John Harakal

WORLD WAR II ADVENTURES

February 19, 1943 - October 23, 1945

by Warren S. West

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE DIVISION PATCH AND ITS HISTORY

IN the middle of the 19th Century, pioneers of a rapidly expanding America pushed their way over a trail they could follow only as they hacked it out, leading the development of the great Western Territory. It became known as the Santa Fe Trail. When the wind blew dust across the plains the trail was often obscured, so the pioneers eventually marked the trail with crosses to guide travelers.

The winning of the Western Territory, with the many hardships, battles against nature and the Indian Wars, was accomplished by pioneers traveling in covered wagons. Since the 35th Division was originally formed in the area of Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska, and in the first World War trained at Camp Doniphan, Oklahoma, near the eastern end of the Santa Fe trail, a shoulder patch was adopted consisting of a white Santa Fe cross upon a wagon wheel with four quadrant projections, symbolizing the courage, ruggedness and pioneer trail-blazing spirit of the people whose descendants form the nucleus of the Division.

FOREWORD

IF THE HISTORY of the 35th Division could be written in one word, that word would be "attack." Few, if any divisions can claim a record of ten months of almost continuous action, many days of which were in bitter attacks, nor can many divisions claim some 1600 miles of *combat* travel. From the time we landed at Omaha Beach, early in July through St. Lo, the Vire River, Mortain, Orleans, Montargis, Troy, Nancy, Sarreguemines, the Blies River, Bastogne, the lower Vosges, the Roer River, Venlo, Wesel, the Ruhr and on to the Elbe, the division established a record for aggressive action, determination, and the ability to win battles second to none. Such a feat can only be accomplished by careful coordination and the full cooperation of everyone connected therewith, based on plans carefully prepared and carried through to their conclusion.

For our success, full credit is due to an exceptionally smooth functioning staff, to a determined group of commanders who knew but one motto, "advance," and to as fine a group of non-commissioned officers as any unit can boast of. But when all is said and done, the finest staff work and best type of command will fail, if the determination and the will to do of the individual soldier is lacking. I cannot praise too highly the indomitable spirit of our soldiers who withstood the worst that the Germans could offer in shot and shell, as well as the bitterest mud, rain and extreme cold that the weather could produce. This spirit of determination not only pervaded the division and its attached units throughout the operation, but was quickly imbued in all reinforcements that arrived. No better illustration can be offered than the fact that when the division received 2200 replacements in a four day period prior to Christmas Day 1944, and had but one day, Christmas Day to absorb them, these new members became so imbued with the spirit of the division, that within the following ten days, the 35th not only drove the Germans from the Arlon-Bastogne highway, but for four days withstood the withering attack of elements of four of the best divisions the Germans had.

Successful action as fierce and sustained as that in which the 35th Division was engaged, unfortunately, entails a price. We, too, paid that price. The brilliant deeds of those comrades we left behind, of those who will bear the scars of war, as well as the rest of us fortunate enough to return in good health, are indelibly recorded in the pages of history; all members of a proud, aggressive, successful division—heroes every one.

PAUL W. BAADE
Major General, U. S. A.
Commanding

PREFACE

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This is the story about how these "adventures" came to be:

On Sunday, March 13, 1994, Phyllis Shields was to preside at the 10:30 a.m. service at the Enoch Hill congregation. She called the Sunday evening before to ask if I might be willing to take part in the service, joining her and Tom Waters by giving one of the three scheduled short talks. She was thoughtful enough to say I didn't have to if I didn't want to, but without hesitation I said, "Yes". She said the theme was to be *Move Forward in Faith.*

My thoughts immediately turned to an event which took place many years ago and I told her what I had in mind. She asked for a title and I told her I would come up with one. The next morning she came out to the house with the service ready to be typed and asked for my title. It wasn't too satisfactory to me and after reading her own suggestion I immediately discarded my own. Her title was *Into the Unknown.*

The event mentioned a moment ago occurred in January 1945 in Belgium while my Army outfit was engaged in the Battle of the Bulge, more correctly called *The Ardennes Campaign.*

As I read my outline to Phyllis at our dining room table I was both surprised and embarrassed to become emotional enough to have to stop reading for a moment, twice.

Many times as I wrote to Alice during the war I had written, "I know that God was with me today", but because our letters were censored, I couldn't tell her why. This experience was probably one of those days. But back then, we just knew that we had come through safely.

There were times that I was absolutely and completely terrified and I have literally shaken from total fear. God never promised to keep fear away from me, but He **always** protected me from harm.

Last Monday, I guess, was the first time I really came to grips about God's hand in my life during the war.

After reading this, Phyllis suggested I write this experience down for John and Bob because they had never really heard about the war and how it was fought, so I did. It will be found in *The Ardennes Campaign* chapter. Then thinking it might also be interesting to them to hear about my training and other experiences, this project was started. If each of "A" Company's 98 men and five officers wrote their own personal experiences of their Army service, there would be 103 different stories. This one is mine.

WORLD WAR II DIARY

In writing a history of my World War II experiences I am copying a word-for-word record of the diary kept during training in the United States. We were forbidden to keep one overseas "for security reasons" should we be captured. After reading our post-World War II newspaper, *The 35th Divisionnaire* I have discovered many of the officers did keep journals, however, because many articles written by them refer to their diaries. R.H.I.P!

This diary was a gift from my parents as I left for Fort Leavenworth and it was only kept sporadically, when especially interesting events took place. Of course at the age of 18 and having been only in the states of Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma and Arkansas at that time, almost everything was interesting for a while. Here we go.

SERVICE RECORD

Transfers and Changes in Rank

1. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas Army Reception Center. Sworn in February 19, 1943, which was Daddy's 44th birthday. Went home for a week then returned to Fort Leavenworth on active duty.

2. Because I had an unusual trousers size, I was kept at Leavenworth for three weeks waiting for my size to arrive. The rest of my buddies from Independence were long gone. I acted as Barracks Orderly during that time, missing all the special details such as Battalion Fatigue (trash collecting), Area Policing (picking up cigarette butts, paper, etc.) My only responsibility was to keep a record of those men arriving and departing to new assignments each day. One other man was also detained because of his size. "Tiny" Wirth was very heavy and slept on the top bunk. I was beneath him. He was so large that I could put a *LIFE* magazine on my stomach and prop it against the bed springs of the upper bunk which were sagging dangerously, and read it without holding it in my hands.

3. March 21, 1943. With a dozen or so other men I left Fort Leavenworth for Camp San Luis Obispo, California on the Santa Fe Railroad. The cars we rode on from Leavenworth to the Kansas City Union Station were so old that they still had kerosene lamps hanging from the ceiling. Electric lights had been installed, however. I called the folks from the Union Station and told them I was headed for California to join the 35th Infantry Division, Daddy's old World War I outfit. Was I excited, only having been in four states up to this time!

4. Charles (Red) Mastin was given charge of us even though he was a draftee too. We would bug him about when it was time to eat, etc., which he took good naturedly.

One of the men in our group was Tony Griemel, who sat sullenly looking out of the window speaking to no one. He was built like *Lil Abner* with broad shoulders and powerful arms. We found out later he had gone AWOL from the Cavalry at Fort Riley, Kansas and had gotten off a 42 month sentence on the rock pile, hence his amazing physique. He later turned out to be one of my best buddies. I could reason with him when he was drunk when no one else could. They were afraid of making him mad. He later turned out to be one of the bravest soldiers I knew!

5. We arrived at Camp San Luis Obispo, California on March 26, 1943 after a five day journey.

6. It was late at night and we were assigned the squad huts where we would live. I loved to listen to the Southern Pacific steam freight engines pulling their train of cars around the base of the mountain and listen to the echo of the whistles.

7. Upon our arrival we found the division was in process of moving to Camp Rucker, Alabama so on March 28, 1943, we got back on the train for the trip east.

CAMP RUCKER, ALABAMA

8. Tuesday, August 17, 1943. I made T-5 today. Wonder of wonders. This was the cause of several transfer requests by the older National Guard men who did not get promotions. They objected to us younger ones coming into the company and getting "their" promotions. (I was only 18 years old.)

9. Friday, November 12, 1943. We leave Monday (November 15) for maneuvers in Tennessee. Headquarters and A.P.O. #35 c/o Postmaster, Nashville.

10. Company arrived at Camp Butner, North Carolina Thursday, January 21, 1944.

11. Went to West Virginia at Seneca where we learned to scale cliffs, about February 10, 1944. Returned to Butner March 9, 1944.

CITATIONS, AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

A. Bronze Star Medal for Heroic Achievement.
b. Good Conduct Medal - April 5, 1944.
c. American Campaign Medal.
d. EAMET Medal. (European, African, Middle Eastern Theater Medal) with five campaign stars: Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland and Central Europe.
e. Victory Medal, World War II.
f. Army of Occupation (Germany), World War II.

OFFICERS
I Have Met

Captain Roy M. Matson, M.C. (M.C. denotes *Medical Corps* showing the officer is a doctor.) He was a pretty good C.O. but was strictly G.I. He never swore. At the Retreat ceremony the night before a big Saturday morning inspection by the Battalion Commander, he would say, "I want your uniforms pressed like the "vury" dickens and I want your shoes shined like they have never shined before!

Captain Arthur Murray, M.C. "Commando Art", as we called him behind his back on maneuvers, was always "up at the one-three-four". (134th Infantry Regiment where we got our orders.) He would come back into the Station Section where I was working and tell us, "I just got back from the one-three-four". He didn't function as well as "Mattie" when he took command of the company after Mattie's promotion to Major.

2nd Lieutenant Romsiewicz, M.A.C. (ROM-sa-wick). Here is one boy that is really on the ball. He'll talk to a Private just as soon as he would another officer. Everyone likes him.

Captain Everett Brillhart, M.C. Here is another real soldier. He knows his stuff and really sticks up for his men. Most guys like him.

Captain McDermitt, M.C. We just got him two weeks ago. (Approximately April 10). Don't know much about him but he seems to know his stuff.

CIVILIANS
I Have Met While in the Service

THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN THE DIARY OF MY LIFE IN THE SERVICE

1. Camp Rucker, Alabama, May 13, 1943. Got a Conklin pen and pencil set for my birthday. We are kind of wondering about the 28th Division moving in. It was rumored that the 35th wasn't supposed to be here. Who know, we may not be here long. (I hope.) This Rucker deal is getting monotonous and I am getting tired of the Army together with everyone else I know, including Wayne. I have heard we are going to Camp Robinson, Arkansas, Great Lakes and California. California for me.

2. Sunday, May 23, 1943. Well, for a week or two it has been strongly rumored that we are going to Little Rock. Our Basic Training is over this week and we are having inspections all this week. Assignments came out and I am still in the Litter Bearer Section but I am a Liaison Man. (Contact Agent). It just started raining and is really going to town. We have been here since the last week end in March and it has only rained four times including this one. Where were all the April showers? It gets 110 degrees every once in a while so we appreciate the rain.

2a. July 18, 1942. (1943) April showers came in June and July. Every other day.

3. Friday, May 28, 1943. Our Basic Training is over tomorrow. This afternoon the entire division had a parade. More men! Wow. 15,000 of them. (The Division Parade Ground in behind our Rec. Hall, Chapel, PX and Bn. Hq. It is about 3/4 of a mile square.)

Saturday, May 29, 1943. Twenty of us were selected to put on a Litter Drill (five Litter Squads) for the Battalion on Monday. I have been changed from a Litter Bearer to a Contact Agent. (Liaison Man). There are eight of us and Sgt. Sam Drakulich is our leader. He is the Message Center Chief. We are supposed to contact the Infantry Battalion Aid Station and other companies of the Bn. and keep contact with them. If we had radios in our T.E. (Table of Equipment) this wouldn't be necessary. Wilson, Mistachkin and I are going to Dothan tonight. P.S. Didn't go.

4. Sunday, July 18, 1943. Tomorrow is the big day. We (110th Medics) are going over the Infiltration Course. We crawl 75 yards with machine gun fire 30 inches above the ground. Plus that we go through barbed wire entanglements on our backs with dynamite exploding around us. Whoopee!

5. Tuesday we go over the Blitz Course. I don't know what that is. I think one thing is crossing above a stream on a rope with a rope on each side to hold on to. I've done this. It isn't so hard with someone on the other end to tighten the rope up. If not it is really steep when you come to the other side.

6. July 23, 1943 (Friday). Well, we went over the Infiltration Course and Blitz Course. The Infiltration Course was very, very muddy. We were solid with mud. No sensation of bullets going over at all. The entire company went to Lake Tholocco and went swimming with our fatigues on to get some of the mud off.

Blitz Course was really fun. On the rope bridge they throw two sticks of dynamite under each guy. I got three sticks of dynamite. The geyser of water took me clear off the ropes because it got inside my helmet and lifted me up and it seemed as though the water would never stop coming down. The rest of the guys said I got the worst dose (3 sticks). That dynamite was more fun than I have ever had. I would like to do that again.

The Division was transferred to the 3rd Corps Area. (Atlantic Coast). Maybe I won't ever see the Pacific Ocean again. I'd better.

The 15th of July I found out I was getting a furlough. The folks aren't going to know I am coming home until I walk in the door. Hi.

7. Sunday, July 25, 1943.
MUSSOLINI KICKED OUT TODAY.
HOT DOGS. DAWGS

Tomorrow we go out on a week bivouac. We do it once a month supposedly to take the place of maneuvers. The 35th was transferred from 7th to the 3rd Corps Area. (East Coast).

8. Saturday, August 14, 1943. Rumored that Hitler is held prisoner.

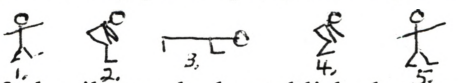
Thursday 9:00 p.m. to Friday 5:45 a.m. 22 mile hike. Stripped pack I wasn't tired except for the balls of my feet.

My lucky day is Friday 13, number 13 and number associated with it is 7.

7. Thursday at 5:00 p.m. 7 hours before Friday 13, Cpl. Paul Simons, our Company Clerk told me that since the new T.O. (Table of Organization) is going through Monday 16, I was up for T-5. Wonder of wonders.

9. Tuesday, August 17, 1943. Well, by Gadfrey I dood it! I still don't know what section I'm in. I went to our P.X., the Artillery P.X., the Engineers, Main P.X., and Clothing P.X. and couldn't find any Suntans (stripes) so I am borrowing a pair from Wilson that the had for a souvenir. I'll get some in Ozark. (Alabama)

10. Friday, August 20, 1943. We had our 3rd Corps Area Inspection in the A.M. We had to do 300 yards in 52 seconds, 75 yards with a guy on our back in 20 seconds, a 70 yard agility course in 30 seconds, 34 (if we can) push-ups, (I did 19) and 12 Burpees in 20 seconds. I did 9. (No one did 12.) After that we marched four miles in



49 minutes and 50 seconds. At the 3rd mile we had established a new record. We walked as fast as we could all the time except when we ran. I wasn't even tired. 60 out of 61 of us made it. On our practice hike only 10 out of 32 made it. I was one.

I am going to Dothan tonight if there are any passes, to get some chevrons.

Captain Matson left August 17, 1943 on cadre. He and Roy Ritchie, who is from Rolla, Mo., (and went out as T/5), went to Division Headquarters to open the Dispensary. I think Lemon is going too when he gets back from school. (He didn't, 11/3/43.) [He died of an illness after we arrived in England.]

11. Saturday, August 21, 1943. Maneuvers tomorrow. We are supposed to go to Geneva, Alabama at the Alabama/Florida line. I think we may go into Florida sometime. The maneuvers last a week. Furloughs are supposed to start when we get back. (4/23/43, missed Florida by 1/4 mile.)

