that time. I’d build little simple radios, with one tube, or crystal radios from the scrap parts. I made microphones. Flashlight batteries used to have a carbon center. I’d crush the carbon and put the granules into a tonic bottle cap, and wire the top and bottom. When the voice vibrated the carbon granules, it translated the voice.

“I learned enough to go to the FCC and test for the Second Class Radio License. I got the license and planned to go into radio, but got my draft notice in late 1942. That radio license guided me straight into the signal corps, where I was trained to be a high-speed radio operator, Morse code and voice communication.”

After field artillery training at Fort Sill, Ok., they were loaded on a ship at Staten Island and headed for Oran, North Africa. Thirteen days with every space crowded with a GI. Over several months they went to Algiers, Tunisia, and then crammed 75 men in small landing crafts and headed for Naples in late 1943. Ten-year-old Sophia Loren saw the Germans ravage Naples and nearly destroy it in their retreat. Naples’ underworld of racketeering, prostitution, and black markets led some soldiers to desert, one soldier saying it was “Christmas every day for the gangsters.”

Doc reflected, “The Apostle Paul landed in a little place close to Naples. I did not know anything about Scriptures then.” Pausing. “It took two days to reach the Port of Naples. Rough seas. Every man got sick, sick, sick. Every minute – sea sick. We dehydrated. I could only eat apples for about a week. It was all I could eat.” After about a month in Naples, they fought briefly at Cassino, and before long they were on their way to Anzio. No one had heard of it.

Anzio! A resort town about 30 miles south of Rome. Allegedly where Nero fiddled while Rome burned. But there was no fiddling in 1944.

Of the load published, the U.S. War Department’s *Anzio Beachhead* was the first in 1948, fourteenth in a series, and based upon Capt. John Bowditch’s narrative in the field, republished in a 50th Anniv. Ed. in 1990 (CMH Pub 100-10, free PDF too). A logistical benchmark that opens with Anzio being “one of the most courageous and bloody dramas of the war.” Pressing its tediously rugged course from battle to battle without any character descriptions – just battles sprinkled with a few of the many heroics – it declared midway, “There were no safe areas at Anzio,” and toward the end wounded Pfc. Johnston “crawled back to safety the next morning. The spirit of these men could not be broken.”

Over two dozen books on Anzio have come out in every decade since, most clipping the War Department’s 1948 action and adding vignettes, some with teasing sub-titles as the Gamble that Failed, Edge of Disaster, Epic of Bravery, Death Trap, an Unexpected Fury, Song of Destiny, and Agony at Anzio. Even President Eisenhower’s son wrote a smooth reading version. Anzio Rifleman Fred Sheehan told his story in 1964. Award-winning historian Carlo D’Este’s acclaimed *Fatal Decision: Anzio and the Battle for Rome* (1992, 566p) appears to be the most thorough version. The histories of the major players and battalions seem endless.

Unlike WWI, the WWII Allies allowed embedded journalists to share all the risks, and a villa in Anzio housed over thirty, including the most famous of them all, Ernie Pyle, until it was demolished by a German bomb, Pyle just escaping with his life. BBC war correspondent Wynford Vaughan-Thomas' *Anzio* (1961) lays bare the soldier's heart with more personal touches and artistic flare in perhaps the best account of all. Robert Mitchum starred in the movie "Anzio" (1968) based on Thomas' book, though, Doc Taylor said, "The movie could not portray what it was really like."

