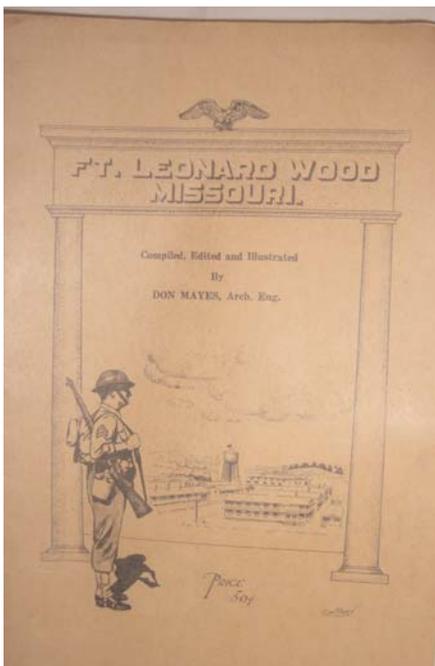


MIKE WAREBERG



Minerd Thomas "Mike" Wareberg was drafted into the US Army on 12 June 1941. He reported to Fort Snelling to be sworn in. Wareberg was sent to Fort Leonard Wood Missouri for Basic Training.



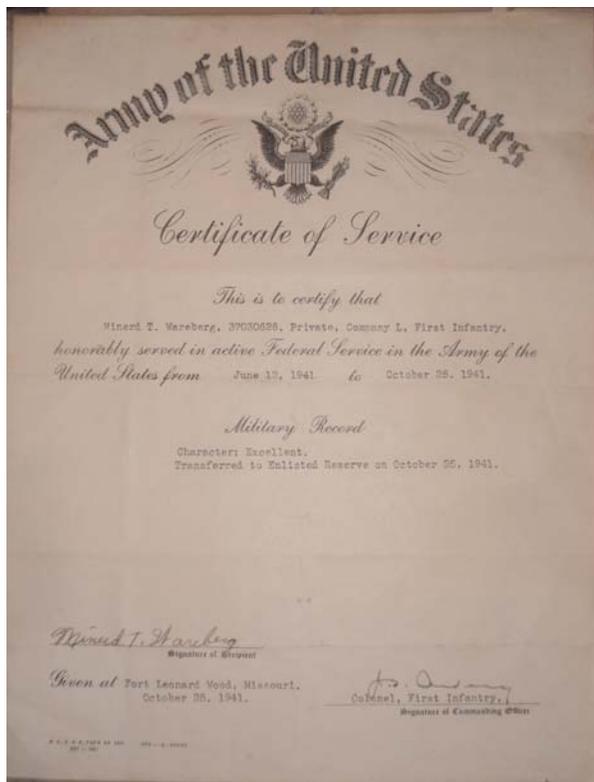
Fort Leonard Wood was a brand new installation. When Mike arrived, they had to clean out the left over supplies from building before moving into the barracks. Mike recalled having to sweep the sawdust off the floors, from the building process, just to be ready to move in.

Wareberg became a member of L Company, 1st Infantry, Sixth infantry Division. During his training, they did physical training, formation drills, weapons training, and learned the different types of gas used in gas warfare.

Wareberg's company at Fort Leonard Wood Missouri.

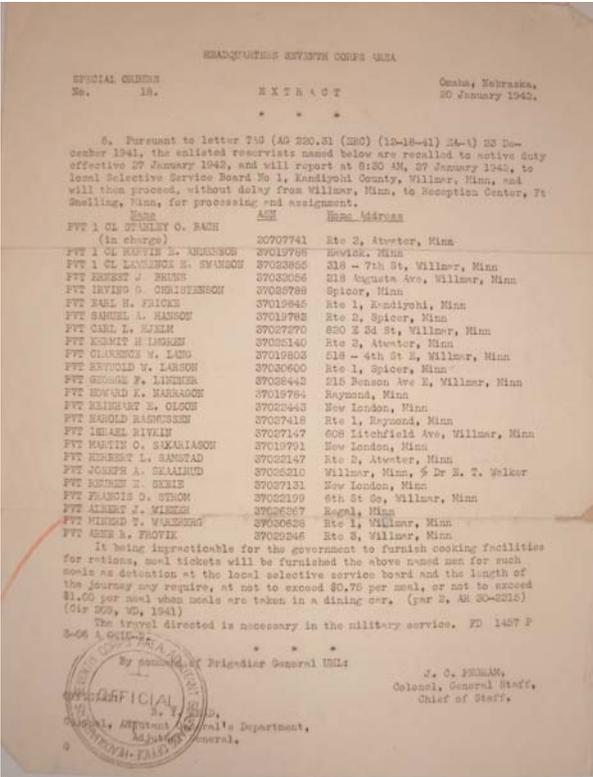


After completion of basic, Mike was transferred to the Enlisted Reserve on 25 October 1941.



Mike returned home to Willmar, as a part of the Inactive Enlisted Reserve. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, Mike was expecting to be recalled. His official recall came on 23 December 1942. He was ordered to report to Fort Snelling on 27 January 1942.

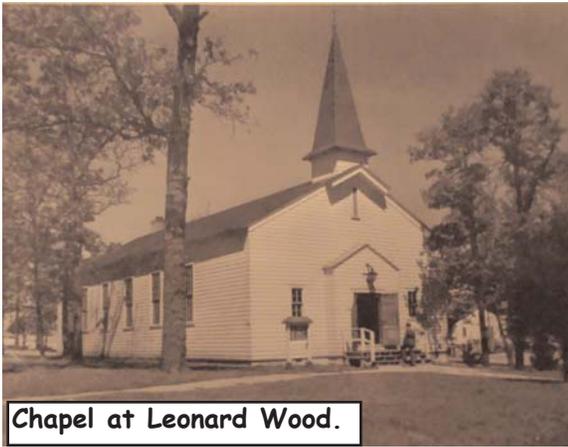
Mike's discharge (left) and recall to active duty letter (right).



Keepsake dresser scarf from Ft. Leonard Wood brought home by Mike.



Shortly after he arrived at Leonard Wood, Mike had to have surgery for hernia treatment. After his surgery, he was sent home for a 30 day leave to recover.