12. Sunday, August 29, 1943. Well, we got back from maneuvers yesterday. There wasn't enough room for all of us to ride back with the Company so Kramer and I went to the 3rd Bn., 134th Inf. to ride with T/5 Gruchow and Bartch. (Our ambulance drivers assigned there.)

Some rube in the Infantry stole my helmet and liner while we were asleep. Probably cost me $6.00 or $7.00 for a new one. (Dec. 26. Never did have to pay for it.)

Furloughs - ah yes. They would be nice - I suppose. I don't know. I was going home September 4 but S/Sgt. Hebda told me that T/5 Mastin, who made 160 out of 163 on the I.Q. Test in 11worth, and Ed Howe and I are going to radio school September 6. No furlough. What do you know?

13. Wednesday, September 8, 1943. We start to Radio School Monday (9/6/43) and today I was licensed to operate the SCR-300-A. (Signal Corps Radioand Transmitter.)

ITALY UNCONDITIONALLY

SURRENDERS

GOVERNMENT CAPITULATED

ANOTHER ADVANCE ADOLPH

14. Saturday, October 9, 1943. Last week a new T.E. (Table of Equipment) came out and took our radios away from us. I quit school Thursday 7. At the end of school I could print 24 words (120 letters), send 20 words (100 letters) and receive 12 words (60 letters) per minute.

I want to transfer into the Air Corps as a Radio Operator after I get back from my furlough. I should get one the 15th.

Yesterday a little Piper Cub (L-15) cracked up on the drill field about 500 feet east of the barracks. It was coming in low to pick up a message suspended between two poles and it got too low and nosed over. It broke the prop, took off the right wheel and smashed the left wingtip. The celluloid windshield was broken. No one was hurt. The pilot said he wasn't shaken more than he is on good landings.

15. Thursday, October 15, 1943. Yesterday, Oct. 13, I found out that Fritsch, Boyer (from Paratroops) and I are going home on furlough. We have chartered a bus to Montgomery. There are 30 from the Bn. and the bus costs $56.00.

I want to transfer into the Air Corps as a radio operator. So does Fritsch.

It is strongly rumored that we are moving. We are pretty sure this time. Everyone is having a physical and we heard that the Dispensary was to be closed by the 22 of November.

16. Wednesday, November 3, 1943. I got back from furlough Sunday evening at 7:30. I really had a time while I was there. I met Alice Wheeler while I was there and was with her almost every night. She is really swell. Charlie bought Pinky Curtis' 1933 Plymouth coupe with a rumble seat. More fun. Wow!

17. Friday, November 12, 1943. Yesterday General Baade (pronounced "*body*") talked to the Division on the Parade Grounds and gave us the low-down on maneuvers. He said how maneuvers turn out will depend on how soon we will go to the South West Pacific or Europe. After his speech we (all 15,000) moved to the north end of the Parade Grounds for an Air Show. There was a Douglas A-20-B, North American B-25 "Billy Mitchell",and a Martin B-26 "Marauder", all light bombers, and a Bell Airacobra (P-39), Republic "Thunderbolt" (P-47),and a North American Mustang (P-51). The P-47 is one

of the fastest even with the blunt nose. Its diving speed is over 750 MPH.

Each plane would separately dive down to about 30 above us and go across the field, zoom up and roll. Their speed is terrific. It is unbelievable and then they were doing just about half of their high speed.

I the afternoon we had a Division parade and heard the new Division name, the *Santa Fe Division* and the march made up of the Nebraska song, *The Missouri Waltz*, the Kansas song, *California, Here I Come* and the Division song. It is really nice.

(Leaving the Diary for a few paragraphs, this is the appropriate place to insert a few comical events that happened there. The Diary will then continue with maneuvers and I want to include all the Camp Rucker incidences together here.)

We had some kind of a job to do in the Supply Room because some of us had stenciled our initials on the backs of our fatigue jackets. One day while standing in formation, Jack Schwab was in the rank behind mine and saw "WSW" on my back. He called me *Wuswah* and I was *Wuswah* to him from then on.

Jack was a special buddy to me. His wonderful sense of humor made him great to be around. When we later got into combat, his exceptional bravery made me proud to have him as a friend

"Chief" Davis Kewanimptewa was one of our Battalion buglers. The bugler's first job of the day was to blow "First Call" at 5:45 a.m., prior to blowing "Reville" at 6:00. One morning Chief came into the barracks around 4:00 drunk from a pass into town. He got undressed to go to bed, then, deciding that it would be too much bother to get back up at 5:45 to do his bugling, he would do it right then. So, in nothing but his shorts, he went out to the Battalion Training Field and blew "First Call". It roused and confused quite a few soldiers that morning. Later in the day he was "busted" from the rank of Corporal to Private. He was Private, Private First Class and Corporal more times than anyone I knew. What a good friend he was.

We all had name tags containing our last name hanging from our bunks so each could be identified. Late one night a man from another company down the street came in our barracks drunk looking for his bunk, not realizing he hadn't even reached his own barracks yet. He walked down the center of the barracks aisle to the spot he expected to find his bunk and saw someone sleeping in it. He had reached Jack Schwab's bunk. He leaned over to read the name tag and said, "Hmmmmm, Shrobe". Then he walked back out the front door and on towards his barracks. For me, Jack was "Shrobe" from then on.

Our battalion area was just a few blocks south of Division Headquarters where the flag ceremony took place morning and evening. On my first morning in camp at 6:00 came this blast from a cannon then a bugle call followed by the Division band playing a rousing march. I felt as though I had risen a foot off my bed because the cannon was so loud and I was so surprised. No one thought about telling us this was the Army's alarm clock.

So many humorous things like this happened. I wish I could remember more.

I have remembered two more incidents which are humorous and they must be inserted here, hence the odd page number at the top of the page. I will be taking this book to the printer this week so now is the time to add them.

While we were at Camp Rucker our *Plans and Training Officer* was Major Huber, an Obstetrician in civilian life. He was very effeminate and in fact, behind his back, we called him *Mother Huber.* Because of that, we never spoke of him as *he*. We always called him *she* or *her.*

She wore her trousers tucked straight down, tightly, into her leggings which made them look like lady's long bloomers. She hardly had a chin. Her neck reminded me of a frog, sort of going from her mouth down to her shirt collar in one shot. She always smoked a pipe which dangled down from her mouth and seemed almost to rest on her chest.

Military Courtesy told us that no one ever saluted while smoking. When we saluted Mother Huber her reaction was ALWAYS the same: .She VERY SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY raised her left hand to her pipe, taking it from her mouth and lowering it to her side, as her right arm came up slowly to return the salute. Then as her right arm was descending to her side, her left arm was again taking her pipe to her mouth. So it was: left arm up, left arm down and right arm up, right arm down and left arm up, and left arm down. With all her gyration she looked somewhat like a sailor "wig-wagging" a message to another ship It was comical and we enjoyed saluting her more than any other officer until we got to England. (The English gave very exaggerated salutes and they were fun to watch.)

OK. I've described Mother Huber enough to be able to relate just two of the crazy things she was involved in. Of course, she didn't know she was funny. Only the enlisted men knew that, however, I suspect the other officers grinned on occasion.

One Saturday morning during Battalion Inspection, the inspecting officers were going through the Battalion Headquarters Detachment barracks next door to "A" Company.

There was a comical little Jewish soldier named Harry Levine, short, sort of round, happy, and a lot of fun to be with. Harry had picked a watermelon somewhere and had "stored" it on the floor beneath his bunk. Naturally it was in plain sight of everyone.

When Mother entered the barracks, *Attention* was called, and each man stood in front of his bunk. Mother slowly walked down the aisle between the bunks and she saw Harry's watermelon. (In the Army, you just don't "store" watermelons in the barracks.)

Mother very slowly raised his arm and pointed to the melon, saying, "Wha-a-at's tha-a-at so-o-oldie-e-er?"

Harry answered loudly in his high voice, "THAT'S A WATERMELON, SIR!", feigning complete innocence. Mother just walked on. She had probably given up on us months before.

The other occasion happened while we were in the field practicing the art of camouflaging foxholes.

We had been instructed to dig our holes and camouflage them to the best of our ability because Mother was coming to inspect them when we had finished.

Alabama has sandy soil and LOTS of pine trees. We chose our foxhole locations and began digging. I went down about two feet, throwing the sandy earth all around the hole and tapering it to the level of the ground so it would blend in naturally.

Next I cut a number of pine branches and spread them over the hole from one side to the other, making them appear as just a pile of fallen boughs.

Before long, First Sergeant "Puttie" Putnam announced that Mother was in the Company area and we could expect her momentarily, and sure enough, she soon came through the trees. She carefully and seriously, looked at each soldier's hole as she passed, then it became my turn for inspection. She slowly walked toward me and started to say, "Whe-e-ere's your ho-o-o-le, Ka-rp....." but before she could finish "Corporal", she fell through the camouflage and down into my hole. I felt as though my lungs would burst as I stifled my giggles and tried to maintain a straight face! She put both hands and one foot on top of the ground, and with great aplomb, ceremoniously climbed out and stood up. She looked me in the eye with dignity and very seriously said, "Tha-a-at's pre-e-etty go-o-od, Karprel," and sauntered off to continue her inspection. She didn't miss a beat or loose her composure.

All this time the others were attempting to also keep straight faces and when she had gotten beyond hearing distance, we all burst out in raucous laughter. This incident had made the entire morning worth while.

(Now back to the Diary)

We leave Monday for Tennessee Maneuvers. (November 15). It is already snowing there.

18. Sunday, November 14, 1943. Well, tomorrow is the big?? day. We get up at 2:00 a.m. T/5 Harry Moran (Ambulance Driver), Ray Wittman (Assistant Ambulance Driver), Angelo Forte (pronounced *Forty*), Joe Forte (no relation), Henry *Desmo* Desmarais and I leave Rucker at 4:30 a.m. and go with the 134th Infantry. Their convoy alone, is seventeen miles long. We bivouac two nights on the 400+ mile trip to Tennessee Maneuvers. We always said that we would be glad when we left Camp Rucker but I don't think anyone is laughing about it now. We don't like the sound of the word *maneuvers*.

The 2nd Army Maneuvers involved three divisions; ours and another Infantry Division plus an Armored Division. Each *problem* lasted five days . We spent Saturday and Sunday in a rest area recouping from the previous week and preparing for the next problem. During one problem we were the *Red Army,* wearing red arm bands for identification and the Armored Division was the *Blue Army*. Our Station Section was set up on a hill overlooking the road a hundred yards below. One night we began to hear the roar of tanks in the distance and Captain Murray told me to go down to the road to see what was going on, because we didn't know about any tank movement in our area. I went down and hid in the ditch as the tank convoy approached. It was the *Blue Army.* I lay there as the lead Jeep approached followed by the tanks. The jeep stopped beside me but as we were operating under black out conditions they didn't see me. Two officers, using their blue flashlights, were conferring about their location and destination and I could hear everything they said. They got back into the vehicles and the convoy began moving. I never saw so many tanks in one place before and the convoy seemed endless. When it finally passed I went back to our Station tent and told Captain Murray that the tanks were part of the Blue Army. He realized we had been surrounded because the 134th Infantry had failed to notify us of their move out of the area. Captain Murray cheated! He told Puttie, our First Sgt. to strike our pyramidal tent, in black out conditions, no less, fold it up and load it into one of the 2 1/2 ton trucks then we all were to bandage each other up, simulating wounded men. We applied arm slings, head dressings, hand dressings galore then got into the ambulances and started for the *Red Army* lines. When we reached the first *Blue Army* tankers they stopped us and Captain Murray told them <u>he was escorting a load of wounded men to the Division Clearing Station!</u> Ten ambulances full of "wounded" men going through the *Blue Army* lines. They believed him and we managed to get back to the *Red Army* again by cheating and without being captured and experiencing the chagrin and embarrassment which would have been ours. Not to mention "explaining" how it all happened. It was certainly good to get back where we could see *red flashlights* instead of blue ones. It gave us pause to think how easy it might be to get captured by the enemy after we got overseas.

19. Sunday, December 26, 1943. A Muddy Christmas and a Sloppy New Year! Here we are already for our sixth week of maneuvers. We have had weather ranging from around 50 degrees down to zero degrees. Now we are having rainy weather and the mud is three and four inches deep.

The 35th is really on the ball. No one thought it was on the ball but it really has done OK on maneuvers. The latest rumor now according to Lt. Bruffy, who was General Baade's 1st Sgt. when Baade was a Captain in charge of Co. M, 20th Infantry Regiment and who went to school with him in Kansas City in 1920, said that we are going to Camp Butner, North Carolina for three months and then we will go overseas. I hope we go to Germany. I think we will go over around April and when we get there we are supposed to get two to three months of maneuvers in England or wherever we go. Nutz, there may not be much going on over there by the time we get in, but there may.

Lt. Bruffy said that Gen. Baade was from Cameron, MO. All smart men come from Missouri we tell the guys from Nebraska and Kansas.

(We could never figure Lt. Bruffy out. I worked in the Collecting Station as a Record Clerk so I was in the Station tent half the time, taking turns with the other crew, hence got in on all the scuttle butt. Here was Lt. Bruffy, probably 50 years old and <u>still</u> a 2nd Lieutenant. He would often come to the tent after chow in the evening and tell us he was going to Division Headquarters to visit "Paul". (General Baade). Late that evening he would most likely come back drunk telling us everything he knew, such as our next assignment at Camp Butner and overseas duty. He wouldn't have done that if sober because no one knew those things at our level. We often wondered if he were here posing as a 2nd Lt. but really checking on us to see if we were ready to go overseas. We never did find out because he left as mysteriously as he arrived, staying only past the maneuvers with us. It was pretty strange.

One night he came back to the Station and told us we were going to England and would be used as Shock Troops after the invasion of France. We asked what Shock Troops were and he told us they were the forces committed to battle after the enemy has recovered from the initial assault, then counterattacks. That is what we did in Normandy.

The first strange thing we noticed about Lt. Bruffy when he transferred to "A" Company was that he arranged to have a "Dog Robber". A dog robber is a soldier who takes care of an officer's equipment for him. None of our company officers had dog robbers and as far as I know, not even our Battalion Commander, Col. Hall, had one. Very peculiar.

20. February 8, 1944, Tuesday. Well, I just got this diary from home today so I am a little late for entering this:

Maneuvers finished Thursday, January 13, 1943 (should have been 1944) and the Division moved to Camp Forest, Tennessee near Tullahoma. I left out of the field for furlough January 15 with a 30 hour pass which got me home at 8:55 Sunday nite, 3 hours before

before the furlough started since it is only 18 hours from Nashville to Independence. Mom, Daddy, Denny, Alice Charlie, Carol W., Nola, Mammaw, Bob Stewart, Uncle Kenny and Aunt Ethel were at the station to meet me. Charlie took Alice and me home in his car. (We all went to our house.) After I had been home about three days WAyne came home on a 15 day furlough from Drew Field, near Tampa. He and Fern and Alice and I double dated quite a lot, once in a while in the Olds. (Mr. Shakespeare's 1938 Oldsmobile.) I had 7 days traveling time plus a day and a half pass. I didn't use all of my pass or any of the travelling time going home so I had 10 days there. Alice and I really had a swell time together.