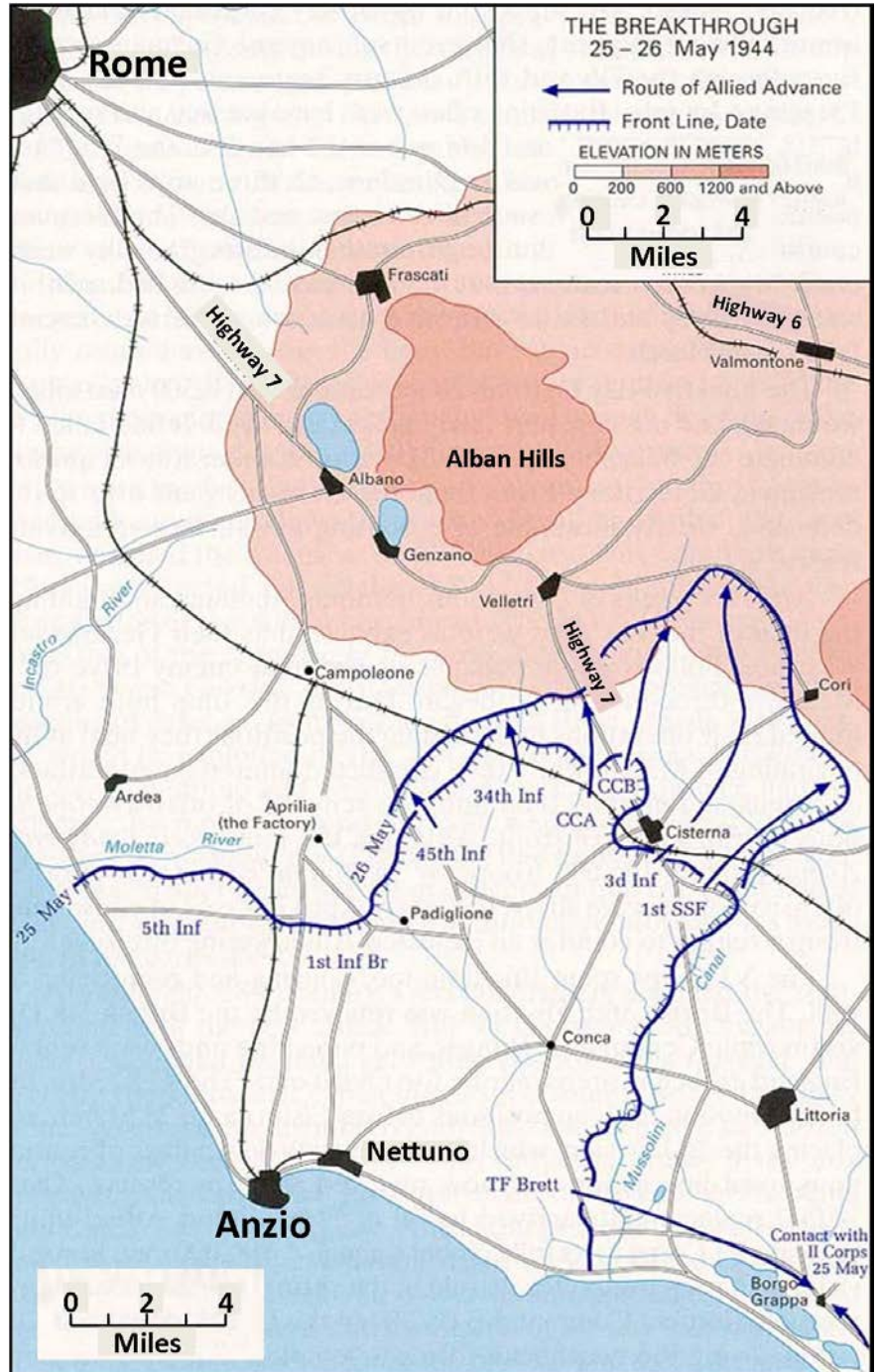
From a million records, many have strained to paint the horror of Anzio and the soldier's heart. A scare deep in Doc's soul has haunted him these last 70 years.

Doc pointed out his movement on an Italian map and shared an old Nazi banner he had tucked away, about six feet long, brilliant red with the black Swastika in a white circle, little fading on the ends.

Anzio – Germany knew that the Allied push up Italy could, as Churchill said, "slit this soft underbelly of the Mediterranean" strongholds, and, "He who holds Rome holds the title deeds of Italy." The Allies pushed across North Africa, through Sicily, up the Italian boot through two German defensive lines, but were halted halfway at the Gustav Line on the southern side of the Apennine Mountains. Churchill hoped a landing at Anzio on the west coast of Italy, 50 miles north of the Gustav Line, could outflank the Germans and allow a run to Rome.

Operation Shingle was planned by the British, and pushed by Churchill who said, "It will astonish the world." Yet American Gen.