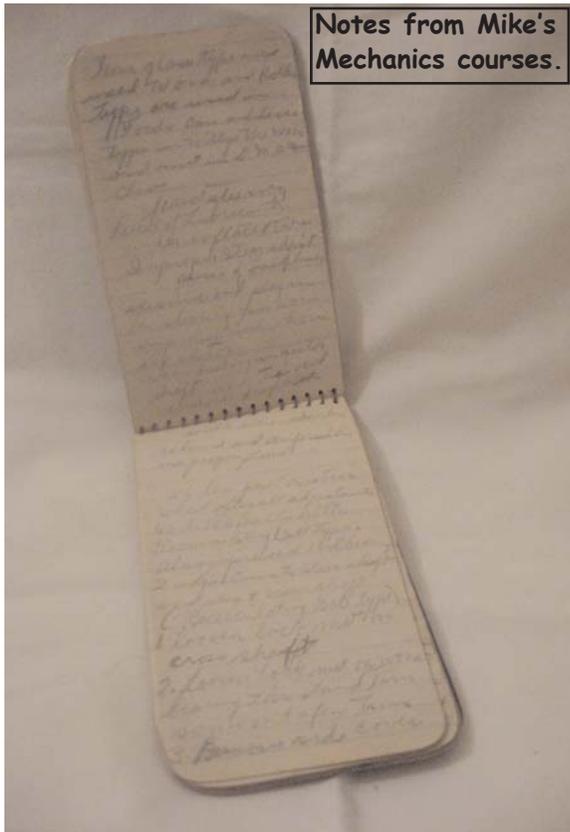
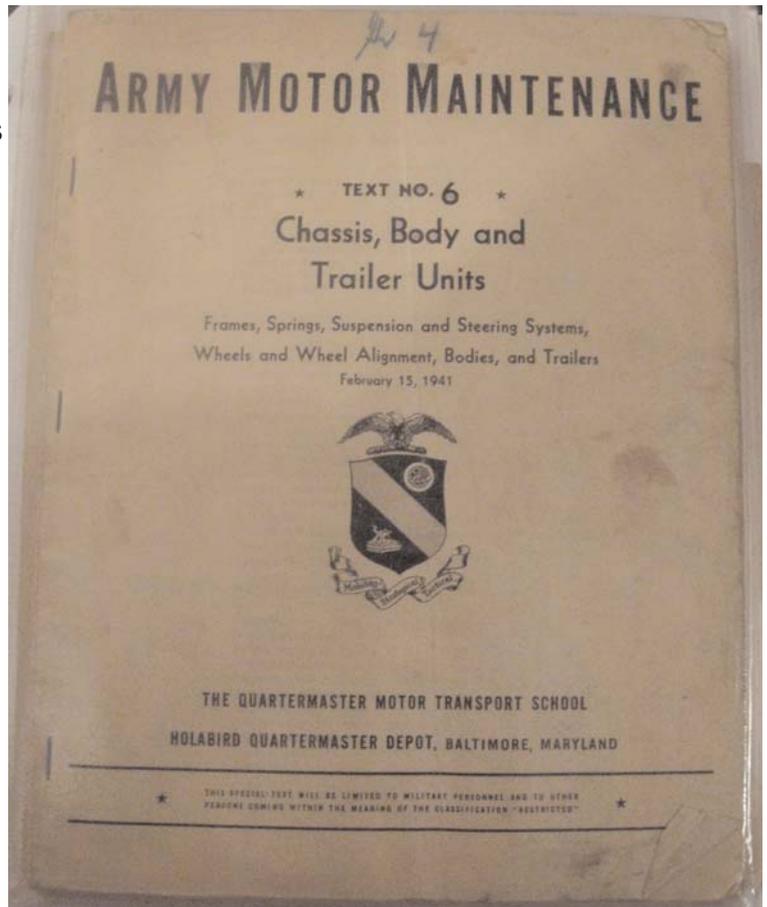


Chapel at Leonard Wood.

When he arrived back to Leonard Wood, his company, L Company, was gone. So Mike was transferred to Bravo Company (B Co).

In July 1942 Wareberg was sent to Fort Cook in Omaha Nebraska arriving on 5 July. He was to report for instruction for General Motor Mechanics at the 7th Corps Area Quartermaster Motor School.

While there, Mike studied General Motor Mechanics on Military Vehicles. He also studied the chassis, body, and trailer units. During the training, Mike was pushed, and tried to absorb the information that he was presented.



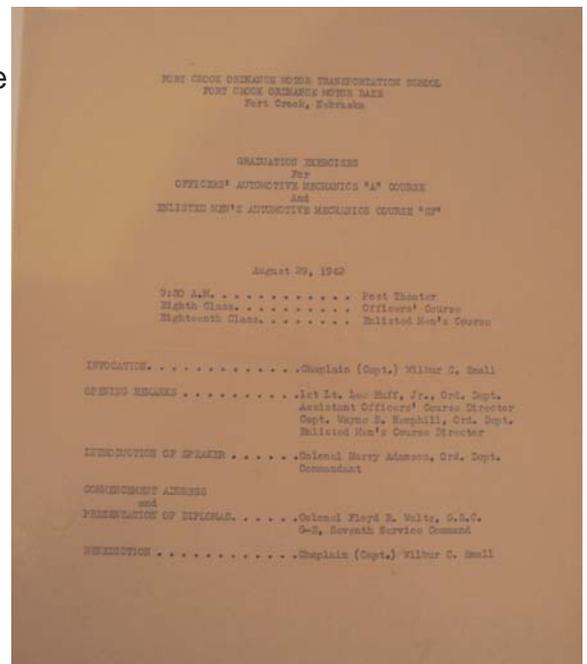
Much of the information came easy to him, but there where a few things he had to work at. Wareberg kept meticulous notes, scribbling down concepts and ideas on small spiral bound notebooks for easy reference.

After classes on the various components that were taught, Wareberg was then tested on his knowledge

of them. He was tested on multiple aspects of vehicle repair including power units, such as transmissions, chassis units, brake systems, steering systems, power generators, and more.

After a series of classroom and hands on exercises, Mike finished his 8 weeks of training.

On 29 August 1942, Mike graduated from the Automotive Mechanics Course at Fort Cook. At the graduation ceremony, Mike and the other graduates dined on a meal of Southern Fried Chicken, along with a wide variety of side dishes.



Graduation Program from Mike's Motor Mechanic's Course, August 1942.



Wareberg's Dogtags.

After completion of training, Wareberg rejoined Company B. On 25 November 1942, Mike and his unit were sent to the California/Arizona border for Desert Warfare Training.