When I got to Camp Butner, North Carolina, I learned we were going on Mountain Maneuvers in West Virginia for two weeks and I am in the Advanced Detachment and leave tomorrow twelve days early. We will be issued Mountain Suits and bed rolls there. Captain Brillhart told us we were preparing to go overseas. We had been suspecting it a long time. I am on the Cadre List as a T/4 Medical Technician. (Sgt.) TIME OUT. We just got back from getting instructions for the maneuvers. We cross the Appalachians and pass by the Natural Bridge in Virginia. (Missed it. Went by on the highway. Didn't see it.) On the last three days of the maneuvers we will have a Combat Team problem using live ammunition. More fun. We are going to be taking "Assault Training".

21. Saturday, March 11, 1944.

We got back from the W.V.M.A. (West Virginia Maneuver Area) Thursday, March 9 and it was swell to get back into barracks again. Colonel Miltonberger (C.O. of the 134th Infantry Regimental Combat Team) told us at Seneca School that the 134th Combat Team would play a leading role in a drama soon to be unfolded. You will be overseas in a matter of weeks". Oh well, we've been expecting that. (Bruffy told us Christmas Eve).

22. Sunday, March 12, 1944.

I imagine we will go to Italy although Pratt (Bertis L. Pratt from Caribou, Maine) thinks we might go to Norway. I don't. Lt. Bruffy said we would be used as Shock Troops in France. I don't think anyone knows. He said Shock Troops are sent in after an invasion and the enemy has had time to regroup and counterattack. The Shock Troops absorb the attack and go on.

Six guys leave Wednesday to go back to the W.V.M.A. to learn how to use pack mules.

The Seneca School was divided into two climbing areas; *Seneca Rocks* and *Champs.* Our platoon would take turns with the other platoon going to *Seneca Rocks* one morning and *Champs* the next.

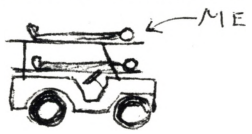
At Seneca School we made 80 foot rappels off of sheer cliffs. It is done by wrapping a piece of rope in sort of a figure eight across the body and bouncing down the cliff.

On the Overhead Firing Problem, a machine gun got pretty close but it missed. I was an umpire and tagged casualties on the "front lines". (More about that in the chapter named "West Virginia".) The 105 mm howitzer shells landed about 250 yards ahead of us up the mountain. When you get close to where they land, instead of the pht-pht-pht whirring sound, they sound like the combination of a Hoover vacuum sweeper, siren and a sharp hum altogether. You can't imagine what an artillery barrage from an entire battalion, 12 guns, sounds like unless you've heard it. It is really fun to watch the shells explode.

An 81 mm mortar shell burst too close and three men were hit by shrapnel. Two were hurt seriously and one was just scratched. Another fellow fell and rolled twenty feet down the mountain and broke his back. Our Litter Bearers took care of him and were commended by the XIII Corp Colonel.

23. Saturday, March 18, 1944. I took my physical examination for overseas service and passed the little rascal.. Alice said she cried when she read my letter telling her about it but she said she read it again and felt better.

I had a ride on a Peep (another name for *Jeep* and also called *Beep*) but not the way most G.I.'s do it. I was tied on a litter and it was tied on top of the Peep.



The top two litters are supported by the windshield and poles that hold up the roof. The bottom one rests on the lower part of the windshield and the rear end. It really was fun.

23. Sunday, April 2, 1944. Sgt. "Pete" McNeely and I started to the 134th Infantry Combat Team S-2 School (Intelligence School) two weeks ago (March 20) and it lasts for another two weeks. My favorite subject is *Aerial Photograph Reading.* School ends April 14 and April 15 we go on the *Blue Alert* meaning we are subject to Overseas Call. Looks like the "Banana Boat" is about ready to pull out. We may go to Italy, maybe to England and catch some of the Invasion through the mountains in Alsace Lorraine or maybe even Norway. Who knows? I'm sure we don't. I look for us to pull out about the first of June. (From the U.S., I mean.) If we don't hurry, Old Joe is going to be in Berlin before John Bull or Uncle Sam even gets a landing barge in the channel.

24. Thursday, April 6, 1944. Donald Price, "A" Company clerk, said last night that a "reliable source" told them all at Battalion Headquarters that the 35th would go to England, live in barracks and then go to France as Occupation Troops. What a laugh. (But still you can't tell. This Division might do anything.) 1st Sgt. Putnam said that our "Banana Boat" would pull out around June 15.

25. Sunday, April 23, 1944. Tomorrow we have to have all of our non-G.I. stuff sent home. We were issued our new clothes Friday and our Dufflebags, too. They can be carried over the shoulder like a golf bag or by a handle like a suit case. Probably we will be in our P.O.E. (Port of Embarkation) by the middle of May.

Pete (McNeely) got our reports back from Intelligence School. He averaged 91 and I averaged 94, they say. It averages to be 91 to me.

I got my Good Conduct Medal last week. Haven't gotten the medal yet. It doesn't amount to much.

This is all of my diary. We were instructed not to keep one overseas so I sent mine home for Mom to keep for me. She has written:

"Tuesday - July 25, 1944.
This morning for three hours"

I couldn't send any information home because of censorship and intended to finish this after the war. It, of course, concerned the 3000 plane bombing raid on St. Lo, Normandy. This story will be told in the chapter titled, "Normandy".

PLACES I HAVE BEEN

This is the last formal page in the diary.
Los Angeles - The most beautiful city I have ever seen. I have also been through Yuma, Phoenix, San Antonio, New Orleans, Gallup, El Paso, (we went through the tip of Mexico there), Flagstaff, ("Chief" Sowe Davis' Kewanimptewa's home town high in the mtns.) Amarillo, Albuquerque, Santa Barbara ("A" Co. had a Clearing and Collecting Station there in the summer of '42), Houston, Beaumont, Mobile, Montgomery, Nashville, St. Louis, Evansville (Indiana), Tullahoma, Atlanta, Durham, Raleigh, Ventura, Glendale, Pasadena, San Bernadino, Kingman, Winslow, Wichita, Topeka, Knoxville.

1. Missouri, 2. Kansas, 3. Oklahoma, 4. Arkansas, 5. Texas, 6. New Mexico, 7. Arizona, 8. California, 9. Louisiana, 10. Mississippi, 11. Alabama, 12. Tennessee, 13. Kentucky, 14. Indiana, 15. Illinois, 16. Georgia, 17. South Carolina, 18. North Carolina, 19. Virginia, 20. West Virginia.

TENNESSEE MANEUVERS

Sleeping outside during the winter taught me something I hadn't noticed before: when the sky at night is clear, expect a frost. Being a city boy, I had never noticed things like that before.

My first winter night out, I slept in all my clothes plus my shoes. That proved to be uncomfortable so the next night I put my shoes on the ground outside my bedroll. In the morning when I tried to put them on, they were frozen stiff and it really hurt trying to get them on my feet. The third night about half an hour before getting up, I took them inside my blankets where they thawed and became warm and soft.

In all my time in the Army until now, I didn't drink coffee, but on a subfreezing morning sitting on a snow-covered log eating breakfast, a hot cup of coffee did much more good than cold water did to get my body warm.

Lambert Hron, our 6'6" First Cook, was very good about frying our eggs and serving them with bacon in our cold mess kits. The trouble was, even though the first egg was hot, by the time we got to the second, the aluminum mess kit had transferred so much cold to the egg that it was cold and greasy.

Ed Howe, from Bowling Green, Ohio, was the other Record Clerk in the other Station section. When his Station Section was operating, the Station I was with was down. When we moved to another area, his section, if operating, would wait until we reached the next area and were set up, then they would shut down, pack up, and join us. They would take their turn at rest. In this manner there was always a Station Section able to receive patients. Because of this operating mode, Ed and I were usually together. We were always dreaming about what "might be, if...." In Normandy, for instance, we used to think about having a remote controlled airplane with a television camera aboard to spy on the German operations. (This was in the day when television was still considered to be almost experimental.) We always had some exotic scheme to talk about. On Winter Maneuvers, however, we thought more realistically.

One idea which we spent quite some time on was how to construct a warm, weather-proof pup tent. Each night we tried a different scheme. The first order of business, always, was to cut evergreen boughs and make a bed of them about a foot thick and the size of a pup tent. This would insulate our blankets from the cold, snowy earth. (No bedrolls in those days.)

The second order of business was to devise a way to button our shelter halves together in an unorthodox style which we devised. After several nights we decided on a final design. This resembled a trampoline more than a pup tent. It called for the shelter halves to be buttoned together at the top, as usual, but then to be spread out almost flat and only about one foot above our blankets. At bed-time we would take off our shoes, slither inside the tent and bring our shoes inside, too. The small space between the tent and the ground made it much cozier and warmer than a pup tent, which was about three feet high. And then, if we were <u>really</u> lucky, it would snow hard during the night. The snow made a weather-proof insulating blanket on top of the tent and also closed up any air holes around the sides. We would sleep as snug as two bugs in a rug.

It always surprised me how we could improvise to improve our life style in the winter snow.

By the way, because we were outside 24 hours a day all winter, we were very healthy! The only man in our company to use our Station was Henderscheidt. He came down with appendicitis one night around 2:00 o'clock. It was my Station Section which was on duty so Captain Murray, Our Company Commander (and who also was a doctor), Sgt. Frank Hebda (our Station Chief) and myself, were in our long johns caring for him until one of our ambulances could take him back to the Clearing Company where surgery could be performed.

I loved being outdoors during the winter. The fir trees and snow made it so very quiet and beautiful. When others were doing other things, I would go out and cut fire wood. It had to be done by someone and I really enjoyed it. Good recreation, hard, invigorating work and I kept warm while doing it. The guys in the Station appreciated it, too because they always had a stack of fire wood beside the stove.

WEST VIRGINIA MOUNTAIN CLIMBING TRAINING AND MANEUVERS

After concluding 2nd Army Winter Maneuvers in Tennessee, which lasted for eight weeks, during November and December 1943 and the first part of January 1944, some of us were fortunate to get furloughs home, right out of the field. I was one of the lucky ones. The rest of the company, indeed, the complete division, went on to Camp Butner, North Carolina, our new post near Durham and Raleigh.

(I enjoyed this camp so very much because it was located near two large cities as well as Duke University which I visited a few times. On one occasion I attended a concert given by Alec Templeton, a blind classical pianist.)

Upon returning to the division after ten days at home I walked into the barracks hallway and found my name posted with a list of "volunteers" who were scheduled to go to West Virginia to take training in mountain climbing and cliff scaling. After spending all winter in the field, the ten of us were going right back to "the great outdoors" while our buddies stayed in the heated barracks!

The training would last two weeks, then the rest of the Combat Team, all 3000 of them, would come up for two weeks of mountain maneuvers.

I was one of ten men in Company A to go. If the 35th Division were scheduled to go to Italy our job would be rigging the lines over which the rest of the company could safely climb.

Our group involved only members of the 134th Infantry Regimental Combat Team of which Company A, 110th Medical Battalion was a part. Other units were the 134th Infantry Regiment, Company A, 60th Engineer (Combat) Battalion, the 161st Field Artillery Battalion and various smaller units. i.e. Signal, M.P.s, etc.

Two of the men from Company A were ambulance drivers who would take care of anyone who became sick or injured while we were there. They did not climb.

We formed a convoy large enough to accommodate 100 or so men and started off. We passed by the birthplace of President Woodrow Wilson in Staunton, Virginia, situated in the Shenendoah Valley and bivouacked that night on the grounds of Virginia Military Institute, setting up our pup tents in straight, neat rows.

When we arrived at the training site near Elkins, West Virginia, we found a four pole ward tent being used as a mess tent surrounded by many mountain pup tents. The mess tent was the only place that had electric lights so we went there after supper each night to write our letters home, relax and just to stay warm near a wood stove.

The mountain tents were made in one piece instead of being made of two piece shelter halves. The entrance was "igloo entrance" style made into a tube or tunnel about 1 1/2 feet long and 1 1/2 feet in diameter which could be tied shut at night from the inside. Just below the two end ropes which were tied to ground stakes in front and back, were two tube-like vents, also "igloo" style, about six inches long which allowed air to enter the tent. They had a short rope that allowed them to be tied to and supported by the end ropes which went diagonally to the ground. There was a floor built into the tent so that it was waterproof.

The inside and outside were of different colors. One side was tan which would blend in with normal ground cover. The other was white which allowed it to blend in with the snow. We used the white exclusively because of the winter weather.

The school divided us into two platoons so that the platoons could train at the two different sites. We climbed at Seneca Rocks and Champs. The 1st Platoon went to Seneca one day and Champs the next. They were not close so we rode each day. We lived in a mountain valley so narrow and deep that we didn't have direct sunlight until 10:00 a.m. The sun disappeared behind the mountains again at 2:00 p.m.

We learned to tie knots in our hand lines (they were not called *ropes*) which we would use in climbing. The lines were 1/2" green nylon, very soft and very smooth. Nylon is also very elastic and stretches considerably when a man's weight is on it. Manila hemp is much too stiff and scratchy to serve as a climbing rope.

We learned to scale cliffs in two-man teams. We were issued one 120 foot nylon hand line, a piton hammer apiece plus many of the four types of pitons and a good supply of snap links.

A snap link is made of aluminum and is a round-cornered rectangle about two by three inches. One side may be pressed open to allow a line to go inside, after which it springs closed keeping the line inside until released by the climber.

Pitons are spikes four to six inches long especially shaped to fit different types of cracks in the rock walls. The climber decides which type is appropriate. They are then hammered into the wall.

The snap link is opened and passed through the piton ring. A test follows to determine if the piton is firmly secured in the wall. The nylon hand line is passed through the snap link and testing begins, first, by yanking sharply from the wall outward, then yanking down followed by an upward yank, and yanks to the right and left. If all five produce no loose feeling on the piton it is considered safe and climbing begins.

After being divided into teams, one man of the team is designated to be the climber and the other the *Belay Man*. The belay man's job is to find a secure place to sit and pass the line around his waist while the climber is tied to the other end of the 120 foot line by means of a loop around his waist tied with a bowline knot to secure it. Bowlines are always used because they do not slip.

The climber then passes the line through the snap link which has been placed in a piton above his head and, as the belay man holds the line tightly, climbs a foot or two up the face of the cliff. As the belay man holds him in place the climber gets out his hammer and correct piton, pounds it into a convenient crack, puts in another snap link, tests it in all five directions with a short rope and passes his line through it. He then climbs to the next spot in the cliff where he begins the same procedure again. As he hammers the piton into place he leans back, being held in place by his belay man.

In order to acquire team confidence the two men take turns in climbing and "falling". The climber free-climbs up five or ten feet, puts his line through a snap link

and calls down to the belay man, "Ready to fall!" The belay man says, "Fall!", to which the climber responds, "Falling!" and jumps back from the wall of the cliff beginning his fall to the ground. It is the responsibility of the belay man to catch the faller before he hits the ground. After practicing this procedure a number of times the teams are confident enough in each other to begin climbing in earnest and it is just a matter of time before 100 foot climbs are being made.

The following is an example of how high our confidence in each other was:

One climbing team was composed of Charles (Red) Mastin. (Red was the one who had charge of all of us draftees as we traveled from Fort Leavenworth to Camp San Luis Obispo. He was the son of a lawyer in Seward, Nebraska. He was exceptionally studious and made the highest I.Q. score by anyone who had passed through the Fort Leavenworth Army Reception Center. On our daily 15 mile road marches he always had a book to read during our 10 minute breaks.)

The other man on the team was Davis Sowe (SO-wee) *Little Rabbit* Kewanimptewa, the son of the chief of the Hopi tribe on the reservation near Flagstaff, Arizona. He was nick-named "Chief".