John Lucas, "Foxy Grandpa," led VI Corps was not so sure, saying, "I felt like a lamb being led to the slaughter." When Gen. Patton saw the plan, he told Lucas, "John, there is no one in the



Army I hate to see killed as much as you, but you can't get out of this thing alive." When Lucas tried to summon some optimism, Patton strongly advised Lucas to read his Bible!

Prior to landing on January 22, 1944, the Allies dropped 12,500 tons of bombs on supply roads, bridges and rails inland around Rome. About 1,500 5-inch rockets and 1,200 air strikes softened the beach.

When the armada of 374 vessels arrived, 180 landing craft snuck ashore, and Gen. Lucas reported in code at 0300 on January 22 that the landings were in progress, surprisingly with little effort. The German pillboxes and bunkers from the shore to the Alban Hills were nearly empty. Having achieved a total surprise, the Allies fortified roads from the beach, established dump sites, spread smoke screens, cleared mines, and deactivated demolitions meant to destroy the Anzio-Nettuno city roads and ports. By midnight on the 23rd, 36,000 men and 3,200 vehicles had secured a defensive line four miles inland with only 13 Americans killed, 97 wounded, and 44 missing, while capturing 227 surprised Germans.

Some Germans were captured in their pajamas. After capturing a half-naked German in the street wearing only a vest, one American private jibbed, "It was my first encounter with the Master Race."

However, also at 0300, news reached the head of the German military in Italy, Field Marshal Kesselring, who, unflustered, coolly said, "We have a problem ... but not an insurmountable one." At 0400, the code words "Case Richard" were sent over Italy, alerting commanders that the Allies had landed. Mobilization began. Hitler was informed at 0600 at his *Wolfschanze* or Wolf's Lair.

Anzio – during the last week of January, German fighters and bombers devastated until the Allies could build up air defenses. James Arness, aka Marshal Dillon, was severely wounded and sent home after three weeks.

In February three major German offensives tried to "eliminate" Anzio, the second on February 16 being the worst. In March and May, there were no major German offenses, but Anzio was still under attack 24/7 by artillery with one to six nighttime aerial raids every single night. The first six weeks were lethally vicious, but all four months were deadly.

Doc directed artillery fire every day for four months, often all day long!

Anzio – the Allies held about 10 miles of coastline both north and south of Anzio, radiating out from Anzio about seven miles for a 30-mile inland battle line. At the height, the area was about the size of a single Tyler County precinct with 100,000 men and thousands of vehicles and artillery. The Germans had marshaled 140,000 to surround Anzio in a few weeks. The major battlefield from Anzio to Rome was *smaller* than Tyler County. And 50 miles south, as in Beaumont, similarly sized forces were battling the Gustav Line!

Disgusted at the easy landing and fearing a quick run to Rome, Anzio infuriated Hitler, who personally ordered the "abscess" south of Rome eliminated.

The Germans loosed pre-arranged plans to rush Panzer and troop divisions to block any further Allied advance and crush Anzio. They moved two of their seven massive Krupp K5 283-mm (11.1 in.) railroad guns down just for Anzio, becoming effective on February 7, named by the Allies "Anzio Annie" and "Anzio Express." At 231 tons with a 70-foot rifled barrel, its 550 lb. shells had a 20-mile range, 52 miles with rocket-assisted shells. Scary. Yet during the Germans' second and strongest offensive on February 16, they only shot 50 shells from Annie and the Express, while firing 454 rounds from their lethal 170-mm guns. The Allies bombed the supply railways to the K5s, but could not take out the guns which moved in and out of tunnels, usually at night. Strangely, it never dawned on the Allies to bomb the tracks in front of the



tunnels! R. J. O'Rourke wrote *Anzio Annie: She Was No Lady* (1995). Today, Annie resides at the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland.

The best the Allies had was the 155-mm Long Tom with a 13-mile range, and the Allies had naval and air superiority.

"Artillery was king," historians have said, and it was "at Anzio that the clamor for heavier artillery began" for the Allies. The scores of rain-soaked valleys, rivers and marshes favored the German defenses, but not Allied armored advances. And likewise for the Germans, the terrain being a major reason they stopped their offensives in March.