The purpose of the desert maneuvers was to try to push the unit and the division into a smoothly functioning motorized fighting force.

The division needed to function and keep communication lines, and supply lines operational in desert situations.

At the time, the Army fully expected to train the men and then move directly into combat in the deserts as a part of the North African campaign. Mike's task was to try to keep the vehicles operational. On 7 September 1942, Mike was promoted to Technician Fourth Grade.

The trucks, jeeps, half-tracks, and armored vehicles traveled across the desert, pushing sand deep into areas not prepared for sand. The soft sandy landscape left the vehicles deep into the sand, up to hub deep. Life in the sand presented its challenges as the sand crept into all areas, beyond the vehicles. There was sand in almost everything, hair, ears, motors, beds, and worst of all for the men; food.

On Christmas day 1942, Santa brought the division a terrible sand storm, and more sand infested their Christmas dinner.



At almost every stop Wareberg made, he tried to pick up a souvenir to send home to his family in Willmar. These souvenir pillowcases were easily available.



Collapsible Cup used by Mike while in the Army

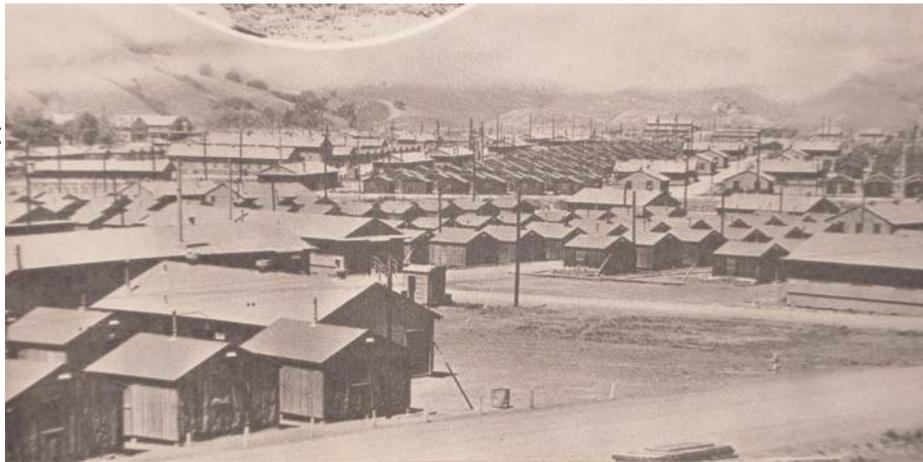
The training in the desert came to a quick end when soldiers in Africa had so much unexpected success that the need for more troops in the campaign would not be needed. Mike's desert experiences would come to an end, it was time to train for a different climate.



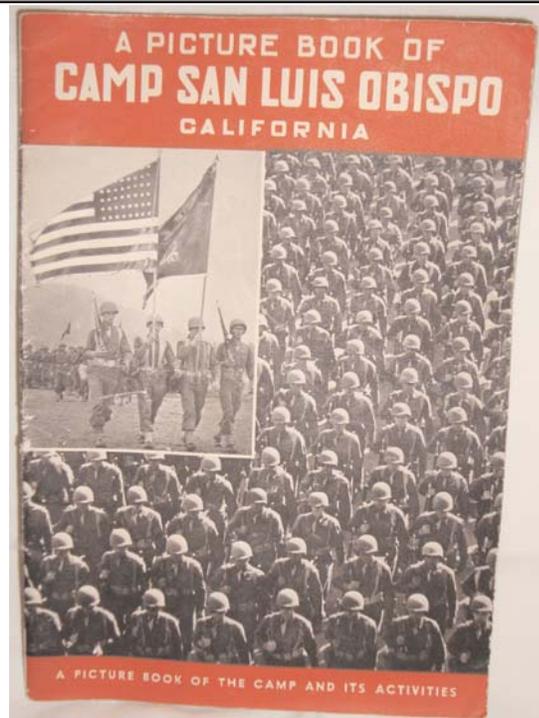
In March 1943, Mike and his unit were de-motorized and sent to Camp Luis Obispo California to begin Jungle training and small unit infantry training.

Mike spent some of his time in California learning Infantry tactics. Countless hours were spent on the rifle range, practicing and qualifying with numerous weapons.

They also practiced close order and assault drills with live ammo.



Camp San Luis Obispo in California. Only four miles from town, this was a welcome site coming from the vast desert before.

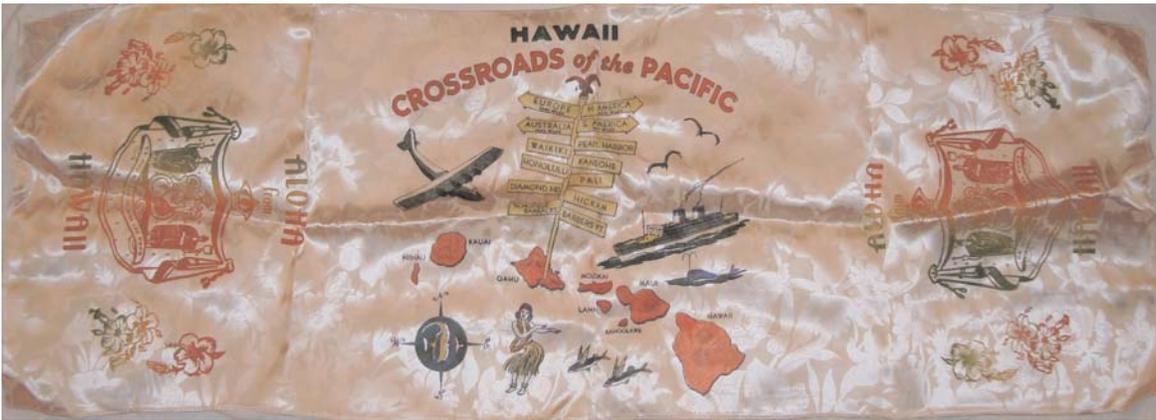


The California weather proved a blessing and a hindrance to the men of Mike's unit. The unpredictability of the weather was used as a training aid as well. At times, regardless of the weather, rain or shine, the men would be ordered in or out of their overcoats, and they needed to adjust accordingly. They could be all buttoned up, in the middle of the day in 70 degree heat.

Continually Wareberg and the men trained in the physical fitness program at San Luis Obispo as well. They consisted of Judo classes, timed marches, push up and sit-up drills, and foot races. They also practiced running obstacle courses under full combat packs. It was a strenuous part of training the men.