During a ten minute break in practice falling, Chief climbed up about ten feet and with no warning hollered, "Falling!", and jumped. Red, who naturally was reading, hadn't removed his lines from his waist and caught Chief before he hit the ground. Chief just cackled in his strange Indian laugh at the "joke" he played on Red. I had such interesting friends.

As cliff scaling begins the belay man passes the line around his waist holding both lines with his hands and plays out the line as the ascent is made, keeping enough tension to allow the climber to continue, but always keeping it tight so that should the climber fall he can be caught immediately.

When the first climber reaches the top he becomes the belay man and finds a safe, secure spot to sit and brace himself as he belays his partner up the side. As the second man ascends he removes the snap links from the pitons so they may be used again. The pitons, having been hammered in correctly, are permanently in the stone. (I suppose we could go back to Seneca Rocks and Champs and find hundred of pitons protruding from the cliffs left not only from our school but the many schools before and after us.)

After reaching the top of a cliff, how does one get back down to the bottom? By rappelling.

In rappelling, a 120 foot line is placed around a tree at the top of a cliff with sixty feet hanging down on each side over the edge of the precipice. (Today a rappeller has a belt around his waist with a breaking device on it through which the lines are passed, allowing the rappeller to speed, slow, or stop his descent at will until he reaches the ground. It is a very safe way to descend.)

In West Virginia the accepted method, after placing the doubled line around a tree, leaving two lines dangling from the top, was to stand at the edge of the cliff, facing the direction of the tree and legs straddling the lines. We would stoop down and pick up both lines and pull them up between our legs, then up over our back and over our left

shoulder, and diagonally down across our chest and beneath our right arm, being held by our right hand which was held stiffly down and to our rear. The friction of the lines sliding over our clothes coupled with the pressure we applied with our right hand allowed us to rappel quickly, slowly, or stop in mid-air.

The most difficult part in rappelling is going over the edge. This is accomplished by taking all the slack out of the lines and leaning backward out beyond the edge of the cliff. At some point the changing center of balance commits us to fall over the side and begin the rappel. Leaning back into the line much as a lineman does while working on a pole, we walk slowly down the vertical face until the line is resting on the ground above our head. At this point all that is needed is to kick away from the wall and loosen the grip of our right hand allowing us to fall before our feet come back to the wall. As they do, we kick away again and continue the descent so that we bounce down the cliff.

The danger of this method comes from not keeping ones' feet below the waist. Should the climbers' feet get too high he will literally fall out of the lines and go to the ground. This makes everyone especially cautious to maintain an upright position. By being long-legged and having big feet, I didn't as great a problem as shorter fellows.

As long as we only had snow, climbing was not difficult but it was very dangerous on ice and because we had only two weeks for training we climbed whether it was icy or not. There were a few occasion we asked our instructor if he could issue *crampons* to strap on our boots but they were not available.

At least we didn't worry about snakes in the winter time. When climbing, it is impossible to see what is on a ledge above our heads when we are ready to put our hand up for a hold. There was always the story about "the climber last summer who put his hand on a ledge above and was bitten by a rattlesnake". Whether true or not, it was comforting to know there would be no surprise waiting for us as we climbed up to the next ledge.

While "free-climbing" a cliff, balance is stressed. "Always have three points of suspension", our instructor continually said. "Be sure both hands and one foot or both feet and one hand are firmly planted before climbing up another step. "Always climb with your fingertips", he would say. "If you are so out of balance that you need to grab a rock very tightly, you are likely to fall", so we made sure there were no loose stones under our feet before we moved a hand. We observed our next <u>foothold</u> as our <u>heads</u> passed it.

Descending is ever so much more difficult because many times it is impossible to see our feet well.

Our highest rappel was about 120 feet. We tied two 120's end-to-end and placed them around a tree. (I should explain why we never tied a line to a tree while rappelling: It would have been impossible to retrieve the line if it had been tied on so we just looped it around the trees. Two lines are also easier to grasp.) The tree was maybe ten feet from the edge of the precipice which meant the ends of the lines were about ten feet above the ground below us. After straddling the lines and putting them over my shoulder, I backed over the edge and began rappelling. I reached the end of the lines before

reaching the ground even though the nylon had stretched several feet, so I was six feet above the ground and just kept sliding out of the lines and dropped to the ground as the lines sprang back up to their normal length.

This reminds me of an interesting observation that we made the very first time we held and uncoiled line from the top of a cliff. A coiled length weighs a given amount but when it is uncoiled and allowed to fall its full length, it seems much heavier. We attributed it to the force of gravity as it was applied to the rope hanging down. We had no way of really explaining this phenomenon but maybe some day a student of Physics will explain it to me.

Some of our later problems (the Army term for special training in the field) lasted all day.

One such problem called for the morning to be occupied by a combination of mountain climbing and cliff scaling. We started the arduous task of climbing up the very steep slope through the *talus*. (TA-lus) (Rocks and stones which have fallen down from above.) We were glad a few times that we were wearing helmets which protected our heads from falling rocks. We had already been taught "the Mountain Pace". When using this method of climbing, our *ruck sacks*_were raised high on our backs and we put our arms behind us as we leaned forward "into the mountain". This moved our center off balance forward and also saved us the tiring disadvantage of having our arms swinging freely in front. That is fatiguing. We took slow, careful steps because the talus is difficult to climb through. The rocks all move when they are stepped upon.

After a couple of hours we reached a cliff with a ledge 75 or 80 feet up the face. We spent some time belaying each other up to the ledge. By this time it was noon and our instructor said we would eat lunch on the ledge. It was three or four feet wide giving us plenty of room to take off our rucksacks and eat. We found some dead tree roots sticking out of a crack in the wall and broke them off to make a fire to warm our C Rations.

One of the fellows, for some dumb reason didn't poke a hole in the end of his C ration can of infamous "Meat and Beans". It got too hot and exploded, blowing Meat and Beans all over the valley below us. We had to divide our meat and beans with him.

We had a Night Problem as the final test for our training. It involved climbing over rocks we had not seen before, finishing with a rappel from an overhang. The first man going over the edge was very surprised to find he had no place to kick away from the wall. Overhangs are dangerous because the method of descent is different. This one, being done in blackout conditions really proved to us (and our instructor) that we had learned our lessons well.

As our training concluded, Company "A" and the rest of the Regimental Combat Team came up by truck convoy from Camp Butner, North Carolina and assembled in our area in West Virginia.

The next two weeks would find us on Winter Mountain Maneuvers. In the meanwhile, our First Sergeant, Charles "Puttie" Putnam told me I had been selected to act as a Medical Umpire with a medic from the 134th Infantry Regiment.

Our first problem involved artillery firing overhead with live shells exploding about 250 yards ahead of us. We had never heard a shell pass overhead or see it land. An American 105 millimeter howitzer shell moans like a Hoover vacuum sweeper as it passes by. It was important, we later found in Normandy, to be able to identify shells as either *incoming* or *outgoing mail* so we could hit the ground or not bother with it. (Some people were NEVER able to tell our shells from the German ones which made it scary for them.)

Before the problem began I was taken by jeep with my equipment to the assigned meeting place. There the 134th Infantry Medic and I met for the first time.

An Infantry officer told us we were at the base of Canaan Mountain. (The West Virginians pronounced it *cah-NAYN* with a long *A*.) Our assignment was to place EMT Tags (Emergency Medical Treatment Tags) on various Infantrymen at random with our description of the "wound" so that our "A" Company Litter Bearers could treat them and evacuate them to the 134th Infantry Medical Aid Station where they would be taken by ambulance back to the "A" Company Collecting Station. There, following further treatment they would be evacuated by another ambulance to the Division Clearing Station, a small hospital.

The regimental problem would begin "somewhere" up on Canaan Mountain and my buddy and I were to hike up and join the Infantry. It was about 2:00 p.m. when we began our climb through the snow. We soon found the only way to reach the top was to follow the *Fire Trails*. They are trails cleared of trees and wide enough to allow one truck to pass through. The snow was about a foot deep. We took turns breaking the trail because with our packs, the climbing was difficult. We not only were carrying our personal equipment but our mountain pup tent and small *white gas* mountain stove to warm our meals on. We found no one else's tracks all that afternoon.

By evening, not having found the Infantry, we decided to stop and camp for the night. With our hatchets we cut pine branches from the surrounding trees and made a bed or cushion of boughs in the snow about a foot thick and the size of our mountain tent. We had a soft bed that night and we were also insulated from the snow. (We had learned this procedure in Tennessee.) We put up our tent and crawled inside to cook (or warm) supper.

After supper I went back outside to enjoy the clear, cold night. Walking through the trees to a clearing I could see the lights of a farm house far below. I could imagine how snug and cozy they must be in the warmth of their house. I felt lonely and wondered what Alice was doing at that time. The quietness was startling. There was not a sound anywhere because of the soft, deep snow and dense fir trees.

Returning to the tent, I crawled into my mountain bedroll, something we wished for in the Battle of the Bulge eleven months later. It was very warm with only our faces exposed to the air. A draw string pulled the face opening tight so our body heat was trapped inside. It reminded me of a sarcophagus because of its body fitting shape.

When we awoke the next morning we peeked outside and found that it had snowed another foot while we slept. We would have two feet of snow to walk through today!

We cooked breakfast and began the almost impossible task of folding the snow-covered tent into a package small enough to fit inside one of our ruck sacks. Cooking supper inside the tent had melted some of the snow on the outside of the tent and it had frozen stiff during the night making the tent stiff and difficult to fold.

We finally got everything packed away and began climbing again. The walking was extremely difficult because we had to lift our feet so high with each step so we took turns breaking the trail.

During the morning we began to hear Army trucks far in the distance and began walking in that direction. We reached the top of the mountain and still found no trace of anyone anywhere so we began our descent in the direction of the truck sounds.

As we got lower down the mountain we met an old man who lived in the area. We told him we had been lost since yesterday and he asked where we spent the night . We said we had spent the night on top of the mountain, to which he responded, "Whar's yore guns?" We said we were Medics and carried no weapons. He said, "You mean you spent the night on Canaan Mountain without no guns? Why boys, Thar's *bars* up thar!" Well, we hadn't seen any *bars* or any *bar tracks* for that matter all the time we were on top. I guess our innocence was one of our virtues or at least our protection.

He gave us directions to the nearest road and we parted ways, he going up and we going down.

Traffic noises were becoming louder and a little after noon we found the road and started down it. Almost immediately we met a jeep coming up. The passenger was no less than Colonel Butler B. Miltonberger (North Platte, Nebraska) the commanding officer of the 134th Infantry Regiment. We flagged down his jeep and saluted, telling him of our plight and asking where the 134th was located. He said it was at the bottom of the mountain on this very road so we thanked him, saluted him again and were on our way.

We soon reached the bottom and there was all kinds of activity and sure enough, right where Col. Miltonberger said it would be, was the 134th Infantry Command Post.

We went inside and introduced ourselves telling them we had been looking for them since 2:00 p.m. yesterday. The officer in charge of the C.P. told us they hadn't gone up the mountain at all! What a SNAFU! We were instructed to return to our units.

Company A, 110th Medics was down the road to the right, they told me, so I started walking. I rounded a bend in the road and there was "A" Company, not 50 yards from the 134th. I looked at my watch; 2:00 p.m. We had been up the mountain for 24 hours looking for the 134th when it had been 150 feet away all the time.

After this typical; mix-up I wonder how we won the war at all.

ATLANTIC CONVOY

During the first week of May, 1944, the 35th Division left Camp Butner, North Carolina for our Staging Area in Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. Here we would make final preparations for overseas movement.

We were taken into an auditorium and informed of what we could and could not say in our letters home. From now until the end of the war they would be censored by company officers. We were told, for example that we needn't try to tell our families where we were by quoting the poem *Trees* by Joyce Kilmer. That had already been done and it didn't work. We were also told we could not say in our letters when we would be shipping out; we could only say we would be sailing "in the not too distant future".

After a few days at Camp Kilmer we left May 12, 1944 for New York City, our P.O.E. (Port of Embarkation). As we rode through the New Jersey countryside pulled by an electric engine, we saw steam engines taking on water at 60 miles an hour by putting a chute from the tender down into a water trough between the rails that stretched for miles. The speed of the train forced the water up the chute, thus not necessitating the engines stopping at a water tower. It was quite a sight for a boy from the midwest where every railroad station had its own water tower for the engines to use. There were several tracks side by side, each having an electric wire overhead and a water trough between the rails so that both types of engines could use any of the tracks.

We must have gone through one of the tunnels beneath the Hudson River but I don't remember now. I'm sure that is why we had en electric engine on our train.

We arrived at the docks late in the evening around 10:00 p.m. and boarded our ship, the U.S.A.T. (United States Army Transport) Edmund B. Alexander. The arrival of all the troops was coordinated so that boarding was continuous around the clock until the ship was loaded. The gangplank was very steep going up to a door in the side of the ship. We carried our duffel bags on our shoulders and a full field pack on our backs with a blanket horseshoe folded over the top. Everything we owned was either on our backs or shoulder. To check us off as we boarded (in the proper order) there was an officer with a clip board containing the boarding list. He called out the last name of the soldier boarding and the soldier responded with his first name and middle initial. In this manner each soldier was identified. We were taken to the fantail where we were assigned bunks one deck below the open deck. My bunk was the top one of five in a stack and later I was glad. There was a fresh air ventilator on the ceiling above me and I always had fresh air, which most of the others didn't have.

We sailed the next morning and as we were at chow we saw the Statue of Liberty as we left New York Harbor.

On the preceding page is a picture of the U.S.AT. Edmund B. Alexander from a publisher on the east coast. The following is information which came with the photo:

"The ship was built in Belfast, Ireland in 1905 and operated in the North Atlantic passenger service by the Hamburg-American Lines. Siezed on April 6, 1917 at Boston she was converted into a Navy Transport and renamed the USS America. She made nine trans-Atlantic voyages as a World War I trooper.

After the war, she was reconditioned and operated commercially by the United States Lines.

Laid up in 1932, she was, in 1940, rehabilitated by the Army. For a while she served--under her new name--as a floating barracks (1,200 troops) at Newfoundland. Then came extensive overhaul; and in April 1943 she left Baltimore for New York as a 17 knot (19.5 mph) oil-fueled troopship.

The better part of her World War II service was spent as an Army Transport (USAT) operating from New York to European and Mediterranean Theaters of War. In the spring of 1946, she was altered to carry military dependents (904 adults, 314 children). The following year she was laid up, in the Nation's Reserve Fleet, in Baltimore. There, in 1957, she was severely damaged by fire and was later sold for scrap.

This ship, originally a coal burner, measured 687 feet in length, 74 feet in the beam and a 33 1/2 foot draft. She had wartime troop accommodations for 5,159 officers and men. In this respect she was the second largest of the Army's World War II troopships, and was exceeded only by the U.S.A.T. George Washington, (6,341).

Our position on the fantail was the first deck below the steering mechanism which controlled the rudder position. This consisted of a small reversible reciprocating steam engine and by running the engine in one direction turned the rudder one way. Reversing the engine turned it in the opposite direction. The pilot wheel on the bridge was connected to the steam engine by two long chains which apparently wound around the wheel axis somehow, so that when the wheel was turned to maneuver the ship, the chains were pulled through two metal conduits which ran to the steam engine. The engine turned a worm gear that meshed with a large fan gear sitting atop the vertical rudder shaft. The worm and fan gears fit together loosely with a great deal of play and the water passing by the rudder constantly moved it from side to side as far as the fan gear would permit, making a continual clanking noise. When we changed course the chain clanked link by link as the pilot wheel turned causing a noise similar to a chain being dragged over the edge of a steel table. It was quite loud but we soon learned to disregard both the chain and the rudder noise.