Another reason the Germans could not advance was that they could not match the Allied supply trains. After the initial build up, every single day six Landing Ship Tanks (LSTs) would arrive from Naples, and 50 pre-loaded trucks drove ashore and to the front lines, as 50 empty trucks that had come ashore the previous day re-boarded the LSTs to return to Naples – a supply innovation started at Anzio. Fifteen smaller vessels arrived each week, and every ten days four huge Liberty Ships delivered heavy equipment. An average of 3,920 tons of ammunition, fuel and rations came daily for four months to Anzio.

By week two, the Allies had landed 22,000 vehicles including 380 tanks. Finally in mid-April, they received 240-mm M1 howitzers, named "Black Dragons," capable of firing 360 lb. shells 15 miles.

An American prisoner witnessed German dead stacked like "cordwood in piles 150 each," and bulldozers dug mass graves. Gravely different from how the Allies treated their own dead, as crosses grew like corn near the Anzio Casualty Clearing Station.

Killing. So much killing.

In the trenches, helmets were used for *everything*, cooking, bathing, shaving, and, when pinned down, for bodily waste and thrown over the side. Bloody water from streams was boiled for drinking. Animalistic survival. When there was silence, one could hear the enemy the cough or shuffle in a trench. On April 20, Hitler's birthday, the Allies could hear the Germans hollering and singing *Lilli Marlene*.

The Germans had heavier artillery and were sending about 1,500 rounds a day, but they could not compete. By February 16 the Allies were firing 20,000 rounds a day. Though bombing and shelling by both sides continued until the Allied breakout in May, the Germans reported that 75% of their casualties were from Allied artillery, only 15% from bombing.

Doc Taylor, the VI Corps radio artillery man, said, "Hell! Four months of it! It took us that long to break out of there. About three times, the Germans almost pushed us out. We were given notice that the only place to go was the ocean, so we were ordered to 'Hold On!' It is hard



K-5 283-mm  
Anzio Annie



German K-18 177-mm



American 155-mm Long Tom

to describe, the daily artillery and aerial bombings. What we delivered to the Germans. What they gave to us. *Every single day!* We set up our camp in a wine cellar. It was perfect safety ... when you got down into it. Went to sleep to the echo of explosions. I'd go to sleep to it like music. Slept like a log. Just a routine."

Was there wine in the cellar?

"Was when we got there. None when we left," chuckled Doc. "Several got court-martialed because they got so drunk they could not work. I tasted it. Just did not like it. I especially did not like the dizziness that I got if I took one swallow."

Doc was part of a four-man radio crew. "The command post would send a message on fire direction, map coordinates, how many rounds per gun, and time on target. I'd acknowledge and then relay the message to the artillery. Hundreds and thousands of rounds. I blew up everything they told me to blow up."

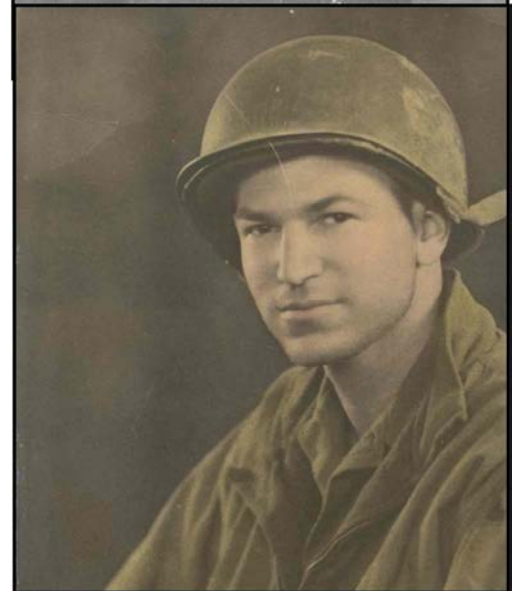
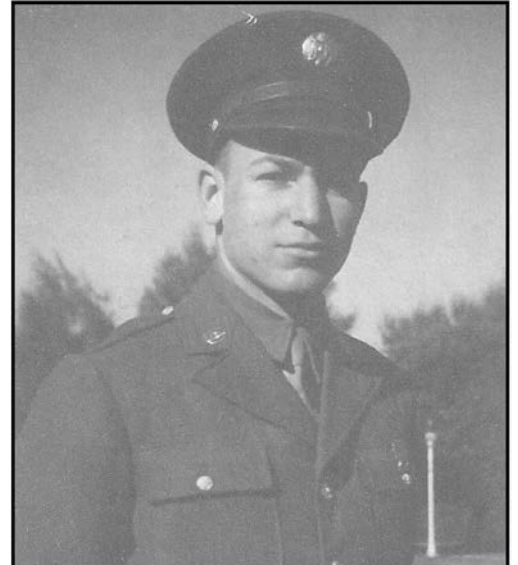
Doc's firing routine was not without humor. "It hurts if you are too close to one of those 155-mm Long Toms. Everybody that went to Anzio was in the thick of it. Even the hospital got hit. It got so routine." Doc chuckled. "While we were raining shells on them, the Germans were flying in from Rome. Bombing and strafing the beachhead. Screaming in at high speed, they would drop anti-personnel or bigger bombs, then fly out as fast as they could. If they fooled around, they got shot."