Their free time was spent in town, or at the local beaches at Pismo Beach and Morro Bay. The town was small but did offer the men on leave some chance to get away, and relax some from the rigors of being a soldier.

But soon, the time in California came to a close. In May, the Sixth Division received their alert orders. Over the next months, the entire Division left California. Mike's unit left in September.



Mike sent home a variety of keepsake items from the various places he was stationed including this table runner from Hawaii.

They departed from San Francisco with no idea where they were headed. After a couple of days at sea, they finally found out where they were going; Hawaii. They arrived on 26 September 1943.

Their primary purpose on Hawaii was to provide ground defense to Oahu. Although the Navy had rapidly recovered from the horrible attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese attack was still a possibility.



Mike (right with cigarette) in training in Hawaii practicing evacuation of wounded personnel.

In addition to providing security to the island, training never let up. Amphibious assault training and continued jungle training was conducted.

Simulated assault landings were held on the reef-ridden shores, training Mike and his unit for eventual assaults on Japanese held islands in the Pacific. They learned the hazards of the landing nets, and trudged ashore to concertina wire and other obstacles.

Division commander Major General Franklin Sibert also created an extremely difficult "Jungle Training" center for the troops of the Sixth Division, including Mike, to negotiate.

The continued physical fitness drills, along with the assault training and jungle training helped build the bodies that would soon be

going ashore on enemy held islands, and withstand sleepless nights under combat conditions.

The weather again played a part in the training, but many times was too ideal a tropical paradise to fully train the men for the conditions to come. On security patrols, they would go out into the field, constantly on the move. Many times they would travel the entire island to take up new positions. Night operations were conducted in total blackout conditions, even the glow of a cigarette could bring trouble from a commander.

Although the training was tough, Wareberg was able to make it out to the city from time to time between the training. The time away was needed, as soon he would be making his way farther from home, and deeper into the Pacific.



Soon Mike received orders for Jefferson Barracks, which in his mind meant that they would be heading overseas. In late January 1944, Mike boarded a troop-ship, part of a huge convoy of ships bringing the Sixth Division into the Pacific Theater.

On ship, Mike was appointed to submarine guard. He was in charge of a group that kept a look out for possible Japanese submarine attacks. This allowed him full run of the ship, no restrictions on where he could go. If he wanted to go check out the gun turrets, he could just go, unlike other soldiers on the ship. The job also came with some perks, at chow time, they could just jump in line wherever they wanted.

Mike noted that the trip over was a bit rough. The ships would go down, diving deep into the water, and then scooping up the water all over the deck and then coming back up again. At times, it was a wonder if they would come back up again. Although Wareberg didn't get sea sick, one of the men in his squad did. He noted that the man became sick the minute he got on the ship, the boat didn't even have to move.

Prior to their departure from Hawaii, Mike had been promoted to Staff Sergeant. He was designated as a squad leader, in charge of twelve men. At times, he would take up a whole platoon, four squads, but specifically he was just a squad leader.

Wareberg traveled to New Guinea. The ship stopped far enough away from shore to evade enemy artillery. Mike recalls climbing down the side of the ship on rope ladders, and boarding Landing Ships, Infantry (LSI's). they landed at Milne Bay. Mike recalls that there was little resistance during the initial landing.



Mike recalls meeting some of the natives of the island during his time there.

He noted that they were all over, but they couldn't trust them. The natives would work their way into the good graces of the Americans, then turn and bring the information back to the enemy.



While traveling the island, Mike saw some of the homes that the natives lived in. He said that they were not like homes we know of, just huts. Straw, or weeds bound together formed the roofs and walls. The Sixth Division pushed into the jungle, trying to build quarters for the men, roads, and defenses from the Japanese enemy holding the majority of the island.

Prior to any pushes farther into the island, artillery would send barrages of shells at the Japanese positions, trying to break down the resistance from the enemy.

Much of Mike's time on New Guinea during the early part of his stay there was spent on climatizing and training. It took some getting used to the climate change. It was much hotter and more humid than the areas he had been to previously. The weather in New Guinea was either raining, or so hot that you'd wish it would rain. General daily temperatures were around 115 degrees.

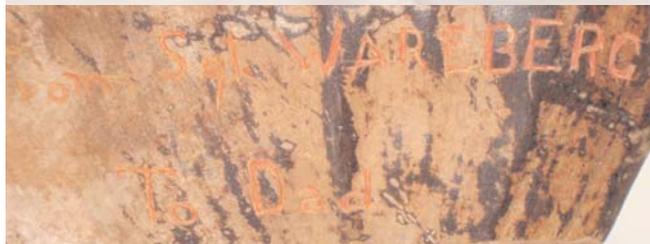


Due to the rain, and the sweat created from the heat, Mike didn't recall having a dry stitch of clothes the whole time he was in New Guinea. Because their duffel bags never dried out, he recalled that their stuff was molding.

Between training exercises, building, and unloading supply ships, Mike and his men waited. Waited for the word that they were going into combat, to take the island from the Japanese. They waited for letters from home, and wrote letters in return.

Slowly, they made their way deeper and deeper into the island. Meeting some resistance along the way. Much of the fighting that took place was done by the New Guinea natives, and the Australian allies.

From time to time, the monotony of waiting was broken up by Japanese aerial attacks. "Old Washing Machine Charlie", as they were referred to, would drop some ordinance near their positions.



At New Guinea, Wareberg sent a received letters home. In one of his mailings home, he sent this coconut, carved with his name and a note "To Dad". He didn't think they would take it, but they did.

As news came of American landings on nearby islands, Mike and his men all began to realize that soon it would be their turn to go into combat.

In late May 1944, the orders came

They were to push into New Guinea, and take the Maffin Bay area. The area was needed to provide air bases and staging areas from which assaults against the remaining Japanese held territory on the island.

On 10 June 1944 Mike was leading his squad into the jungle to wipe out the Japanese. Artillery had pummeled the area prior to, so there wasn't much left for wildlife left in the jungle. The enemy was well entrenched in caves, bunkers, and hills. Japanese soldiers were fairly well camouflaged, hard to see, but Mike said that they could see some of their positions.

Without being able to easily see all of the enemy, the plan was to subdue them, and keep them down with sheer firepower. The US was firing almost everything that they had at them. Mike recalls that bullets were flying all around.

The ground around Mike was being kicked up by incoming fire, along with branches being shot off all around and above him. It was an intense barrage of receiving and returning fire. A number of men were hit, wounded and some killed. With all the bullets flying, it would be hard not to get hit by something.

