

## **A Hitch in Hell \***

By Sgt George Miasner

Camp Claiborne, Louisiana

And

ERTC, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri

### I

I'm sitting here and thinking of the things I've left behind  
And I have to put on paper, what is running through my mind  
We've dug a million ditches, and cleared ten miles of ground  
A meaner place this side of hell, is waiting to be found  
But there's one small consolation --- gather closely while I tell  
When we die we'll go to heaven -- for we've done our hitch in hell

### II

We've built a thousand kitchens, for the cooks to stew our beans  
We've stood a million guard mounts, we've never acted mean  
We've washed a million mess kits, and peeled a million spuds  
We've rolled a million blanket rolls, and washed the captain's duds  
The number of parades we've stood, is very hard to tell  
But we'll not parade in heaven -- for we've done our hitch in hell

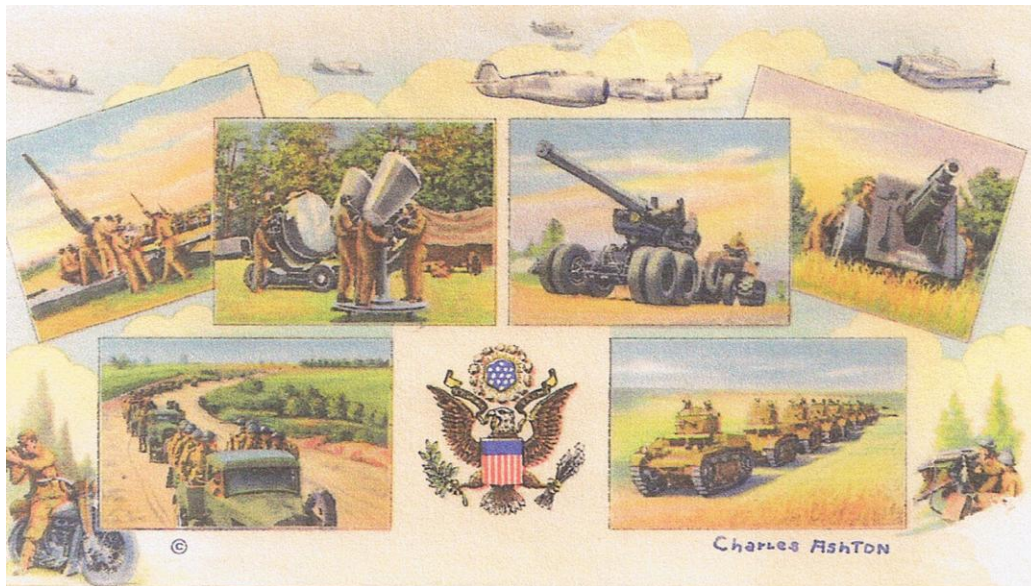
### III

We've killed a million rats and bugs, that crawled out of our eats  
We've pulled a thousand centipedes, from out our dirty sheets  
We've marched a million miles, and made a million camps  
The grub we've had to eat at times, has given us the cramps  
But when our work on earth is done, our friends behind will tell  
They surely went to heaven -- for they did their hitch in hell

### IV

When final taps is sounded, and we've laid aside life's cares  
We'll do our last parade upon, those shining golden stairs  
The angels will all welcome us, and harps will start to play  
We'll draw a million canteen checks, and spend them all one day  
The Great Commanding General, will smile on us and tell  
Take a front seat soldiers -- You've done your hitch in hell.

\* Transcription – Original text (from WWII) is reproduced below,  
courtesy of Debbie Anderson, Frank Priesnitz' daughter.



## A HITCH IN HELL

I  
 I'm sitting here and thinking of the things I've left behind  
 And I have to put on paper, what is running through my mind  
 We've dug a million ditches, and cleared ten miles of ground  
 A meaner place this side of hell, is waiting to be found  
 We've had our consultation --- gather closely while I tell  
 When we die we'll go to heaven -- for we've done our hitch in hell  
 II  
 We've built a thousand kitchens for the cooks to stew our beans  
 We've stood a million guard mounts, we've never acted mean  
 We've washed a million mess kits, and peeled a million spuds  
 We've rolled a million blanket-rolls, and washed the Captain's duds  
 Her number of parades we've stood, is very hard to tell  
 But we'll not parade in heaven -- for we've done our hitch in hell

III  
 We've killed a million rats and bugs, that crawled out of our eats  
 We've pulled a thousand centipedes, from out our dirty sheets  
 We've marched a million miles, and made a million camps  
 The grub we've had to eat at times, has given us the cramps  
 But when our work on earth is done, our friends behind will tell  
 They surely went to heaven -- for they did their hitch in hell

"O U E X"

When final taps is sounded, and we've laid aside lifes cares  
We'll do our last parade upon, those shining golden stairs  
The Angels all will welcome us, and harps will start to play  
We'll draw a million canteen checks, and spend them all one day  
The Great commanding General, will smile on us and tell  
Take a front seat soldiers -- You've done your hitch in hell.