Our convoy picked up more ships as we passed Boston and formed, what was at that time, the second largest convoy in history; being surpassed only by the convoy of the invasison of North Africa. Of course this was before the Normandy Invasion, which dwarfed our convoy by far.

On May 16, four days after sailing from New York, I celebrated my twentieth birthday on the Edmund B. Alexander. It was the flagship of the convoy and was placed in the center of the first rank of ships. I counted over 80 ships before they disappeared over the horizon. The D.E.'s (Destroyer Escorts), many times with only their masts visible swinging wildly back and forth in the rough seas, were bobbing around us on all sides. The convoy followed a pre-planned course and on the hour and half hour our ship blew a long blast on the steam whistle and all the ships turned to the new heading. The whistle was used to eliminate needless radio transmissions and possibly revealing our position to German U-Boats. Our convoy, as were all convoys, was forced to sail at the speed of the slowest vessel, which was 10 - 12 knots, we estimated. At any rate, it took us 12 1/2 days to reach Liverpool, England.

I went off limits one day, out of curiosity, to see what kind of engines were propelling us. Their sound was similar to a washing machine going very slowly. I sneaked down to the engine room and saw four vertical steam cylinders, their connecting rods attached to the propeller shaft. The small, high pressure steam cylinder exhausted into the next larger cylinder and that one did the same into the third. The fourth, and low pressure final stage cylinder, was about forty feet high. As the pressure reduced it was exhausted into the increasingly larger cylinders which was necessary because many B.T.U.'s were used in each one, thus cooling the steam and lowering the pressure

When we ate, we stood instead of sitting, to conserve space. The tables were about four feet above the floor and each had a one inch rim around the edges to catch sliding dishes, spilled oatmeal, coffee, etc., which was always splashing along the tables in rough weather. Only those who ate first had clean tables to start their meals. Those following sat their plates in pools of spilled liquids.

When walking on the deck of a heaving ship in a storm you are at one time very light on your feet, then very heavy. As the ship's bow leaves the top of the wave and begins to fall to the trough, a person feels like "Twinkle Toes" and feather-light. At the end of the plunge and the ship is beginning to raise back up, the body becomes extremely heavy. It is a strange sensation on these occasions.

We had a terrible storm while in the North Atlantic and I loved it! Some men were seasick but most just simply stayed below decks, however I spent my spare time up at the bow where the spray from one side of the ship crossed over and fell in the ocean on the other side. I estimated the height of the waves as being equal in height to a telephone pole, or about 25 feet. The ship's bow rode out of the water until it became heavy enough to plunge down into the trough. It buried itself in the next wave almost to the level of the deck, and then, suddenly becoming bouyant again, it rose quickly above the water, and passed out and above the trough. Becoming heavy again, it slammed down into the water. It was absolutely exhilarating! The ship shuddered each time it reached the bottom and was struggling to regain bouyancy again. This was the reason we always were required to wear our *Mae West's* when we went on the open deck. We also had to be sure the red light, which was attached to the top of the vest, would turn on in case we fell overboard.

LANDING IN LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

Two days before we sighted land, we picked up our "Seagull Escort" so we knew land was not too far away. The gulls stayed with us until Ireland came into view.

As our troop convoy went around the northern tip of Ireland I put on my life jacket and went up on the open deck one night about 10:00, to get some fresh air before going to bed. It was still light! We were about 56 degrees north of the equator and this was our first exposure to the l-o-n-g English evenings. I was amazed.

We turned south into the North Channel and on to the Irish Sea between Scotland and Ireland. How beautiful Scotland was with the villages right down on the sea coast. Passing down the Irish Sea, we sailed past the Isle of Man where Alice believes her grandfather, Charles Robert Wheeler, was born, and as we approached the Irish coast, the color of the ocean abruptly changed from blue/black to green, just as though a line had been drawn in the water separating the two colors. I imagined there may have been a shelf below the surface with enough vegetation to give the water a greenish hue before it plunged deeper.

(When I told friends of this phenomenon after the war, many had trouble believing me, but in 1994 when Alice and I crossed the Irish Sea on board a ferry, again we saw the same change in the color of the water. I grabbed my camera and took a picture which clearly depicts the change in colors.! After seeing this, and the beautiful green hills, there is no doubt as to the origination of the name *The Emerald Isle.*

We entered the harbor at Liverpool and dropped anchor. I was so surprised to hear how much noise a ship's anchor and chain made when dropped into the water. "Drop Anchor" is not just a nautical term. It is a "happening". The anchors are carried on the outside of the hull, both starboard and port, and when one is dropped it is just as though someone releases the pawl on the cog wheel and the anchor literally **falls** into the water creating a great splash. The HUGE individual links follow, one by one in machine-gun-like succession through the hole in the hull, creating a terrible clanking heard throughout the harbor. All day, as the convoy's ships took their turns in entering the harbor and anchoring, we heard the anchor chains echoing as they dropped.

And all that day when we came up on deck we would see the same ships in the same places and with Liverpool on our right. The next morning when we got up and went on deck, another set of ships was there and Liverpool was not on our right. We thought we had moved during the night. Being landlubbers, it took some time to figure out the answer. The tide had gone out overnight, swinging all the ships around 180 degrees on their anchor chains. changing the view so that Liverpool was now on our left. As we also soon saw, the same ships were there but on the opposite side of our ship and also showing us their other sides. I felt rather stupid not realzing the correct answer but

I hadn't seen many ocean liners back in the hills of Missouri.

We leaned on the ship's rail and watched the English civilians going to work and we saw many public transportation busses passing by the harbor, each pulling a two-wheeled trailer. We learned the trailers held charcoal burners. The gasses of burning charcoal powered the bus engine instead of gasoline.

The ship began unloading and our turn came around 2:00 a.m. As we reached the docks, we fell in and formed up into companies to begin the march to the railroad station. As we walked along we saw our first war damage from German bombers. The buildings, five or six stories high, were only shells, having no floors nor roofs. We could see the sky through the windows. In black-out conditions, the streetlights were found only at the intersections and instead of being a bright light, each one had only a dim blue bulb, just marking the intersection as such. We boarded the train and began our all-day ride to "somewhere". We stopped in one city and I opened the carriage window and asked a man on the station platform where we were. He answered in a language I didn't understand. As we pulled out I saw a sign mentioning "Cardiff, Wales". He had answered me in Welsh. Welsh was used to a great degree then and in fact, every morning at 9:00, the BBC gave the news in English followed by the news in Welsh.

We finally stopped about 2:00 p.m. The train went into reverse as we left the main rail line, and backed a couple of miles to the end of the track.

BODMIN, CORNWALL, ENGLAND

Backing for a couple of miles really baffled us. We had been impressed by the quietness and privacy of the English railroad "carriages" and the convenience of entering and leaving directly to the station platform from our compartments instead of walking down the aisle to the end of the car. Reversing the train made us wonder what was happening.

We arrived at the station, which was indeed the "end of the line" with no way to turn the train around. That was why we backed in and this was the customary method of bringing trains into Bodmin.

Bodmin was the County Town of Cornwall, the equivalent of the American County Seat. It was located in one of the most beautiful parts of England I had seen and we had just traversed almost the entire length of the country that day. It is also just a few miles from Land's End at the southwestern most tip of England. I was never able to visit Land's End and was sorry about that.

"A" and "D" Companies were assigned to the Poor Law Institute, the Poor House, the buildings of which were several hundred years old. This was our first experience with the very old buildings which are common in England.

Each evening after chow we would walk down the hill into Bodmin. It was here we first found Fish and Chips. We would order it and watch the man make his own chips, frying them in grease. The fish was also deep fat fried. They were served in funnels rolled from newspaper which absorbed the grease. They were absolutely fresh and HOT.

From there we would go to the cinema and queue up for the movie. The money was so foreign to us for the first few days that we would just pull out a hand full of change and let the girl take what she needed. A few of the seats inside were double seats having no arm rest so that couples could sit together. We thought that was a good idea for the theaters in the United States to incorporate, but since we didn't date there we never used them.

Bodmin was a quaint town with many narrow streets which dated from the middle ages I suppose and just wide enough for one English car to drive through. The streets were cobblestone and never went in north-South directions. They seemed to follow shortcuts from here to there which were established hundreds of years ago and gradually became streets.

The English pubs (Public Houses) had such picturesque names: one was the *George and Dragon*. Another was the *Cat and Fiddle,* not the *Cat and <u>the</u> Fiddle*.

Plymouth, England was about twenty-five miles east of Bodmin on the English Channel. Every morning we could see the barrage balloons, which protected the city from low-flying German airplanes, being raised up to the desired altitudes for the day. In the evening we watched them as they were lowered back to earth. Plymouth, being a seaport, was heavily bombed during the war.

Twenty miles west of Bodmin was Newquay, situated on the St. George's Channel. Newquay was the "sometimes" home of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, of Sherlock Holmes fame. Sir Arthur did some of his writing here.

The rocky coastline was so strange. Rocks had been thrust up eons ago leaving the odd vertical shapes of today. It seemed as though a giant had come in with a large pancake turner and stood them up on their ends. It was such a picturesque scene.

Again, as land lubbers, we found ourselves victims of the tide. "Knobs" Shaver, Ed Howe and I had gone down from the city streets of Newquay to the beach and we found a cave which went far back from the beach into the cliff. (Shades of the *Fingal's Cave Overture*, music written about the rocky coast of Scotland by Felix Mendelsohn). We had gone into the cave with the idea of emerging on the street one hundred feet above the beach but when we got to the top of the stone stair which had been carved from the cave, we found the door locked. The town had done that in order to prevent the Germans from getting into town, should England be invaded. So we went back down after being in the cave for some time. Upon reaching the bottom of the cave again we found that the tide had come in and our sandy beach was covered with four feet of ocean. Our only way out was to scale the rocks and climb along above the water until we reached dry beach. I had my movie camera in one hand and raincoat folded in a neat package in the other. (We never went anywhere without our raincoats.)

So when I lost my balance while climbing above the water, I had nothing to grab a hand hold with. I fell into four feet of cold sea water and waded the rest of the way. I had to stay down on the beach for an hour or so waiting for my uniform to dry because the M.P.'s would look with disfavor upon a G.I. soaking wet from the waist down on the public streets. I have a movie of me sitting on the rocks wringing out my socks.

In Bodmin we had replaced the 29th Infantry Division who was to participate in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day. They left us a beautiful part of the country to train in. On some afternoons our company would take a fifteen mile road march just to give us something to do and keep us out of mischief. We walked down the beautiful country roads with hedgerows on each side. In the fields were piles and piles of artillery ammunition....fields just crammed full. Other fields had trucks of all descriptions parked bumper to bumper, just waiting for the invasion. We used to tell each other that if another ton of supplies were stored in the fields, England would sink in the ocean. Maybe that is one reason barrage balloons were so prevalent;
they were holding up the island.

The civilians put up with a lot while the Americans were there. We crowded them out of their cinemas, their pubs, their fish and chips shops and I am sure it was just a little more than a mere inconvenience for them, They used to tell us the American G.I. was *over paid, over fed, over sexed, and over here!*. The English humor is great.

One morning, June 6, 1944, the Bodmin church bells began ringing using the wonderful art of pulling the ropes to create an ever-changing sequence of the bells. We could not understand what was happening unless it was a special church holiday. We turned on the BBC and found that the invasion of Normandy had begun. The 29th Division, with many thousands of others, had landed. In one month we would follow them across the channel as Shock Troops, just as Lt. Bruffy had told us in Tennessee.

CROSSING THE ENGLISH CHANNEL

July 3, 1944 found us in yet another staging area. This one prior to crossing the English Channel. We stayed in Quonset huts whose sides did not reach the ground, leaving a big hole for the night breezes to gently waft us to sleep. It was COLD.

We were beside the strip of an American fighter base whose location made France and Normandy in particular, very convenient. We watched the P-38's take off, their liquid-cooled engines purring like contented kittens. What a beautiful sight they presented as they flew off into the evening sky.

The next day, July 4, we went to Weymouth, Dorset, England on the south coast and just thirty-five miles due south of Stonehenge. This area of England is north of the Normandy peninsula. The Weymouth beach was paved with cobblestones which allowed the trucks to reach our LST easily.

Our ambulances, with all of us inside, and the other vehicles drove on board followed by the 161st Field Artillery Battalion with their 105 mm guns. When on board we all got out of the ambulances and went up on the open deck where we would sleep at night during the Channel crossing. We were assigned an area and we selected our individual sleeping places, such as behind a projection, which would protect us from the wind as we traveled. We had been issued a set of more-or-less gas-proof clothes called "impregnated clothing" in the event the Germans would attempt to gas us while we were on board. We also wore our gas masks over our shoulders. (We would wear them from that time on until the end of the war.) The impregnation process closed the weave of the cloth making it more airtight and much warmer for us. For this we were thankful because we were to sleep on the open steel deck under the stars as the LST sailed across the Channel.

We headed out into the Channel and the convoy of LST's formed, each towing a small barrage balloon from the stern to make it more difficult for German planes to strafe us. The cables holding the balloons were invisible to a fighter going several hundred miles per hour and striking one at that speed would cause the plane to crash. We saw no enemy planes that day or night.

After we had been sailing in convoy for a while I asked a sailor where the latrine was located. (*Head*, in Navy lingo.) It was reached by going through a round hatch on the main deck and down a ladder to the crew's quarters. It was then I realized I was in the wrong branch of service. Here in this compartment were bunks with white Navy blankets on them. It was painfully apparent to me that unless the LST sank, those sailors would have clean, warm, dry beds to crawl into every night. We were headed for Normandy where our beds would be four foot deep slit trenches, many times wet from rain. It was very thought-provoking.

Our sailing from England and arrival in Normandy was timed to coincide with high tide. Our ship, upon arriving in Normandy, went straight into the beach until it grounded on its flat bottom. I guess it had no projecting keel. Later the tide went out and our bow doors swung open. An Engineer bulldozer piled up a sand ramp and the ship's loading ramp was lowered on it so all the vehicles could be driving off. (Even then, the back step of our ambulance hit the edge of the steel ramp and bent the step upward as we left. It was never repaired.)

After the tide went out and we waited for our turn to disembark, all of us "kids" were allowed to go out and "play in the sand". We were able to walk completely around the ship and look at the rudder and screw. There was a big hole in the side below the waterline but apparently the bilge pumps were able to take care of it.

A picture of an LST which brought some of the 35th Division over will be found on page 34a.

THE NORMANDY CAMPAIGN
JULY 5, 1944 - JULY 24, 1944

At last after roaming around the LST as it sat on dry sand, our turn to disembark came. We drove off and in spite of the sand ramp, our ambulance's rear step, which was down in the "step" position, was bent upward as we left the ramp. Normally the step is folded up again and it is fastened to the ambulance doors so that rough terrain may be negotiated. I guess someone forgot to fasten it up. This ambulance had its step down for the entire war. It was never repaired.

We formed by companies at our collecting point and began our Battalion convoy to the assembly area. There was not enough room for all the "A" Company men to ride in our vehicles so a few of us were assigned to Battalion Headquarters. By this time it was night. The vehicle I was riding in was behind Colonel Hall's jeep, the first Battalion vehicle.

The German Luftwaffe had a night fighter flying overhead (nick-named "Bed Check Charlie") to harass us and tonight was our first experience with him. Our red tracers were going into the sky in hopes of accidentally hitting him even though the ack-ack couldn't see him.