The devastation Doc directed, even these years later, still strikes him with awe over all of the fire power and carnage. A full day of artillery blasting, directing the death of Germans, just as the Germans were dealing death to the Allies at Anzio. What a day's work! Thousands lost their lives in brutal ways. A German or American soldier would disappear from a direct hit, blown to bits. Whoosh, kaboom, and gone! Missing in action.

"One could feel the explosions. The radio broke one day," said Doc. "When I checked it, a piece of shrapnel had gone clean through it. When I opened the radio, the piece of shrapnel had busted the tops off of the tubes. I replaced the tubes, and the radio worked fine. The shrapnel could have gone through me!"

Doc paused. Reflected. "The sights and sounds cannot be duplicated on TV. I had many frightening moments and near misses. Many, many air attacks. Artillery day and night coming in around the clock! By the grace of God, I survived. I know what real war is!"

It seemed too simple for him to repeat the word "routine," for, underneath, Doc felt a deeper dread about Anzio, sometimes bordering on guilt about having survived; his "routine" warfare and "peaceful" sleeps sometimes reflect a callousness foreign to who he really is in his heart, while his homespun humility will not let him voice that, truly, a resolutely determined courage steeled his and his fellows' hearts and minds and bones toward the evil Nazi empire.



Doc was from paradise, the open prairie, and backwoods where he had hunted his idyllic Hickory Creek with other country boys. Value for life and living – well, back in Warren, Texas, “We would do anything we could for each other!” But this – Anzio – and Hitler’s Germany had no regard for human life. They were in a world war to stop a madman from taking over the world. Doc and his crew were fighting for their lives, yes, but also for the preservation of the free world. Even for Hickory Creek! Anzio steeled the heart.

Anzio – generals and historians disagree. If Patton or Truscott had been in charge, could the forces have broken out sooner and taken Rome? Some suggest yes. Others counter that though they could have taken Rome immediately, a week later most of the Allied forces would have become German prisoners. The German forces were formidable and determined to fight for every yard.

When the Germans sent their second and strongest offensive on February 16, the exchanges were monumental.

On February 28, the Germans had eight divisions of 40,000 nearly in place, and at midnight they attacked for their third and final time, worn out and tired. Doc Taylor’s VI Corps artillery responded ferociously, sending twenty shells for every one the Germans gave, the Allies “expending 66,000 rounds on February 29 alone”!

Men went mad. The brave hardened.

Men disappeared from explosions. Lost limbs. Daily. The Anzio hospital was called “Hell’s Half Acre.” The men said, “Women don’t belong here,” and the 26 female nurses had to dig in too. For all, the fine was \$25 for failing to wear one’s helmet. A surgeon, nurse, cook, mechanic – everyone in Anzio was subject to *disappearing* or getting a Purple Heart. Nurse Ellen Ainsworth refused to use the bomb shelter, reasoning if a bomb fell there, it would kill them all, and paid for that with her life. Lt. Avis D. Schorer finally told her story in 2000 in *A Half Acre of Hell: a Combat Nurse in WWII*.

