

He escaped the Nazis in Europe and fought Japanese in the Pacific

EDITOR'S NOTE: In recognition of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, The Lawrence Township Memorial Committee, in cooperation with The Ledger, will feature a column each week during the anniversary year profiling a Lawrence resident.

VETERAN PROFILE

Nicholas Loveless

"We lost a lot of good men on Saipan," Fred Deutscher began. "Our regiment hit the beach in the first wave of LSTs on June 15, 1944."

Although he has lived in the United States for over 57 years, Fred's pleasant accent cannot hide his European birthplace and seems suited to his name. Born in Vienna, Austria, in December, 1922, he spent a relatively happy youth in the waltz capital of the world, little realizing that his life would be forever changed by the events that led to the Second World War.

Europe stood by and did little as the rise of Nazism spread throughout Germany in the 1930s. On March 12, 1938, Hitler's "Anschluss" absorbed Austria by force and it was a bleak outlook for anyone of Jewish origin in that country. In the winter of 1938, Fred escaped the Nazi occupation by fleeing across the border to Czechoslovakia. He was placed in a refugee camp near Moravska Ostrava, and when the Nazis invaded there in March, 1939, he again fled to Prague where he was able to obtain a visa to the United States. His mother had been born in America and he was able to secure preferential quota visa

to join his mother, who had already returned.

In February, 1940, Fred was able to book passage on the S.S. Saturnia, the last ship to leave Italy to the US for the duration of the war.

Arriving in New York and unable to speak a word of English, he lived with his mother in Brooklyn, he immediately enrolled in the National Youth Administration, a federal program organized to train and employ youths during the depression years. The eight-month course taught him English, aviation mechanics and welding, and on completion, he was able to obtain a job at Kramer Trenton Company in Trenton.

In 1943, Fred volunteered for the U.S. Army and was inducted in September of that year. On April 4, 1944, he was shipped overseas to join Company "G" of the 106th Regiment, 27th Infantry Division. The "New York" Division had a tradition as far back as the American Revolution when some of its units were organized. They had fought valiantly in the trenches of World War I, and had just participated in the Gilbert and Marshall Island campaigns in the Pacific. Their next objective would



After escaping the Nazis in Austria, Fred Deutscher came to the United States, joined the Army, and took part in some of the bloodiest battles of the war in the Pacific. In October, 1945, after the end of the war, he posed for a photo during the American occupation of Japan.

be Saipan in the Marianas, 2,000 miles closer to the Japanese homeland and needed by the US for bases to enable B-29 superfortresses to bomb Japan itself.

"When we hit the beach at Saipan," Fred continues, "there was not much opposition, but then all hell broke loose. There were no front lines and we never knew how the overall battle was going. The Second and Fourth Marine Divisions were there, too. We kept taking hill after hill and slowly gained ground. It was hot and tropical on Saipan, and I came down with dengue fever, which is similar to malaria. At one point my temperature was 104 and I had chills and fever very bad.

"We fought the Japanese for three weeks and in the last week they became desperate and made a number of banzai attacks and threw everything they had at us. We had a lot of casualties, and I lost some good friends in the fighting. There were a lot of caves and bunkers around the island and the Japs would hold out in them to the very end. When they saw they were losing, hundreds of them, including civilians, threw themselves off Suicide Cliff on the north shore of the island. Of the 30,000 Japanese that had been there, only about 2,000 of them were taken prisoner. After the island was secured, our division went to Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides to reorganize and lick our wounds."

Okinawa, largest island in the Ryukus, and only 350 miles south of Kyushu, Japan, was needed as a base for fighter planes to escort B-29s raiding Japan. The invasion was delayed, as it took longer to occupy Iwo Jima than expected, and the invasion force of Army and Marines landed unopposed on April 1, 1945, but

there was fierce fighting yet to come.

"We sailed from the New Hebrides on the U.S.S. Darke," Fred recalls, "and as we approached Okinawa, our convoy was repeatedly attacked by Kamikaze planes, and a lot of ships were hit. I was now a section leader and in charge of two machine guns and squads. On the morning of April 9, the Navy treated us to a steak breakfast and we were ready to debark in full combat gear. We were used to tropical weather, and it was cold on Okinawa. For the next 21 days, our regiment was on the front lines in southern Okinawa, which was heavily defended by the Japanese. We were almost constantly under fire by artillery, mortars, machine guns and enemy snipers. We lost a lot of men killed and wounded in my company before the island was secured on June 22. Also, Ernie Pyle, the war correspondent was killed on April 18 on Ie Shim, an island next to Okinawa."

The losses in Okinawa had been a barometer by which military strategists projected what the cost in lives, both American and Japanese, would be to invade and occupy Japan itself. The predicted cost would be staggering, and this was an important factor in the decision to use the atomic bomb.

After the peace treaty was signed on Sept. 2, 1945, Fred was stationed in Japan with the Army of Occupation until he returned to the US and was discharged with the rank of S/ Sgt. on Feb. 7 1946.

His decorations include the Combat Infantry Badge, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two battle stars and his unit's Presidential Citation.

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Veteran

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He returned to resume his position with Kramer Trenton company where he met Marion Morreale, who also worked there, and they were married in 1949. Fred and Marion have one daughter, Linda Katz of East Brunswick, and a grandson, Jake.

In 1958, they moved to their present home at 2928 Princeton Pike in Lawrence. Fred retired in 1988 as production manager at Kramer Trenton, and now enjoys bowling four times a week, doing yard work and reading, in addition to frequent trips to Atlantic City.

Fred and Marion traveled to Austria after his retirement and were able to visit his old neighborhood in Vienna, the park in which he played, and met some of the students from his school days in the 1930s. Each year Fred and Marion attend his old Company "G" reunions in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and reminisce their experiences in the Pacific.

Fred's father was last reported to be in Minsk, Poland, in a concentration camp, in May, 1942, and the Red Cross has since been unable to establish additional information. His sister, Edith Kemeny, who now lives in Lawrence, is a Holocaust survivor of both Auschwitz and Bergen-Belson concentration camps, when she was liberated by the British in April, 1945.

Had it not been for Fred's decision to flee Nazi-occupied Europe as a teen-ager, he most certainly would have suffered a similar fate, and would never have been able to contribute so much to his adoptive country.

The Veterans Memorial Committee is asking veterans from World War II and other conflicts to provide a photograph in uniform, along with their name, present address, branch of service and unit, where and when they served, their principal assignment and summary of their service. Their individual experiences or unusual stories are also welcomed. All

photographs will be returned. Families of deceased veterans are also encouraged to submit articles

All material should be sent to The Lawrence Township Veterans Memorial Committee, P.O. Box 55966, Trenton, N.J. 08638. Inquires may be made by calling 882-9108.



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