The British soldiers nearby were using their anti-aircraft machine guns to shoot at him. Our anti-aircraft machine guns had a tracer in every fifth 50 caliber bullet. The British had a tracer in each one and instead of being red, they were silver and looked like our Fourth of July sparklers. They fired their guns, weaving them back and forth, making great silver, sparkling snakes going skyward. It was impressive, as was the din of so many machine guns and 40 mm Bofors anti-aircraft guns firing continuously.

Our convoy progressed slowly while we enjoyed the pyrotechnics. Suddenly an Infantry Lieutenant stopped the convoy and, with Tommy Gun in hand, asked Col. Hall where he was going. The Colonel said we were on our way to our assigned Assembly Area. The Infantry officer said, "Don't you know this is the front line?" I guess we were lost so the entire convoy of four companies plus Headquarters Detachment turned around and headed in the correct direction.

At this time the front had only been pushed in ten miles from the English Channel leaving very little maneuvering room for the newly arriving units. The 35th Division alone, meant 15,000 more men and associated equipment in that tiny beach head and more were arriving continuously. I guess Lt. Bruffy was right, back on Tennessee Maneuvers. The 35th would go to Europe as Shock Troops to absorb the German counter-attack after the Invasion. This was D plus 30.

While training in the States on one occasion, S/Sgt. Frank (Heb) Hebda said, "Today youse guys are going to practice digging foxholes while laying on your stomachs.

When our infantry launched an attack, the dug-in machine guns were employed against them. As our artillery fire was brought down on the machine guns the Germans would drop mortar fire on our advancing infantry, hoping both for casualties and to cause our infantry to believe that their own artillery fire was falling short. Because of these tactics the Division Artillery fired on German machine guns, mortar observers and mortars simultaneously.

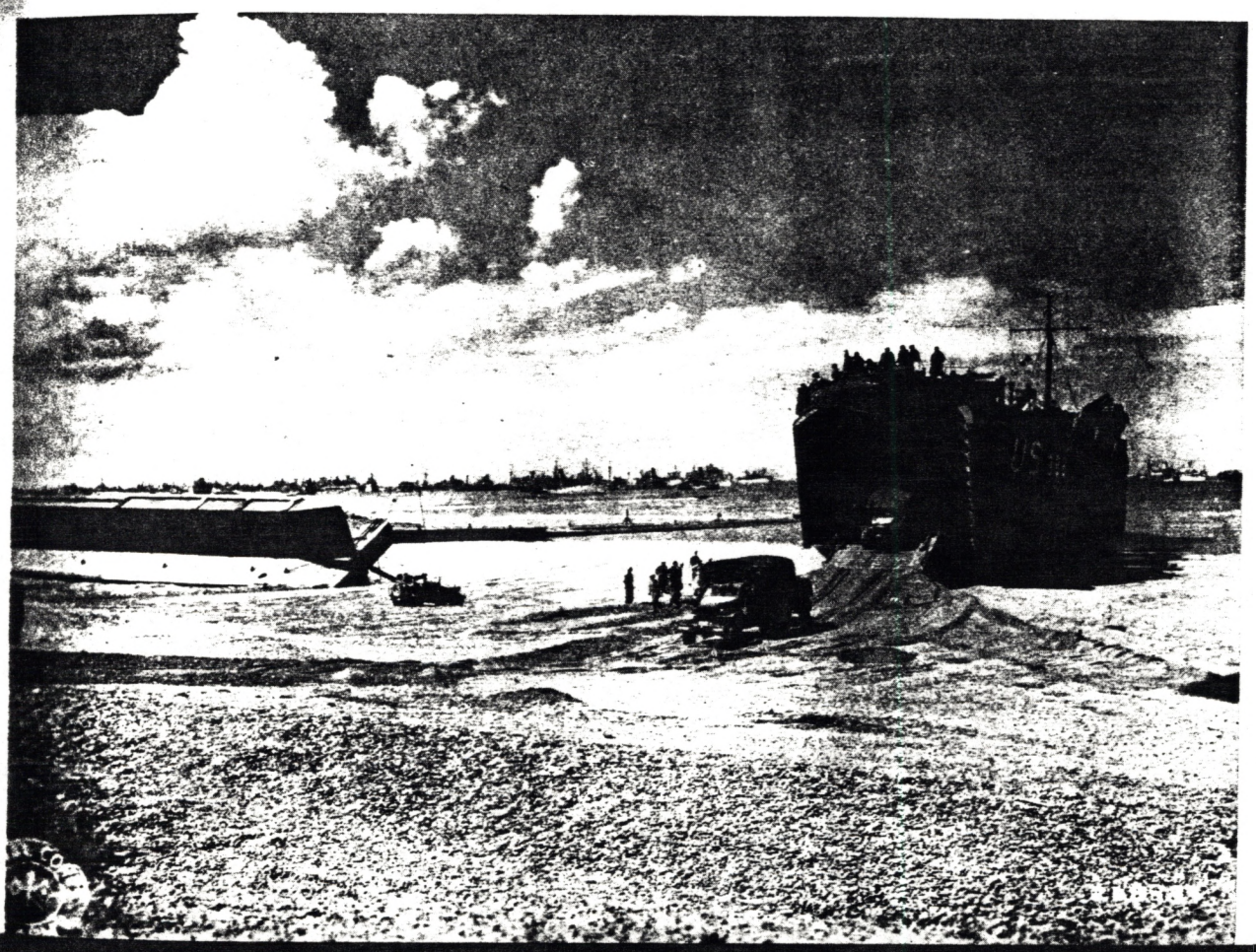
Just before dawn, 16 July, the 1st Battalion started across the mined fields under enemy fire toward Hill 122 itself. As the battalion started up the slope, the hill spewed lead like an exploding ammunition dump, but the doughboys pushed on.

The Germans counter-attacked the steadily moving line and were thrown back. Despite the mounting losses, the 1st Battalion edged uphill against the apparently impregnable enemy defense line. Finally Hill 122 fell.

The advance was slowed down by insistent infiltration of small parties of frantic enemy. It took a series of hand-to-hand engagements to subdue these parties. This was a typical Nazi maneuver. The men in these suicide squads meant nothing to their leaders; it was time that counted.

But this costly delay, for which the Germans paid a high price, allowed them to complete their lines and be in position to launch a counter-attack also on 16 July. As the 3rd Battalion started moving down the right flank of the 134th, opposition was fierce, for the enemy was well aware that once his flank was penetrated he would not again be in a position to drive the Yanks from the dominating hill.

LST brings 35th vehicles on beach at Coilesville, France



Youse guys might have to do it combat some day". Little did we know!

Each soldier was furnished an entrenching tool, a shovel with a two-foot long handle. The spade portion folds back on the handle when not in use in order to conserve space but it could be turned out 90 degrees and used as a hoe or pick. It also can be turned out 180 degrees and be used as a shovel.

We attempted to dig our holes while laying on our stomachs and found it all but impossible and when we quit that day I decided we would never have to do it in combat.

We finally arrived at our assembly area in Normandy and were instructed to dig holes for our own safety even though nothing was going on there.

We determined the direction of the front and began to dig our first foxholes, digging them parallel to the front line. (This was done to present the smallest opening posssible to incoming artillery shells. If we had dug our holes perpendicular to the front, a shell would have a hole six feet long to enter instead of two feet.)

When we had pulled into the area the ambulance driver had parked his rig on the "enemy" side of the hedgerow because we always used the back side of the hedgerow for protection. (The heck with the ambulance.)

We were standing using our entrenching tools as shovels, leisurely digging at the base of the hedgerow when, **BAM!** A German shell came in ushering a long artillery barrage and our first sounds of close-up war. We hit the ground, changing our tools to the pick-ax design and began digging in earnest **on our stomachs.** The ground was very rocky and we just couldn't get holes dug, as hard as we tried. It was a scary situation because a person feels so naked lying on top of the ground during a barrage. One shell landed on the other side of the hedgerow and splattered the side of the ambulance with shrapnel holes, which it carried for the rest of the war. We were ever so glad to leave that area because we never did get our holes dug properly.

As the next few days passed and we had dug quite a few holes, I developed a pretty fancy foxhole, or slit trench. The opening would be about 2 1/2 feet wide and five or 5 1/2 feet long. After digging down four feet, with the dirt piled around the hole on all sides, making it even deeper, I would dig a small cave at one end large enough for my head in my steel helmet. This gave added protection against shrapnel. My shelter half, which stretched over as much of the hole as possible, kept it comparatively dry during the almost-daily rain. (It seemed to us that the concussion from the terrible artillery barrages produced rain much as thunder does as it condenses the moisture in the air into rain drops.)

The rain always seemed to get in, though, and the easiest way to dry the hole out was to dig down farther to dry earth.

The 35th Division was inserted into the line with the 30th Infantry Division on our left and the 29th Division on our right. We had replaced the 29th in Bodmin, Cornwall, England in June before they made the invasion.

The objective of the Corp (29th, 30th, and 35th Divisions) was to take the city of St. Lo, the "County Seat" of La Manche, translated from French as, "The Arm" or "The Sleeve", as the Normandy peninsula was described. St. Lo had a population of

approximately 15,000 people and it was situated in terrain shaped like a saucer. The Germans were in St. Lo and they also controlled the south, east and west sides of the rim. It was the transportation hub of the peninsula and it had to be taken before the American Army could advance.

In order for the 35th Division to gain access to St. Lo from the north we had to take Hill 122 which made up the northern side of the saucer. (The designation Hill 122 meant it was 122 feet above sea level.)

My unit, Company A, 110th Medical Battalion, was part of the 134th Infantry Regimental Combat Team. (RCT). Also in the RCT was the 161st Field Artillery Battalion, Company A, 60th Engineer (Combat) Battalion, one company of the 737th Tank Battalion and a company of the 654th Tank Destroyer Battalion plus other division supporting troops. It should be obvious that a Regimental Combat Team has all the units to conduct warfare in its assigned area, needing no one else. It is commanded by the Infantry Regimental Colonel who, along with the other two RTC Colonels, act under the Division commander, a Major General.

The Infantry was trying to take Hill 122 but before the 134th Infantry RCT was committed, the 137th Infantry had already been committed to its first combat. It was taking heavy casualties. It has been said if a G.I. can make it through his first day of combat, he has a much better chance of getting through another one because on that first day, he must learn the different sounds of war. He must learn the difference between our artillery going out and the German artillery coming in. He must learn the sounds of mortars; the *cough* of a mortar being fired and the phhhht-bang of one coming in and exploding. He must learn the difference in the sounds of our machine guns versus the German machine guns. All these sounds tell him whether to hit the ground or continue walking. The 137th Infantry was learning these sounds today and in their "education" they were taking serious casualties and the Medics in our Company were sent to help in the evacuation of the wounded. This was an unusual situation because as was stated a few lines up the page, each Regimental Combat Team is a separate unit and operates with no outside assistance.

Lt. John A. Barber, our Litter Platoon Leader, had gone to the front line (his first time) so that he could direct all the Litter Squads to the Regimental Aid Station. From there they would be directed to the Battalion Aid Stations and finally to the Infantry companies on the front line.

At this time I did not yet have a squad to be responsible for so I was temporarily assigned to Sgt. Jack Schwab' s squad. One of his other members was Donnel "Pat" Patrick but I don't remember the other member.

Jack's squad started out walking to the front, knowing the general direction to take. Off to the right a German "burp gun" was firing, but not at us so we were walking along, really enjoying the sounds of war which were new to us. We had already learned that the more familiar the sounds became, the safer we were because we knew what was happening - a simple illustration - learning the difference in sounds between "outgoing artillery" and "incoming artillery".

We were walking along the road and met Lt. Barber crawling on his hands and knees in the ditch on his first return from the front. He had turned his shirt collar with his Second Lieutenant bar inside so it wouldn't show to the Germans.

Always exuberant and happy, "Pat" Patrick waved and yelled, "Hi Lieutenant!". Lt. Barber put his finger to his lips and said, "Shhhh. Call me John, Call me Barber, call me anything! But don't call me Lieutenant!"

We found on this road to the front that a G.I. had been killed and was lying on his stomach beside the road. The back of his skull had been blown off and his brains had turned to a gray, watery liquid. By turning to the right when reaching this G.I., we could find the front or direct some one else later, using him as a means of direction. Strange things like that helped us keep our bearings. We used this G.I. several times.

In Normandy we always had four Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighters flying ground support. At times they would fly in a large circular pattern either looking for targets of opportunity or awaiting a request from another P-47 pilot taking his turn on the ground with the Infantry, to radio in a target to them. When such a mission arose, the P-47's would peel off one by one, strafing with their eight 50 caliber machine guns and dropping their two 500 pound bombs. This was their daytime mission. At nightfall they would return to their base in England where the planes would be refueled and rearmed for the next day. Because of our northern latitude, darkness didn't come until around 11:00 p.m. So each night at 11:00 we lost our air cover and at 11:05 "Bed Check Charlie" made his appearance. "Bed Check Charlie" was a German Junkers Ju. 88 twin engine light bomber with a crew of three which included a machine gunner in an upper turret. The engines of a Ju. 88 were never completely synchronized, which gave it a unique sound of its own: Reow - reow - reow, unendingly, all night long.

As previously stated, our Combat Team had not yet been committed, and Company "A" was about six miles behind the lines where we were fairly safe. Next door, across the hedgerow, was the 29th Division Medium Field Artillery battalion with its twelve 155 m.m. howitzers.

After we returned from the front, still edgy from our "first time" experience later that night after dark, Jack Schwab and I were walking past the kitchen truck. Nearby was a 4" x 4" garbage pit. Jack and I were over six feet tall and "Bed Check Charlie" was overhead.

Unbeknownst to us, the twelve howitzers got orders for a "five round fire mission", that is, five rounds for each of the twelve guns, or sixty rounds fired as rapidly as possible. When they started their fire mission we thought "Bed Check Charlie" was bombing us and we both dove into the 4' x 4' garbage pit. From then until this day, we are each other's "Garbage Pit Buddy". What a wonderful man Jack was to work with! Truly a great buddy.

While we were in this area the artillery battalion received many rounds of "counter-battery fire" from the German artillery. (In fact other than "Charlie" and counter-battery fire, this area was completely safe and a GOOD place to be.) Each time a German barrage had stopped we would hear, "chomp, chomp, chomp". It was Lt. Barber

digging his slit trench deeper. One morning we got up to hear him complaining of being wet, as well as having wet blankets. He had dug so deeply that he struck a spring in the bottom of his hole.

By July 18th the 134th Infantry had taken Hill 122 and was sitting on it. It was also occupying the northern section of St. Lo down the hill. My squad had been assigned to one of the 134th Infantry battalions for medical support. We were to set up an Aid Station as soon as we had reached the first buildings in St. Lo.

During our training in the United States we were always instructed to dig our slit trenches with an opening as narrow as possible to minimize the danger of an enemy shell falling into it.

At this particular time as squad leader I had three men who were also T-5's, (Medical Technician, 5th grade - the equivalent of Corporal.) When casualties were unusually heavy and all ten of the litter teams were busy I seemed to end up with the extra T-5's on my squad. These men had other responsibilities in the Company area. Leslie Miller was the Latrine Orderly. Carl Stanley was making his first trip to the front. His usual job was that of Mail Orderly and he ordinarily remained with the Company about four miles behind the lines.

Around 10:00 p.m. the Lt. Colonel who commanded the Infantry Battalion sent word to dig in for the night. After learning the direction of the front, we began digging our slit trenches parallel to the front on the defilade side of the hedgerow which allowed us more protection from enemy artillery fire and complete protection from small arms fire.