Then it happened, Wareberg was hit, multiple times in the arm and chest. Two bullets came crashing into his right arm, shattering the bone. Another bullet entered into his chest, right above his heart. Doctors report that the bullet stopped about a quarter of an inch from his heart, but did hit his lung.

Mike fell in the field, knocked out immediately after being hit. Unknown how long he was out of it, Mike came to laying on the ground. He tried to assess his wounds, and the thought went through his mind, "I'm not going to live through this."

Wareberg's Lieutenant came up to him, he was the first one to try to give Mike aid, and assigned a man to stay with Mike, try to take care of him the best they could. They tried to help Mike as best they could, creating a tourniquet for his arm.



Due to the high number of casualties, there were no stretchers available to pull Mike out on. Wareberg was put on a blanket, and carried out of the area by six men.

Initial observations on Mike told the men that he wouldn't make it. They grabbed on, and took off in a run to try to get him to help.

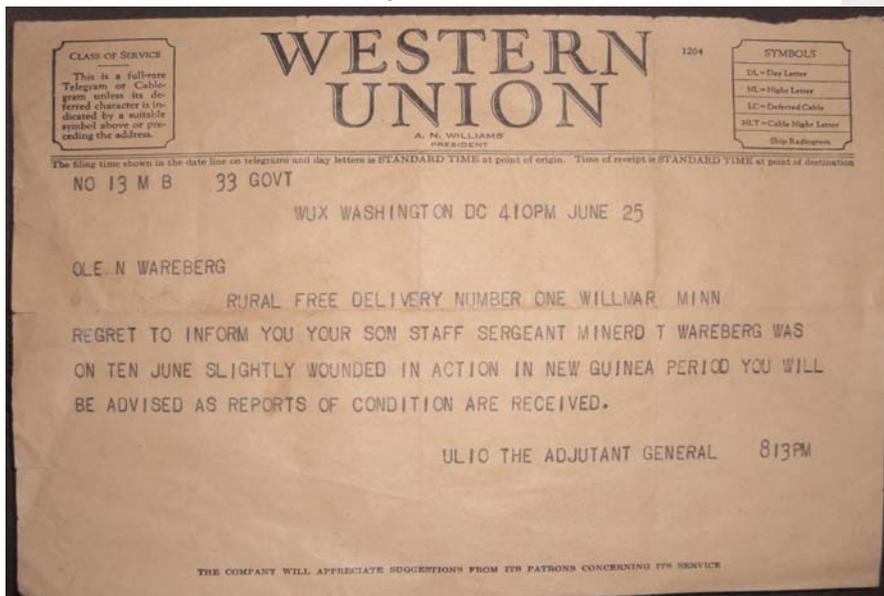
Sergeant Walter Hines was one of the men that carried Mike out. He didn't think that Mike made it. In 1988, Mike finally tracked him down and was able to thank him.



Mike was brought to the 54th Evacuation hospital. Here he was stabilized, and preliminary work on his wounds took place. On 13 June, he was moved to the 237th Station Hospital. When Mike came to, he looked and his right arm was gone, amputated due to the damage from the wounds.

Mike said, "The doctors were watching me very carefully, sending me back and forth to the operating room many times." Dr. Judd, former physician from the Mayo clinic in Rochester Minnesota, was one of the doctors that worked on Wareberg. He told Mike that after he assessed the wounds, Mike should have been dead.

Over two weeks after Mike was wounded in combat, his parents in Willmar received word. The telegram was vague in description & noted that he was only slightly wounded. The real severity of his wounds was not told.



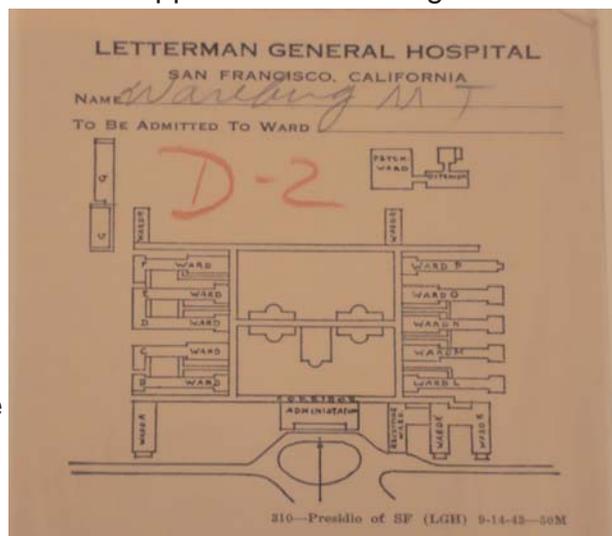
On ship, word came over the intercom that all those that were able could go up on deck. Mike made his way up there, and watched the ship moving toward what appeared to be a huge cloud bank. It was the shoreline to the California coast. A short time later, the silhouette of the Golden Gate Bridge came into view. Seeing the site, one would expect that there would be joyous celebration but the deck was silent.