See AnzioBeachheadVeterans.com, where 22 Medals of Honor were given, the most for any WWII battle. Some posthumously given for uncanny bravery, like Sgt. Truman O. Olson who stood by his machine gun for 24 hours of continuous fighting, his fellows killed one by one, until he was the last one against 200 Germans before he died of his wounds. News and fear of Anzio spread fast and far. Soldiers hid their wounds to avoid a trip to the dreaded Hell’s Half Acre.

Doc remembers scurrying about town one day, between German reloads (or at least he hoped), and getting too close to one round from Anzio Annie. The shock wave, from wherever it came, knocked him down. Deaf and disorientated, he could not walk or think for a few minutes. He got back to shelter and recovered, but has not forgotten.

Doc’s wife Peggy chimed in, “God saved him for me!” Thank God.

On May 15, the Allies broke the Gustav Line and raced north to Anzio, crushing Germans in route. In the early morning of May 23, the combined force of 150,000 Allies were poised to break out of Anzio. At 0545, Doc Taylor’s VI Corps and others gave a tremendous artillery barrage around Cisterna – Operation Buffalo was underway – and 500 artillery among a thousand-plus cannon, mortars, and tank guns thundered and lit the sky. Viewing the spectacular bombardment, Texan Sgt. Audie Murphy grinned with his squad as they exulted, “Hitler, count your children!” in his *To Hell and Back*, a smash best-seller in 1949.

Forty-five minutes later tanks and infantry emerged from the smoke to cut Hwy. 7 through to Cisterna. After two days of fierce fighting, on May 25, the Allies broke out of Anzio, but at a heavy cost, losing on that single day 476 Americans, with 2,321 wounded and 75 missing.

"The front at Anzio just fell apart," Sgt. Doc Taylor said, "and we just spilled into them. When we got to Rome, we did not stop. The Germans retreated. It took all of one day, and most of the next day before the whole 7th Army rolled into Rome. The dust was so thick, because of the dirt roads, we put on gas masks. That's when I discovered one cannot live long in a gas mask. Your lungs had to exercise themselves to pull the air in. So one had to remove the mask and take a breath. We would have been in trouble if nerve gas had been used extensively.

"We were welcomed like heroes when we got to Rome. Especially the Catholic Nuns. We were told by some of the nuns, though, that the people would praise whoever was there. From Rome we advanced 40 miles northwest to Civitavecchia, and then we were sent all the way back to Naples. Seemed like such a waste of time."

They captured Rome – the Eternal City – on June 4, positioning themselves for D-Day as Operation Overlord would unload on June 6, 1944.

In the end, the Anzio Allies suffered 29,200 casualties with 4,400 killed, 18,000 wounded and 6,800 prisoners or missing. The Germans suffered 27,500 casualties with 5,500 killed, 17,500 wounded and 4,500 prisoners or missing. Of 235,000 soldiers, 56,700 or one-in-four became casualties, in an area smaller than Tyler County, over twice the entire population of Tyler County!

Metaphors exhilarate the mind into a fog. Anzio's unique ferocity was its four months of *continual* artillery shelling with aerial bombing – indeed, "artillery was king," a king of hell. Some said of Anzio that "'Battles of the Little Big Horn' aren't much fun," the "whole affair had a strong odor of Gallipoli and apparently the same amateur [Churchill] was still on the coaches bench," and, truly for many, "Anzio took their souls."

The greatest praise came after the war in a *Washington Post* interview, when Field Marshall Kesselring said, "If you had not pitted your strength against us at Anzio-Nettuno you would never have landed in Northern France." Of all the generals, he should know.

After Anzio, though, Doc and the soldiers of VI Corp had to keep on fighting, but it seemed relatively peaceful to the now hardened combat vets.