We began digging with our entrenching tools. The average slit trench would be about three or four deep and in my case, a little less than six feet long allowing room far a small "cave" at one end where, while wearing my steel helmet as a pillow, I could put my head back inside the "cave" and gain more protection from shrapnel which might fall. It also meant I had to dig less by having a shorter hole.

My Mail Orderly buddy asked me to dig a hole with him which would be a hole about four feet wide and six feet long. I told him, "No", because it would be too dangerous to dig such a wide slit trench but he continued to plead to dig a hole with me in spite of the danger. He couldn't stand to be alone in his hole. After much persistent begging on his part, and in spite of knowing how stupid it would be, I agreed to dig a double hole.

Carl and I had dug down only about a foot when "Charlie" again arrived on the scene. The one foot of earth we had dug had been thrown all around our hole to make a higher wall of protection.

"Charlie" had evidently used the intersection of two radar beams to locate the St. Lo area because he began to circle overhead. Carl and I were digging furiously to get as deep a hole as possible before "Charlie" went to work on us. Suddenly he dropped a parachute flare. The magnesium lit the entire area as brightly as daylight because he was flying at no more than 500 feet above the ground.

He evidently saw the ammunition dump about 75 feet from us in the center of the field formed by the hedgerows, and he also saw my squad digging in beside our own hedgerow. He lined up his plane and we heard his engines speed up as he began a strafing dive using his machine gun turret. The bullets were hitting the dirt that we had just thrown out of the hole and splattered it down on our backs. If he had only moved his machine gun two feet to the left, his bullets would have gone into our hole, striking us. Because our hole was so shallow I felt as exposed as if I were lying on a scaffold but the Lord was again with us and He protected us from injury!

Each time "Charlie" finished a strafing run and began his circling climb back up into the air for his next attack I would look up and see his white tracers making an arc across the night sky.

During his strafing runs I had my head buried in my arms and I was praying silently for all I was worth. Carl, laying beside me, was praying aloud saying, "O Lord, protect me; O Lord, protect me". We were both terrified as the bullets broke the sound barrier, each one making a loud crack like an explosion as they hit our hole.

After his last strafing run he returned in a steep dive bomb run. All this time the magnesium flare was still illuminating the ground. As he dived toward the ground he released a bomb with fins attached which were used by the Germans as a psychological weapon. The speed of the bomb falling through the air made a screech at a tremendous volume like a terrified woman screaming at the top of her voice. We also were terrified! The bomb landed 35 or 40 feet away, between us and the ammunition dump throwing large clods of dirt on our backs again. It exploded and the concussion slammed down on us like dozens of sledgehammers pounding us repeatedly. The explosion created a vacuum in the air which, in a split second, closed, causing another concussion of equal pressure on our backs like someone was beating our backs with their fists.

At last "Charlie" left and I found my heart pounding **BAM, BAM, BAM** in my chest and ears. This was always the case after being in an artillery barrage or other kind of extreme danger and excitement. The Infantry company commander got us out of our holes to make a forced march with them down the road into St. Lo. This was well after midnight

After a fast hike away from our danger we reached the "safety" of St. Lo. We set up our Aid Station in a winery and hung our Red Cross flag outside the door so the Infantry Battalion would know where we were and that we were ready to receive the wounded. Our ambulance caught up with us and also parked in front of the winery. This happened to be under enemy observation however at the time, we didn't know it.

When morning came the Germans saw our flag and ambulance, which, although painted in the traditional army green, had a five foot red cross on a white background staring back at them.

They began shelling us at 8:00 a.m. with their 88 m.m. cannons. We took refuge in a space about a foot and a half high beneath a large wine vat.

In the meantime the ambulance gas tank was hit with shrapnel and T/5 Harry Moran, the 39 year old driver, went outside during the artillery barrage, and lay underneath

underneath his ambulance whittling wooden pegs to stick in the holes of his tank. He was wounded by shrapnel during this time. At a later date he was awarded the Purple Heart medal for his injury and the Silver Star medal for his bravery. Harry had five ambulances shot out from under him during the war. (When he lost his fifth ambulance he was put on the kitchen truck as driver so that he would not have to go to the front any more. He was very brave but his nerves were beginning to fray. Each time he lost an ambulance he would come to me in his quiet, bashful way, and say with a grin, "Well, West, I did it again." (The last time was in Germany.)

The artillery barrage continued until 2:00 p.m. when it began to rain. (The Germans never did fire their artillery during a rain.) We got ourselves out of the winery, realizing it was an untenable position and hiked back up the steep road we had come down the night before, and returned to Hill 122.

When at last we reached Company A, 110th Medics, our buddies there told us that the Ju. 88 which strafed us the previous night had flown over the company area and a 29th Division Field Artillery soldier fired two rounds from his 50 caliber machine gun mounted on the cab of a 2 1/2 ton truck, striking the plane. It crashed about 100 yards away in an apple orchard. The soldier ran around shouting, "I got Him!, I got him!" One of the crew members found hanging in a tree was a woman. She and the two others were still there when we got back the next day.

We found that when shells land very close by, ten or fifteen feet away, as they break apart they "ring" making a sound very similar to that of a blacksmith's hammer striking an anvil. Then comes the red fire inside a ball of black smoke and shrapnel whispering past. When they come that close, if you aren't already hugging the ground after hearing them coming, it's probably too late to do so.

The hedgerows in Normandy divide the farmer's fields into smaller pieces of land maybe fifty or seventy five yards across. Hedgerows are long piles of earth five or six feet high with trees many times growing from the top. They might measure six or eight feet thick at the bottom and four or five feet at the top. They are hundreds of years old and are laid out haphazardly, ignoring north/south directions and many times not having 90 degree corners. They just seem to have been "built".

At times roads run between two parallel hedgerows and it seems that the dirt for those hedgerows came from the roads; so the higher hedgerows were built, the more dirt from the roads it took to construct them. These "sunken roads" are many times ten or twelve feet deep with hedgerows forming both sides. Every once in a while the sunken roads intersect others crossing them at ninety degrees.

Sunken roads were very valuable to either army in that they afforded great protection to soldiers passing from the front line to the rear. Intersections were especially valuable because travel was possible in four different directions. Small arms fire was no worry to anyone in a sunken road.

One of the 134th Infantry Battalion Aid Stations had a jeep driver called "Mouse". He was called this for two reasons: he was small to begin with but his face and nose were sharp like a mouse's face. He had been a Chicago taxi driver in civilian life and he brought his taxi driving abilities to Normandy.

One of the most revered qualities of a jeep was its quiet four cylinder engine. In low gear and low range plus four wheel drive it could idle silently across rugged terrain.

"Mouse" was always blessed with the noisiest jeep in the regiment. His wild driving habits seemed to take him through the roughest terrain at the fastest speed. His muffler was constantly blown.

Stealth and quietness are very desirable when riding just behind the front line and we always shuddered when we found he would be taking us from the Battalion Aid Station to the front.

As the German army withdrew hedgerow by hedgerow, they apparently noted the sunken roads on their maps, and especially sunken road intersections. These must have been carefully marked and zeroed in with both their 88's and mortars.

When "Mouse" rode along in his jeep, his noise announced his arrival to the Germans only two or three hedgerows away. All they had to do was phone or radio his approximate location to the mortar or artillery crews who, having previously zeroed in their guns, needed only to load and fire.

Such was the case once when "Mouse" was taking my litter squad up to the front line. The four of us had hopped on his jeep with our legs hanging out over the sides for a quick exit if it became necessary. When riding in a noisy jeep we usually could not hear a shell coming in. Our first warning more times than not was the explosion. At that time we would jump off the jeep and bury our faces in the ground before "Mouse" could get his jeep stopped and get out himself.

We were riding to the front in a sunken road one day, blown muffler and all, announcing our presence to any interested party. Ahead of us we saw a sunken road intersection and as we approached it we heard the first artillery shell explode on the top of the hedgerow off to our right, perpendicular to the road. We hopped off the jeep and I fell into the ditch, face down, burying my head in my arms leaving "Mouse" to do whatever he could do to get his jeep stopped and get himself on the ground.

Another shell exploded on top of the hedgerow to our right, but closer this time. Then another even closer, and another shell yet closer. They were exploding on top of the hedgerow, each one getting closer to the road where we were. They reminded me of a sewing machine needle going down a seam and getting closer and closer to the end of the seam.

My ears were ringing now because of so many explosions so close by. The shells continued down the hedgerow and when one exploded above us at the intersection of the two hedgerows, I knew the next one would land where we were lying. I waited....and waited....no more shells. The Germans had stopped shelling when they thought they had hit our road!

When jumping out of the jeep my only thought was to get down, never noticing anything else. As I cautiously raised my head out of my arms I looked up and saw an American 155 m.m. shell maybe half a foot from my eyes.! This artillery shell is six inches in diameter and about eighteen inches long. If the German artillery had continued one more round, it would have exploded in the road and would probably have caused

the 155 by my head to explode also. There wouldn't have been much left of me. The good Lord had protected me again!

We spent a week or more on Hill 122 because the Infantry was having a terribly difficult time advancing through the hedgerows. One or two hedgerows taken a day was considered a good days' battle. That meant possibly only 50 to 100 yards. We thought it was going to be a long battle across Normandy at that slow rate.

The good part about Hill 122 was that we were settled there; we all had our holes dug and we returned to them each time we came back from the front. It was back far enough that only medium or larger artillery could fire there from the German lines, which meant we didn't have too much counter-battery fire to worry about.

I always enjoyed watching the 29th Division 155's "doing their thing" on the other side of the hedgerow to the west. (St. Lo was south of us.) Everyone was jammed into such a small area because we had only penetrated ten miles, that we couldn't spread out as we would normally have done and that put us beside the artillery of another Division, no less.

When they got a fire mission we would go over behind the guns and watch the men fire. It was interesting to see them set the fuse on the end of the shell, then watch two men put it on a steel cradle and lift it up behind the breech. Two more men with a long ram rod would push it off of the cradle and far up into the barrel.

In the meantime, the officer in charge of firing had figured the distance to the target, the difference in altitude above sea level , and had given the powder charge information to the men loading the bags of powder into the breech. It might have been a Number 1 charge, or it could have been as high as a Number 5 charge, depending on how much powder was required to get the shell to its destination.

If the mission was for five rounds, all three firing batteries, each with their four guns, would have five shells ready to go with the fuses set and the proper powder charge also ready. At the command, "Fire", all twelve guns began firing. In a very short time, sixty shells were "on their way".

We might stand behind the guns and watch the six inch (diameter) shell leave the tube as a six inch circle and, within a second reduce in size and disappear into nothing; or we could stand 50 yards to the side and watch the black streak twenty five or thirty feet long as the shell left the tube. (A 105 m.m. shell, measuring 4 1/4" in diameter, is too small to see.)

Occasionally we might hear a "rotating band" come off the shell, tearing its way through tree limbs and anything else that got in its way. A shell is pointed at the tip and tapers gradually from the rear. This shape makes it impossible to be stabile in a gun barrel because of the difference in size so rotating bands are installed nearer the front of the shell making it, in effect, the same size as the back of the shell, keeping it straight and firmly aligned inside the rifling.

When one comes loose, the shell is going several hundred miles an hour, it screams like a fire truck siren as it crashes into the trees. It is very deadly and I have seen large limbs cut off of trees by bands. For this reason the Artillery crew cautioned us

about standing in front of the guns. After hearing a band come off just once, we understood the problem.

When at the front line, a person is not afraid all the time. I just depends on the situation. If it is quiet and no artillery or small arms fire are coming in - all is well. It is only when under attack that things sometimes become stressful. During quiet times when I was at the front I sometimes forgot where I was and whistled, unconsciously, to myself. This really bothered the Infantrymen, I guess, because one time an Infantryman said to me, "Don't whistle, Doc." He thought a shell was coming in and it frightened him. I could understand that so ever after, I tried to be careful not to whistle even though I felt like it.

Being in combat does strange things to a person's mind. With all the excitement that naturally accompanies combat it caused me to become so "hepped up" that I wanted to hit someone in the mouth just as hard s I could....no one special....not one of my friends....just some one. That isn't really me, but it was back then. When I was back with "A" Company I dreaded for my turn to go to the front line for 24 hours and yet, all the time, I was itching to get there. Then as soon as I got there and had a close call or two, I couldn't wait to get back to the Company and its comparative safety. Each time I wondered how I could ever have wanted to go back to the front. It was a strange feeling I couldn't explain.

One day after returning to the "A" Company area from the front, completely terrified, my good buddy, Ed Howe, met me as I stepped down from the ambulance. I guess he could see the look of stark horror in my eyes and he came to me and said, "Is it rough up there, West?" My only reply was, "Oh God!" This was not a profanity, it was a prayer that God would continue protecting me while at the front. The day had been indescribably horrible and I was **so thankful** to be back four miles behind the lines and out of danger except for artillery fire. No worrying about the incessant scream of shells, the sounds of bullets breaking the sound barrier as they passed over or the phhhht of mortar shells before they landed!

I also think that because in the States while on Tennessee Maneuvers Ed and I worked so closely together in the Station, he may have felt a little guilt at being able to remain in the Station and its safety now while I was at the front. It certainly wasn't his fault that it worked out that way, it was simply what happened in the course of things. Anyway, he wanted me to know that he was concerned about all of us who went up each day. Ed was a good buddy!

In this same area, we had one man who was severely distressed by combat even though he never had to go to the front. He was probably six feet tall and weighed about 200 pounds with black hair combed straight back. After we had spent about a week there I saw a thin, white-haired man leaving the chow line with his mess kit to go to a foxhole to eat. (We were eating on top of the ground.) I asked a friend who he was and he said, "Pop Parker." "Pop" had turned white headed and lost a lot of weight in that one week. I was usually up at the front and had no occasion to see him before. Because of his mental condition he was kept back to drive the Kitchen Truck from that point on.

Occasionally we would try to get fresh eggs from the French farmers. Sometimes before we could ask them they would tell us how much they hated the Germans. They would say, "Le Bosche!", then make a knife-slashing movement across their throats. We could then ask them if they had any eggs: "Avoir vous des oeuf?" (The dialogue was always the same - the farmer would answer, "Des oeuf? Des oeuf? Je non compris pas, des ouef". (I don't understand "des oeuf".) Then we would take out a Hershey bar and say, "Avoir vous des oeuf pour chocolat?" Then the farmer always responded with something like. Oh, DES OEUF, DES OEUF. ah oui, beaucoup des oeuf." (Oh, EGGS, EGGS, oh yes, many eggs.) He would bring some and place them in our steel helmets. I am sure he held plenty in reserve for other soldiers who might offer cigarettes in trade for eggs. Those sly, but funny Frenchmen!

As the land in Normandy was liberated, the F.F.I. made its appearance. F.F.I. stood for *Free French of the Interior* and was composed of Frenchmen who wanted to play a part in the liberation of their particular area. They were private men of their own local town who had banded together, but attached to no one, civil or military, calling their own shots each day. They did, however, supply information to the U.S. Army as to the whereabouts of the German units.

They were a rag-tag group with a brassard showing the *Tricolor* of France on one arm which designated them as part of the *Resistance.* They wore no uniforms with only a rifle slung over one shoulder as they rode out each morning on their bicycles to do battle with *Le Bosche,* the hated Germans. (It seemed many men had a front tooth missing into which a cigarette could be stuck, allowing the man to speak, lips apart, without loosing the cigarette.) In the evening they would ride back home. There was no way to tell where they had been. This was their home territory and undoubtedly used their knowledge of the terrain to their advantage and probably to the detriment of the enemy. At times when we were talking to them they would again say to us, "Le Bosche", making the slashing motion with one finger across their throats. That probably told the story of their adventures of the day, after four years of German occupation.