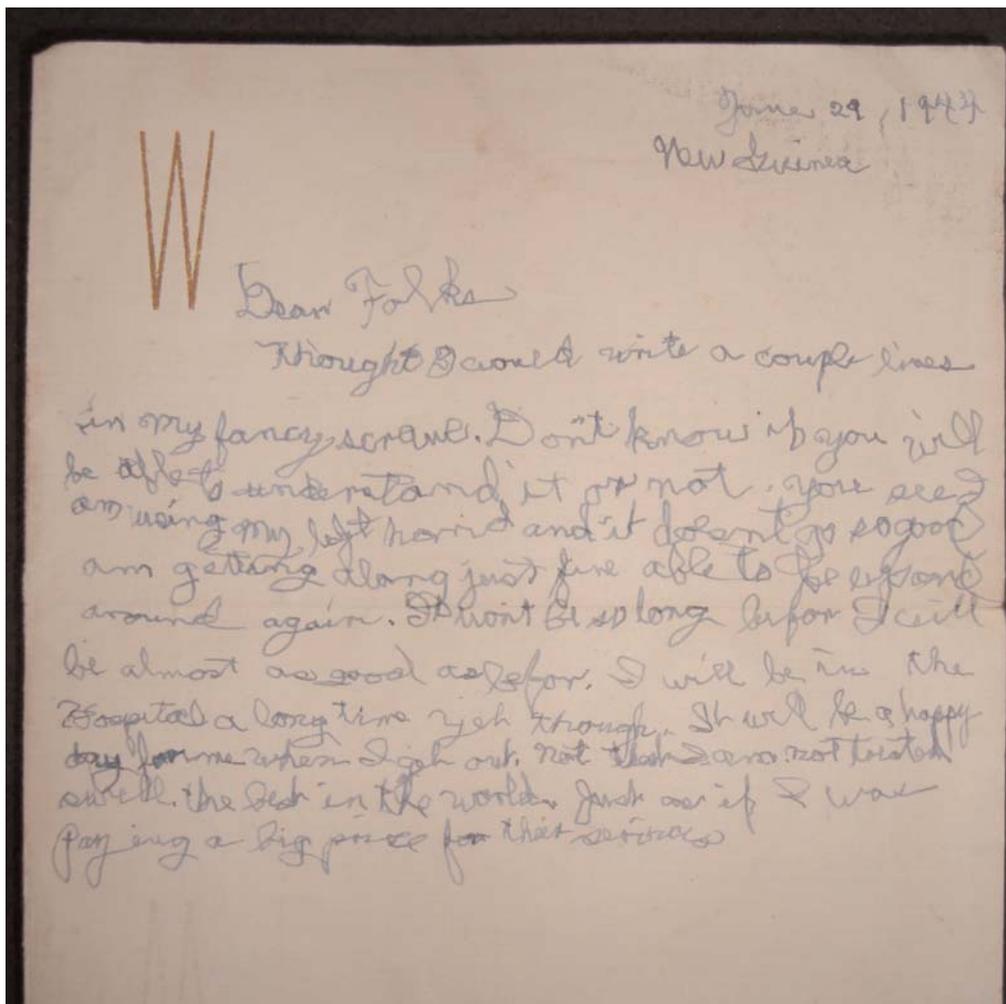
After passing under the bridge, the ship docked and Mike and the other wounded were helped off the ship, and put into waiting vehicles. A band was playing for them when they arrived. They were taken to Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco to be evaluated, and determine where to send them for further treatment. It was 19 September 1944. Mike had been gone from the United States for nearly a year.



On 15 July 1944, Mike was deemed stable enough to be transferred to the General Hospital 49 at Milne Bay. Here he underwent further surgeries.

On 30 August, Mike left the Pacific theater for continued medical treatment in the United States. He left on a passenger liner, for 21 days at sea.





Due to the severity of Mike's wounds, and the loss of his right arm, simple tasks, like writing a letter home were much more difficult.

This is Wareberg's first letter home to his family after his wounding. He is trying to write the letter with his left hand.



Carrying a wallet while on active duty was many times quite difficult. Above is Wareberg's money belt, like a wallet worn around the waist. Looking close, Mike's military Identification is stenciled on the front of the belt.

In 1942, while Mike was still in the United States, he bought this watch. The day he was wounded, he was wearing it. He continued to keep the watch throughout his service, and in the years after. Now over 60 years later, the watch still works.

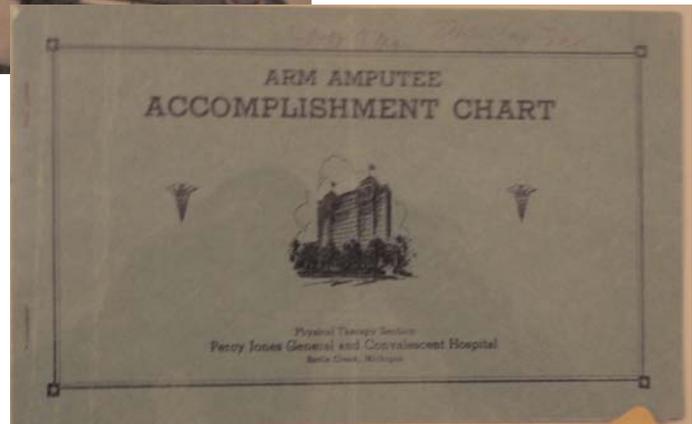
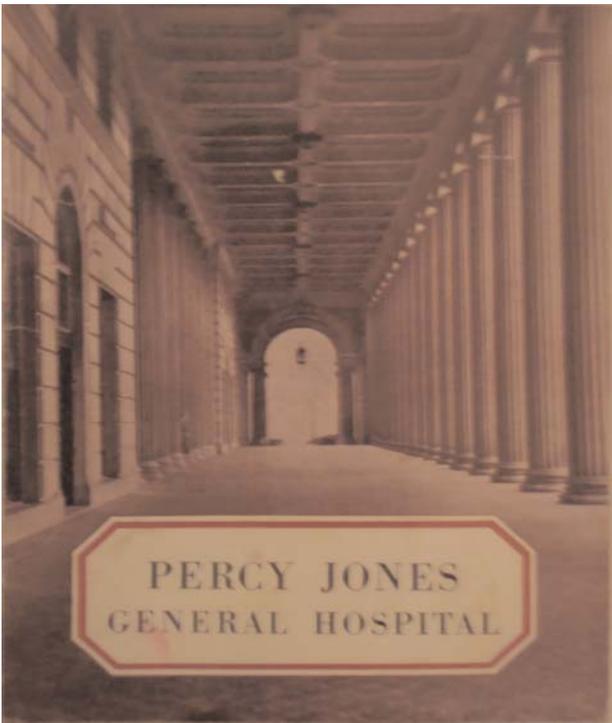




Mike was sent to Percy Jones General Hospital in Battle Creek Michigan.

At Letterman, they tried to decide where to send the wounded, so that they would be closer to home for their rehabilitation, and be able to provide for any special needs. Percy Jones was the closest spot for Mike to go.

He arrived on 28 September 1944. On 10 October, Wareberg received a second amputation on his right arm.



At Percy Jones, Mike was given a prosthetic arm and went for rehabilitation to learn how to use it.