Doc Taylor was involved in five official battles. The Naples-Foggia Campaign landed in Italy, took Naples, and pushed up to the Gustav Line by January, 1944. The Rome-Arno Campaign included Anzio, the taking of Rome, and establishing a defensive line on the Arno River in northern Italy. The Southern France Campaign moved up the Rhone Valley to meet other Allied forces in the northern France. The ill-fated Rhineland Campaign tried to break the Siegfried Line from Holland and failed, but they were able to drive through the Rhine Valley at a cost of 24,000 American casualties. The Central Europe Campaign raced across Germany into Austria and Czechoslovakia and to Germany's surrender on May 7, 1945.

When they landed in southern France, "I was expecting a battle," Doc said. They had been in the thick of it for so long. Yet the landing was otherworldly. "We were the first troops. I kept looking at the beach. When is this war going to start? I got out without even getting my feet wet! We wandered inland about a mile or so. The Germans had retreated from that area. God was good to them." Doc shook his head.

"As we advanced up Southern France, we would go through these little villages, and the people were enraged at what the Germans had done," Doc emphasized. "One little old woman would approach a weapons carrier with a bottle of wine. She'd hold out the bottle with a glass, then stop, and ask, 'Kill Germans, kill Germans?' If a soldier said, 'Yes,' she would give them a drink of wine. We ran through two little towns where the people were enraged at what the Germans had done."



Doc pulls out some maps of France in French.

"Bruyeres – the one I like to tell," he said, "about 100 miles southwest of Strasburg, Germany, in the winter time. It began to snow. We had to find places to spend the night. We found a farm house. It looked big enough. One of us went to the house. A lady came to the door and was scared to death," Doc said. "She did not know us. She let us move into the wine cellar. Each day we would drive down to chow, and we would bring some food back for her, and her father and brother. After a few days of that, she began to see we were not like the Germans. She moved us into her warm kitchen. That wood stove was going strong and felt good.

"Her name was Anna. I'll never forget her.

"After about three weeks, we got orders to advance. As we walked out of her home, Anna followed us. Crying. She went to each one of us and kissed us. She gave me a photo of her family. I still have it to this day." Doc went to his strongbox and returned with an old photo that Anna had given him. "Her brother Henry had been a circus clown. They had a little field where they raised potatoes. We would go out and help them harvest the potatoes."



Doc held the photo of Anna and her family like a fragile jewel. "Anna is seated on the left next to her father, and her brother Henry stands on the far left. I think that was all that was left of her family."

Doc has thought a lot about Anna. How could she let go of such a photo? Doc and his GIs had become precious to Anna. She wanted them to remember her, as she would remember them.

Doc's outfit headed for the German Siegfried Line.

"One of us was chosen," Doc said, "to take a 2-1/2 ton truck to the rear of the line, way out of the war zone, to get food and supplies. Good ole' boy John J. Sabinera, Italian, full blood. Soft heart. On his way back, way out of his way," Doc said with pride in his voice, "he unloaded half of that truck at Anna's house. As good as he was, he was an avowed and vocal Atheist. How remarkable is that?" Doc grinned. "I was not much of anything then," Doc mused, rather sad about his spiritually dark years. "We talked a bit. But what an irony that was, that such kindness came from an avowed Atheist while the Germans, well, I did not know what they were.

"For us, the war ended on May 8, 1945, on the edge of Garmisch, the German city where they had the winter Olympics in 1936 [first to feature alpine skiing]. Stayed another month. Still have the photo of the house where we stayed."

Doc headed back to the states.

"When I got out of the Army. I was the most miserable human being. My attention was drawn to the Rev. Harry Hodge of the United Gospel Tabernacles. He would preach every morning at 0745 on KFDM, Monday through Friday. It was just what I needed. I just got attached to the *thrill of gospel*," he said, rolling his voice to emphasize.

Reflecting on those years of listening to Rev. Hodge, Doc said, "My ears immediately picked when he preached. His preaching brought the gospel alive. The Word came *penetratingly* into my heart. This was the gospel." Doc took his two oldest sons Hails and Todd to Lay Renewals for many years in several different states.

"I had rigged up a rickety car radio on a Model A. While my friends were out in the woods, I would come back to my Model A truck and listen to Hodge preach."

Model A Truck?

"Oh yeah. Home made. My brother was a machinist. We converted the back part of that Model A into a kind of pickup bed."

Doc's three brothers and two sisters have passed on now.

