

BLUE BLOOD

By Mike Harris

When Roy was in the army during WWII he ended up in North Africa, eight days plus D-Day. Lots of men landed at the port of Oran, but no equipment. Roy was part of a photo reconnaissance outfit that was to be formed wherever it was that he was to be deployed. As he said, lots of men, but the equipment not yet there.

He and several thousand others like him got off the ships, were formed into groups, were called to attention, counted off by eleven, and every eleventh man was asked to step forward. He happened to be an eleventh man. The officer then said, "Every eleventh man is a temporary sergeant." Roy turned to the men. "Who wants to be sergeant?" Dead quiet. "O.K. I am stuck with the job." The officer continued, "The men who counted off before you are your platoon. When you are dismissed you will stay in ranks, an officer will address you and march you to where you will await further orders."

"ATTENTION! Stay in ranks!" They formed up, an officer took charge, and the whole group was marched off to a large field. Temporary sergeants were told to get their platoon to set up their pup tents, two shelters, two men. Each platoon was issued an extra shelter half. The sergeant got to live alone.

Roy looked around and said, "We will set up on the slope." Immediately Burke said, "How about there on the flat?" Roy looked at the clouds and without explaining said, "Here on the slope." "Who made you boss?" Roy replied, "I gave you a chance to be the eleventh man and you refused. No one wanted the responsibility so I am boss. It is here on the slope!"

Most of the platoon started setting up and Burke fell in line and did not argue. That night it rained. In the morning when the platoon got up and came out of their tents and looked down at the flat, Burke said, "God, that is a lake down there, sure am glad to be on the slope where we are dry!"

The ten men in Roy's temporary platoon consisted mostly of east coast city recruits. Some of the names he still remembers, some he would always recognize, but Roy kept saying, "Too many years," and he could not recall all the names. There was Burke, from Long Island; Bertini, who had a business on the south Jersey shore; Sacchetti, newly married, who spoke flawless Italian; Miller, a high school teacher in Brooklyn; Morzinski of Russian extraction, who came from the Bronx. Then there was unforgettable Junior, seventeen years old, who got his first pair of manufactured shoes from the army. He still carried his homemade moccasins in his back pack, out of the hills of Tennessee. The best rifle shot I have ever seen.

While sitting around someone mentioned that in the army of the Reich there were people of royal rank and referred to them as "Blue Bloods." Junior, wanting to get in on the conversation, spoke up and said, "There is only red blood. No such thing as blue blood." At this point the platoon began to insist that there *was* such a thing as blue blood. Morzinski claimed he

descended from royalty and so was blue blooded. Junior shut up, shaking his head and said nothing and soon there was other talk. That night there was a scream from Morzinski's tent.

When the platoon broke into Morzinski's tent, Junior was astride Morzinski with a knife saying, "I ain't gonna hurt you. Just a scratch. I gotta see blue blood!"

We got Junior and Morzinski untangled and finally convinced Junior that it all was a hoax, but it could have led to dire consequences.