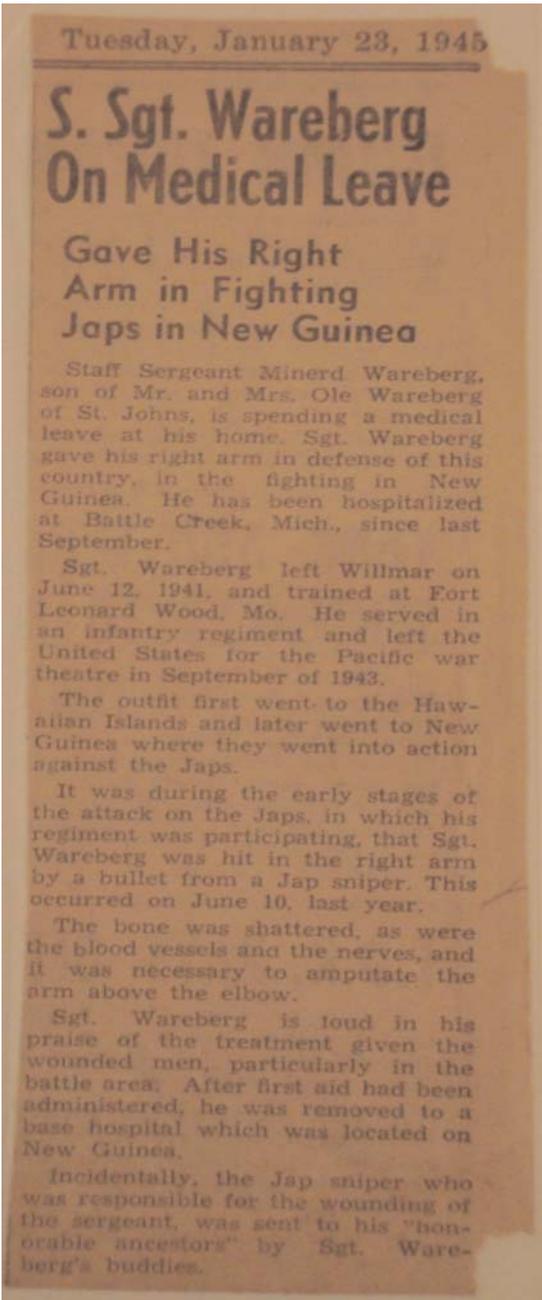
In December 1944, Wareberg was feeling a bit better, and was thinking of home and family. He asked his doctor for the ability to go home for

Christmas. The doctor said no, but after some prodding by Mike, he finally said, "Ok, I'll give you thirty days."

Wareberg got his furlough papers, and packed up his excess baggage to send home. He hopped a train for Chicago, then waited for a connection train to St. Paul.

Waiting, the conductor of the train Mike was to ride came up to him and asked where he was going. "St. Paul", Mike replied and the conductor said come with me. He was put into a fancy nice area for his ride home.



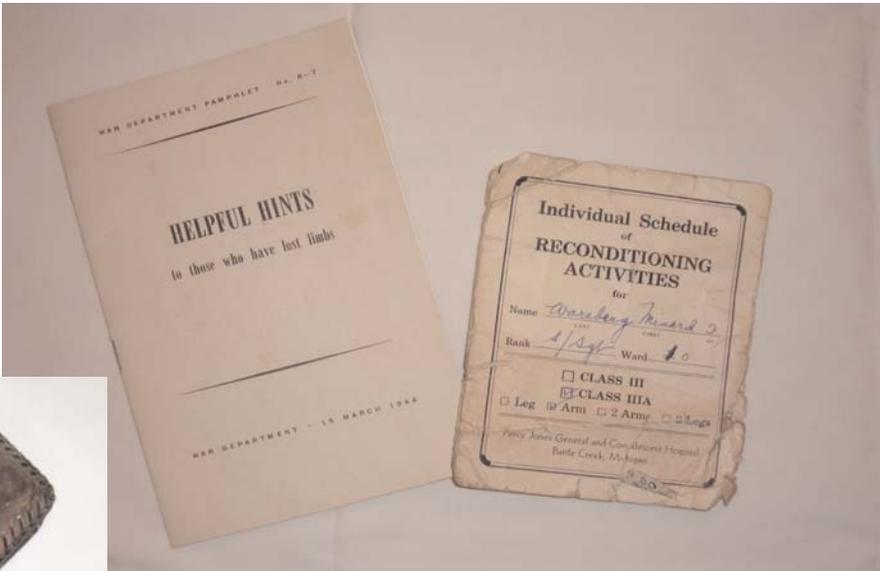


When he arrived in St. Paul, again he waited. There were two MP's (Military Police) in the depot, and they were eying Mike up. Mike thought, "What's wrong?" he hadn't done anything wrong to draw attention to himself. Finally, they came over to him and apologized. They said they were going to come and tell him to get his hand out of his pocket, but then they realized that he didn't have an arm.

Soon, Wareberg's train for Willmar arrived, and he boarded for the final trek home. He didn't pay much attention to the towns as he went through them until he got to Litchfield, and thought to himself, "Only twenty eight miles more."

When he arrived in Willmar, two of his sisters were at the station waiting for him. He thought that they might break his ribs from the strong, tight hugs he received when he got there. Years later, looking back on it, Mike felt that the Christmas of 1944 was one of the best Christmases that he ever had. He thought that he could have died on New Guinea, but made it home for Christmas.

After his furlough, Mike returned to Battle Creek Michigan for further rehabilitation. Mike needed to learn how to do all of the things that he needed to do to care for himself with the use of prosthesis.