Doc worked for KFDM, Beaumont, for 23 years as an engineer taking care of their transmitter. It seldom broke, which meant, "I had all the time in the world to do what I wanted. I built all kinds of stuff. Receivers, transmitters, mobile units to put into cars, and direction finders. I painted some portraits. Loved it.

"I went up to Lufkin, briefly, to work for KTRE TV, to help them build and install their station."

He spent three years in Lufkin. Then, one day changed his life. A school teacher named Peggy brought her students to the station for a visit.

"I saw her for the first time," Doc said looking straight and determined.

Love at first sight?

"Love at first sight. There was never another girl. And never another man. Both of us."

They married in Lufkin, then moved back to Warren across from Doc's parents. Back to the creek bottom. They had three boys: Hails, Todd, and little Kyle.

They lost Kyle to cancer just before he turned 10 years old.

"He was a special fellow," Doc mourned. To this day, if he reflects more than a minute or two, a few tears come to Doc's eyes. Little Kyle still tugs on Doc's heart.

"There was a song in the 1920s," Doc recalled, "'Have you ever seen an angel, I have.' That was Kyle." Doc choked up. He had a Wilms Tumor, a cancer of the kidneys, and no one could help.

"Kyle ... the cute way he would respond to questions. 'What are you doing, Kyle?' And he would say, 'Being here.'" Doc looked down. Memories as fresh as yesterday.

Melissa Carson remembers attending first grade with Kyle at Warren Elementary. "A really sweet boy. Kind to everyone.... His mom, Mrs. Taylor, was our teacher, and she had to miss school sometimes.... I will never forget when he was in the hospital. One of our class projects was to make wild animals out of wooden sewing spools – so much fun. When we were done, our whole 'zoo' was presented to Kyle. Years later, I asked Doc about the zoo, and he said he still had them. Kyle passed away soon after that.... Kyle impacted our lives. His quiet calmness and sweet demeanor will always stay in my heart. He seemed to have a youthful wisdom about him. In some small way, I think his peace of passage helped us all to fear the future just a little bit less. I hope this pleases Doc's heart and gives him a sweet memory."

Doc and Peggy have two other sons, the youngest Todd is a programmer for Battelle and lives in West Richland, Wa. Their oldest son Hails was a Woodville ISD teacher who developed his own computer programming company, and today he is a consultant for Nautical Control Solutions while pastoring Chester Baptist Church.

Peggy has helped manage the home since she retired from school. For a long time she raised African Violets, at one time having about 250 in specially made cases all over their home. She loves flowers.

For the longest time, Doc was a deacon and Bible teacher at Bethel Baptist. Doc loves the Bible and good preaching. In 1992, Doc volunteered at the Gib Lewis Prison and continued for over 14 years. Doc mentored prisoners while his lifelong friend Dr. Bob Larson, a Seventh-day Adventist minister, taught a Wednesday evening Bible study at the prison. Larson had to leave, so Doc took over his prison Bible study class, supplementing lessons with tape recordings of great preachers. Even these 80 years later, Doc and Bob still communicate regularly.

Doc hurt his back manhandling a log about ten years ago, when he was just 80. He does not like the idea of having to slow down. But, kind of like a surprise, age just crept up on him. Doc smiled, then, nonchalantly and slowly said, "Well, I am 90."

These days, he and Peggy go everywhere together.

"She will not go anywhere without me." After church, they walk out together, holding each other's hand, so the other will not fall.

They love each other and their home more and more each day.

Though Doc cannot "go" anywhere he wants, nor can most of us, yet you will find Doc studying his Bible, his spirit lifted again from a jewel in God's Word.

From the piney woods, through Anzio's hell and Europe's expanse, then running a quiet TV transmitting station – with the love of his life Peggy always there – Doc reads his Bible and prays. The woods are fenced. The open prairie gone. The creek bottom hard to get to. Doc reads his Bible, loves the "Word," and he *prays*.

A wonderful life with God and family in the good old USA – yet, after all, this is earth. But not forever. For there is a Grand Open Prairie that will never be fenced, where the creek bottom is always accessible, in perfect peace, and there will be "no more war."