By Lt  
George Mearns  
Camp 100  
Louisiana

E. R. J. C.  
Fort Leonard Wood  
Missouri

***The following poem was submitted by William C. Harvey, a member of the 376<sup>th</sup> Harbor Craft Co. It is taken from their Company History.***

### **A Hitch in Hell**

I'm sitting here and thinking of the things I left behind,  
And I'd hate to put on paper what is running through my mind.  
We have dug a million ditches, cleared a million miles of ground  
And a lousier place than this darn hole is waiting to be found.  
There's a certain consolation though, so listen as I tell,  
When we die we'll go to heaven for we've done our stretch in hell---

We've built a million kitchens for the cooks to burn our beans.  
We've stood a million guard mounts and cleaned the camp latrines.  
We've rolled a million blankets and washed our dirtyduds,  
We've washed a million mess kits and peeled a billion spuds,  
The number of parades we stood is very hard to tell,  
There'll be no parades in heaven, for we've done our hitch in hell---

We've killed a million ants or bugs that crawled from out our food,  
And shook a million centipedes from bunks and sheets that stood,  
We've marched a hundred million miles and pitched a million camps,  
We've pulled a million leaches, from out our khaki pants.  
But when our work on earth is done, our friends behind will tell,  
That we have gone to Heaven for we've done our hitch in hell---

And when the final taps are played and we lay aside our cares,  
And do our final big parade, right up those golden stairs,  
The angels will all welcome us as the harps begin to play,  
And we'll draw a million canteen checks and spend them all that day.  
Gabriel will blow his horn and St. Peter proudly yell:-

“FRONT SEATS YOU GUYS FROM GORDON JOHNSTON, YOU'VE DONE YOUR HITCH IN HELL.”----

***\*Note: Mr. Harvey also donated a Company history, as well as two large photos of water craft used by the men of the 376<sup>th</sup>. Included with the photos is the following information: One photo is U.S. Army QS 44 which was 110 to 125 feet long with a crew of 23. It was powered by 16 cylinder Allison Aircraft engines. A shallow draft allowed it to go into shallow water to pick up wounded soldiers, generals, etc. who needed to get somewhere fast. It had a top speed of 35 knots. The other photo was the U.S. Army ST 24 Deep Sea Tug which had a crew of 10. Its speed was about 18 knots, if no ships were in tow. Mr. Harvey served aboard the ST 66 when we occupied Japan. The photos were taken in Marivales Harbor, Philippines, in 1945. Ed***

<http://www.campgordonjohnston.com/v10n3.pdf>

Note accompanying image below: "My grandfather did a variation of that poem in WWII. Our family thought he wrote it but it looks like he only changed some of the words. He was also in the CCC camps and i've seen other variations of it with the CCC as well. He named it a 'Hitch in Hell'." There was also a note claiming it was composed in WWI

A HITCH INN HELL

I am sitting here and thinking of things I left behind,  
And I'd hate to put on paper what is running through my mind,  
We have dug so many ditches, cleaned a hundred miles of ground,  
Another place this side of hell, I'm sure cannot be found.  
There's a certain consolation though, so listen as I tell -  
When we die we'll go to heaven, 'cause  
We've done our hitch in hell!

We have built so many kitchens where the cook can stew his beans,  
We've built a million gun mounts and cleaned the camp latrines,  
We have washed a million pots and we've peeled a million spuds,  
We have rolled up many a blanket and washed the C.O.'s duds.  
The actual count of reveilles we've stood is hard to tell,  
In heaven there'll be no reveilles,  
'Cause we've done our hitch in hell!

We have killed a million ants and bugs that crawl upon our ears,  
And shook a million centipedes and snakes from our dirty sheets,  
We've marched a hundred thousand miles and pitched a million camps,  
We've picked the Regan cactus from the seats of Khaki pants.  
When our work on earth is finished, then our friends behind will tell,  
'Cause those men all went to heaven,  
'Cause they've spent their hitch in hell!

We've taken strabnine daily, those bitter little pills,  
To fortify our system against the fever and the chills,  
We've seen a million Ack Ack burst above us in the sky,  
As we run for our slit trenches when the "Daisy Cutters" fly.  
Up! out those lights and cigarets, "we hear the sergeant yell,  
This isn't any picnic, it's another hitch in hell."

When the final taps are sounded and we shed our earthly cares,  
We'll pull our best parade of all upon the Golden Stairs,  
The angels will be there to greet us and their harps will gladly play,  
We'll draw a million canteen checks and spend them all in a day.  
He'll hear Gabriel blow his horn, and St. Peter proudly yell!  
'Front seats you guys from Guinea ---  
You've spent your hitch in hell."

P.S.  
To whom it may concern:  
If you don't believe it, then just enlist and  
come here. **THATS A DARE!!!**  
Clyde M. McKee