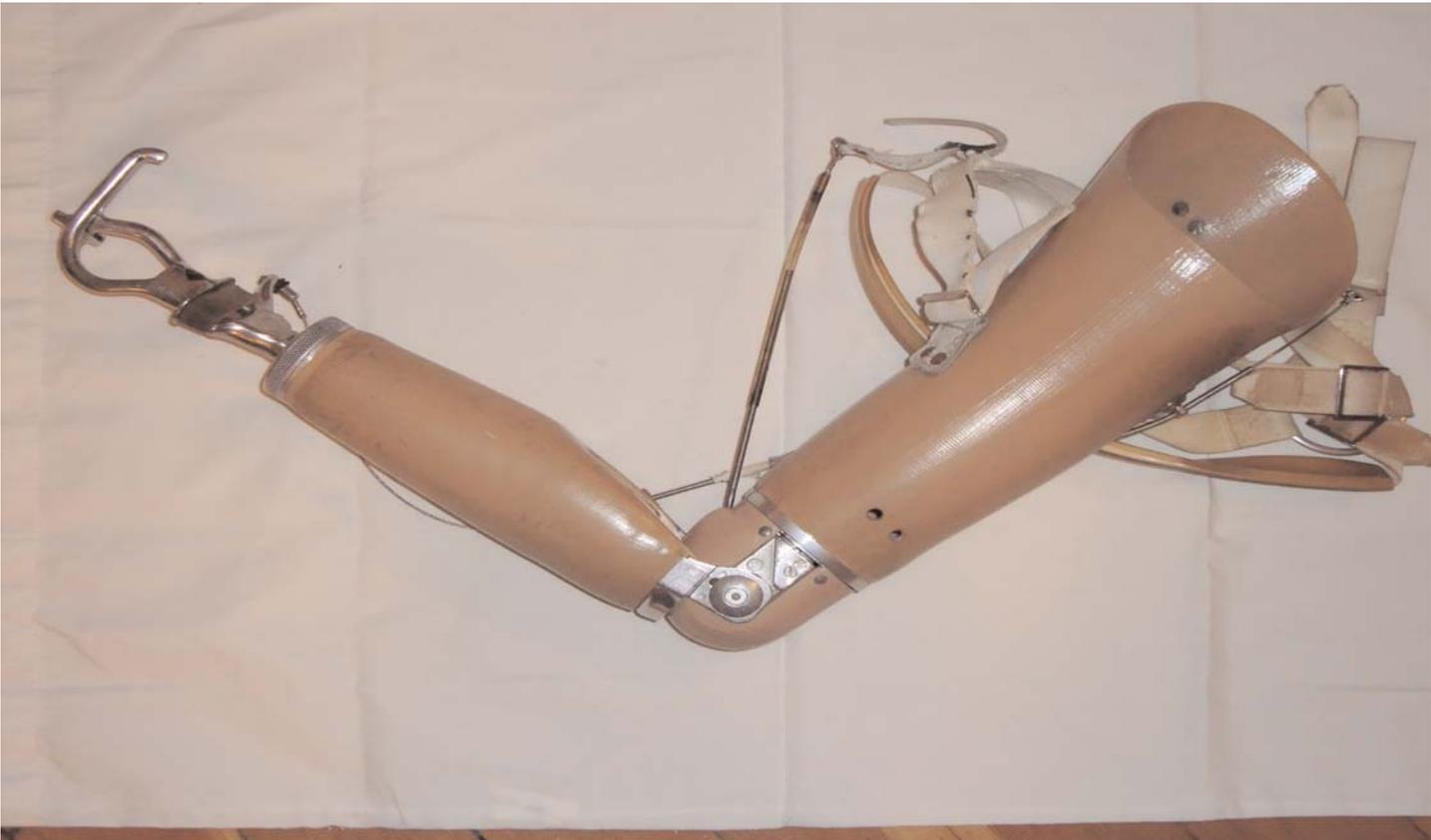


Wallets made by Mike during his rehabilitation.



At Percy Jones, the rehabilitation consisted of working on projects like weaving, and model building to get used to using his prosthetic arm.

They were attempting to try to help Mike cope with the use of the arm, and learn to use it like it was second nature. At times, it could be tough and a bit discouraging, but Mike never let up.



Early Prosthetic arm used by Mike Wareberg. The prosthetic was provided to him by the US Army, which had devoted an entire department to developing and researching prosthetics. Below is one of the hook attachments, and composite hands that could go on the arm. Notice on the boxes for the hook and hand APRL, Army Prosthetic Research Laboratory.





DRIVING. S Sgt. Minerd Warebert, of
Williams, Minn., earns his driver's license.
Ted Aramaki, of Hawaii, is instructor.

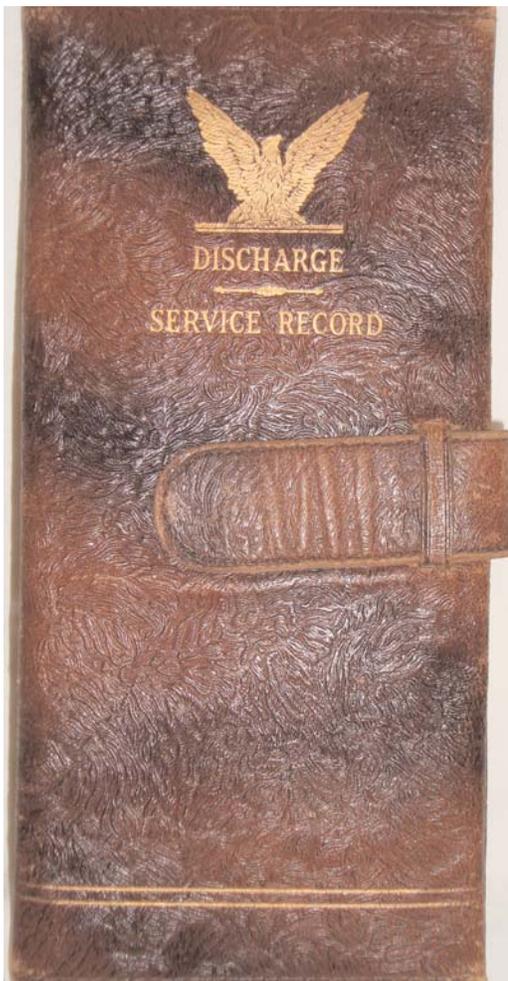
Another task Mike had to learn was how to drive. At Percy Jones, they had instruction on how to operate a vehicle with his artificial arm.

On 18 January 1945, Wareberg passed his tests and received his driver's license from the state of Michigan. In February he was notified that he received his Minnesota license, on a restricted level. He had to wear his arm, and drive a vehicle equipped with a knob type steering wheel and mechanical or electrical signaling devices.

After nine months in the hospital, receiving operations and rehabilitation, Staff Sergeant Mike Wareberg was discharged from the US Army on 7 March 1945.



Photo frame made by Wareberg while in rehabilitation.





Above left, Mike Wareberg, early in his military career. Above right, Mike's Army uniform jacket on display at the Kandiyohi County Historical Society.



To the left and below are some of Wareberg's hats from his time in the Army.





In the years following the war and his hospitalization, Mike continued to live in Willmar. He was married to Gladys Peterson in 1948. He worked various jobs and received accounting training through a correspondence course.

Mike became an active member of the American Legion in Willmar, and a member of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV).

On 28 March 2007, Minerd Wareberg passed away in Willmar. He was 94 years old.

Something that we take for granted is the ability to trim our finger nails. With an artificial arm, Mike noticed that it wasn't something that he could do anymore the same way. He created the item above to do that. He would put the disk in his lap, and pull the clipper shut using the hook attached to the string with his foot.



Caps worn by Wareberg as a member of the DAV Chapter 34.