After Hill #122 had been taken we stayed near a stone farm house whose thatch roof had been struck by artillery and set on fire. The thatch was so thick that it would not really support combustion in the form of flames, but instead, it smoldered continuously for a number of days while we were nearby. It was here that I saw one of the first signs of civilian casualties. A hog was carrying the hand of a woman in its mouth and had apparently been eating it.

The Germans were far ahead of us mechanically many times. Their tanks could completely outshoot our Shermans. Their 88's could fire flatter, faster and more powerfully than our 105s and they had machine guns that could fire circles around ours. It was almost comical to hear a duel between our big, slow-firing 50 caliber machine gun and the German "Schmeisser" machine gun that we called the "burp gun". It fired faster than anything we had and it reminded me of a sewing machine going at high speed. We often thought it was used to call for artillery fire on us, using a series of "burps" as a signal to the German artillery. A duel between one of our 50's and a "burp gun" almost

sounded ridiculous - - chug, chug, chug. Burrrrrrp, burrrrrrp, burrrrrrp. They probably fired 10 rounds to our 50 caliber's one round.

The Germans also had their MG 42 machine gun which fired from a bipod instead of a tripod as ours did. This made the MG 42 much lighter and was handled by only one man.

Here we were in the middle of July wearing wool uniforms and long underwear plus field jackets at night. This, because of the northern latitude, and because we were sleeping in our holes at night. During the daytime, it warmed up considerably. It wasn't hot as it is in the central United States, however, but none the less as we struggled carrying litters back from the front, we suffered from the heat. When we carried a wounded man into the Station tent we immediately smelled the stench of dried blood which was always present. Men needed bloody bandages changed and almost always their uniforms were blood-soaked. They had been wounded several hours before, giving the blood more than ample time to dry. The sun beating down on the outside of the tent created heat which magnified the smell of the blood and this smell has lingered with me ever since.

We had seen our Station Section men use plasma many times for those who had lost a great quantity of blood. Plasma came in two pint sized sterile bottles - one containing the brown dehydrated blood, and the other filled with the proper amount of sterilized water. The bottle caps were made of rubber and one end of a two-ended sterile needle punctured the plasma bottle, and the other end pierced the water bottle which was then held upside down above the plasma bottle. After draining the water in with the plasma, it was shaken to get a good mix as well as achieving the complete dissolving of the plasma. Transfusion then began. The most memorable time I ever saw plasma given was to a wounded member of the German Wehrmacht. When we carried him from the ambulance into the Station tent his face was as gray as though he were wearing a death mask and I didn't think he would live. My Station Section buddies started him on plasma immediately and within five minutes his face was showing color. It seemed miraculous. My squad and I had previously picked up a wounded German soldier at the front line where we found him after he was left behind by his comrades, who were withdrawing. He died on our litter before we could carry him back to the Battalion Aid Station. We naturally took care of our own first, but when there was an opportunity, we cared for the enemy also and they were given the same care as our own G.I.s. On one occasion, I saw a wound that could have made Robert L. Ripley's *Believe It or Not* column: a German soldier had been carried into the Station tent and his ONLY wound was a complete circumcision! A piece of shrapnel had struck him and wound itself somehow around him completing an almost bloodless surgical procedure. This "operation" was done at no cost to him, courtesy the United States Army.

An interesting tidbit of information that I soon picked up was that the direction that an American Sherman tank had been traveling in could be told by the marks left in the dirt by the tank tracks. They resembled a horseshoe that had been spread apart and

widened at the top leaving the top open in the direction of travel by the tank, thusly:

The tracks show a tank going from left to right-

Tanks were brutally hard on the French roads, especially the unpaved country roads. When a battalion of tanks moved down the road and turned a 90 degree corner to another road the intersection was left in shambles. The Sherman tank weighed in at about 32 tons and when turning a corner to the right, for instance, the right track was braked and the left track spun, turning the tank in the new direction. Twisting the right track was not unusually hard on the road but the left track chewed up the surface as half of the 32 tons skidded around the turn and created an arc-shaped ditch as the track tore up the road. Thirty or forty tanks might eventually dig a trough possibly three feet deep, piling up dirt from the bottom to the outside of the turn, creating an "Obstacle Course" for truck drivers following the convoy.

While training in the United States the 737th Tank Battalion was attached to the 35th Division. They also went overseas with us but we soon developed a love/hate relationship for tanks. They were wonderful protection for the troops, being highly mobile as well as firing a 75 mm cannon from the turret. However they also had a 2000 horsepower Wright Cyclone aircraft engine, with no muffler, which made so much noise that, as they moved around, they would draw relentless enemy artillery fire. Many times a Sherman tank would fire a few rounds then move a short distance for safety. The 737th, however, had another idea about safety. If they received anti-tank fire they would pull out and leave us without tank protection; <u>they would just leave us!</u> At first we couldn't believe it but after it happened a few times, we came to expect their cowardly actions. There must have been complaints lodged against them to General Baade by Battalion or Regimental C.O.s because all at once <u>they were gone.</u>

The 784th Tank Battalion replaced them. This battalion had white officers and black enlisted men. This was our first experience with black combat troops. The only black men we had previously seen were Quartermaster drivers who drove for the Quartermaster *Red Ball Express,* a very large fleet of trucks carrying supplies from the French seaports to the front lines. When they got to the front they hurriedly unloaded their trucks and were GONE! We couldn't blame them; the front line is no place for Rest and Recreation furloughs.

We never saw a better tank battalion than the 784th. They never left us alone. As we prepared to jump off on an attack, the 784th would drive past. The black drivers and assistant drivers would have their hatches open and heads sticking out looking at us, white eyes showing, with their leather football helmets on to absorb the knocks on their heads. It was thrilling to me to be able to watch them going out to battle. One day we carried an injured black tanker back and I told him of our experiences with the 737th. I

said, "Why is it that you guys stay up here and fight it out?" His answer was wonderfully simple. He said, "The way we figure it, if we don't get them (the Germans) they'll get us - - so we get them first!" I thought that was a wonderful attitude. They were such brave men.

One day my squad went to a destroyed American tank from which one of the crew was hanging out of a hatch. We thought it was a black tanker outfit and were prepared to remove him and carry him back. It turned out to be a white G.I. who had been dead a few days and was already turning black. In Normandy during the hot July days, in a matter of three or four days a dead body turned black and swelled up so that the buttons of their coats and shirts seemed ready to pop off, the uniforms gaping grotesquely. To me, they always seemed so inflated that if stuck by a pin, they might explode. I was very naive and didn't realize this situation existed. Dead cattle did the same, with two legs laying flat on the ground and the other two pointing toward the sky like anti-aircraft guns. A grisly sight and smell. We found then that a person smells as badly as an animal.

The 35th Division's reconnaissance was carried out by the 35th Recon. Troop, the replacement for Horse Cavalry. There was only one troop (or company) for the entire division. It used jeeps and lightly armored vehicles such as the M-8 Scout Car and M-3 Light Tanks. The M-3's had only a 37 mm gun for protection, but definitely not to do battle with a German Tiger tank. The M-8's were fairly large rubber tired armored vehicles with very quiet engines. (M-8's are used by present-day civilian police departments in *Operation 100's*. The Kansas City Police Department has at least one.) Although most infantry jeeps drove (dangerously) with their mufflers blown, the Recon troops' did not. Their mission required stealth - - and extreme bravery! Their task was to get behind the German lines to ascertain the enemy's make-up and strength. They also wanted to know which outfits were facing us, such as *SS,* Panzers, Paratroops, etc. At dusk we would watch the jeeps, M-8's and M-3's quietly slip by us. They would spend the night probing the enemy. Their objective was not to provoke a fight but maintain secrecy and remain undetected, if possible. The next morning at dawn they would return through our lines, hopefully with information but with no wounded. My hat (or helmet) was always off to theme as they left each evening and they had my deepest respect.

On page 48 is a page from the 35th Division History dealing with the Normandy Campaign, and St. Lo, especially. The left center picture depicts our first combat area. As might be expected, we are set up in an apple orchard. (Normandy was famous for its apples and their products, Cognac, Cider, Calvados, etc.) The Station Tent is in the foreground and Litter Bearers whose turn it was to stay with the Company for the day, are shown carrying a wounded G.I. into the tent. My buddies are, from left to right: Harry Hebb (Litter Platoon,)my good buddy, Ed Howe (Station Clerk), Warren Schladenhauffen (Litter Bearer), Jim Bassett (Station Technician), and Louie Beelart (Motor Section). The large square canvas bags on the ground are blanket cases. We had a number of them for both Station Sections. Extra litters are leaning against an apple tree. The Kitchen Truck is on the other side of the hedgerow to the right and my foxhole is about 100 feet straight ahead. We were probably set up three or four miles behind the

"Don't knock"—Soldiers examine door to German blockhouse

"Steel and concrete"—German reinforced C. P.

"Not to kill, but to save"—Litter bearers carry wounded into aid station near St. Lo

Two GI's entering St. Lo

"Try to sneak up," near St. Lo, France

German "Booby Traps"

lines, as we usually did. We were supposed to be out of range of fire except for artillery. This area was that far back, obviously because everyone is bunched up as they get the wounded G.I. into the Station tent. The pyramidal tent has been erected beneath the apple trees so German planes will not see it. This was one of the few orchards left standing. Later, while on Hill #122, we were in an orchard which had been cut to pieces by artillery shrapnel. Many of the trees were only trunks, the limbs having been cut off. It was sad to see the lovely orchards destroyed, not to mention the employment and income of the orchard owners.

We were sent to an American Sherman tank which had been knocked out. A tank offers wonderful protection from small arms fire but if it is penetrated by an anti-tank shell the crew inside is likely to suffer horrible wounds if not death. The reason for this is that as the shell comes through the steel of the tank, it breaks open a much larger exit hole than entry hole. The steel liberated from the blowing out of the inside wall turns into hundreds of pieces of shrapnel with no place to go, even at the exceedingly high velocity given them by the explosion, so they simply ricochet back and forth from wall to wall, jagged edges spinning, until their energy is spent and they fall to the floor of the tank. In fact I used to compare it to a B.B. bouncing inside a drinking glass. This means that anyone inside is going to be cut to ribbons. In this particular case, when we climbed up on top of the tank and looked down inside we saw one crewman who had been badly hit. Even though the interior of tanks were painted white, it was fairly dark inside so we couldn't do anything there. We lifted him out and down to the ground and found that the shrapnel which had bounced around the tank had cut off both off his feet except for the main tendon which runs from the heel to the calf of the leg, and his feet were dangling down from his ankles.

I was never good at giving shots or sticking anyone with a needle but being the squad leader, I carried the pair off large First Aid kits over my shoulders, which contained the morphine syrettes, along with all the other first aid items we needed in the field. I had one member of my squad give the morphine while I sprinkled sulfa powder on all four surfaces of the wounds then folded up his feet and secured them to his ankles and bandaged them in that position so they would suffer no more injuries until they could be amputated at Clearing Company fifteen or twenty miles behind the lines.

That always seemed strange to me - - not being able to stick someone with a needle but, with no fear nor trepidation at all, take care of two nearly-amputated feet.

The German tanks were indeed fearsome vehicles. The Tiger tank was much superior to our Sherman in weight, armor and size of guns, and the Germans were not satisfied with just the Tiger, they developed, in time for the Normandy Campaign, the Tiger Royal. Its 88 mm gun had a tube (barrel) 21 feet long giving the shell a very high muzzle velocity and flat trajectory. When an "88" was fired toward us the shell came so fast that all we heard was *Zip-Bang!*. No time for ducking. It was scary. The sloping front of the Tiger Royal was at such an angle that it gave the equivalent of about 17 inches of steel! With that thickness and slope, our puny 75 mm tank shells merely gouged out a groove in the front then ricocheted up into the air. I have seen the grooves

that were gouged out of the steel of the Tiger. The shell didn't even explode because the fuse did not touch the slanted front. The best way to stop a Tiger was to get behind it and fire a shell into the lightly armored engine compartment, or fire from the side, striking the track or bogie wheels. Either of these methods were successful. (If the Sherman could get into the correct position.

The Stars and Stripes, the United States Army daily newspaper for the G.I.s, told of an account of a Sherman meeting a Tiger Royal at the intersection of two sunken roads. The Tiger rotated its gun around to fire at the Sherman but the long barrel swung into the turret of the Sherman and stopped with the muzzle extending beyond it. The Sherman turned its short gun toward the Tiger and aimed at the point where the turret met the chassis, and fired. It blew the Tiger turret off. We would sometimes see a turret blown off and laying at an angle on the chassis but more often than not, the Sherman lost the battle.

While going to the aid of the wounded tankers mentioned on the preceding page we were forced to evacuate through a mine field which had been installed by the Jerries before they withdrew. There are two kinds of mine fields: one is laid out using precise measurements so that the location of every mine can be determined as soon as the pattern is known. The other type is a "hasty mine field" which is just that. The mines are laid with no pattern and they take time to find. Either way they must be dealt with individually. A mine field does two things: it kills people and/or it slows down attacking troops until the Engineers can clear a path through it. This is a very slow process because when the Engineer sweeps over a buried mine he must get down on his hands and knees and VERY CAREFULLY probe with his bayonet and uncover it with his finger tips. He must then ascertain the type of fuse it has; 1. a pressure-release fuse, which fires when the mine is lifted up; a pressure fuse which fires when weight is pressed upon it, etc. He must also determine if it is just the top mine of a stack, which means lifting the top one up causes the one below it to explode. It is a very dangerous job. So clearing a three-foot wide path is no small task and no one goes through until the Engineers have put white tape on each side of the cleared path.

The day we went to help the wounded tankers the Engineers had cleared the usual path which everyone used to go to and from the front. As we passed this day on one of our many trips, I saw a beautiful German Luger pistol, the kind carried by officers, and considered a prize by everyone. It was six or eight feet off the path where no one dared to walk. Not only was it in a mine field but it could have been booby-trapped as they were so many times. So I decided that the next time I went by I would get it. (being naive enough to think I was the only one with this idea.) When we got to the front line I found a back pack with the clothes line rope still attached, took it off, and attached a safety pin to the end. The idea was to hook the pin around the trigger guard of the pistol, then at a safe distance, pull it to the path. If it were booby trapped, I would escape injury. If it were not booby trapped, I would gain a souvenir. When we got back to that spot, to my dismay, I saw that somebody else had gotten it. There was no hole in the ground showing that it had not been booby trapped. I often wondered how many G.I.s passed by with the same plan until someone was able to come back and retrieve it.

Before we leave the subject of anti tank mines it might be interesting to relate the short story of a 60th Engineer Battalion 2 1/2 ton truck taking a full load of anti tank mines to the front. As it passed along a country road a German 88 came in, striking the truck and its one or two ton load of mines. The resulting explosion of course killed the Engineers, and the truck was almost obliterated!

While sitting in my foxhole on top of Hill 122 one day, this day being one I didn't have to go to the front, I decided to write Alice a letter but I had no stationery with me. The problem was very easily solved, however because there was a dead German soldier near my hole and I got out and went through his pockets and believe it or not, found some blank paper. In the letter to Alice I told her where the paper came from. We still have the letter. I didn't know if Lt. Barber, our Company censor, would pass it or not but he did. He was such a strict censor that Alice told me several times that some of my letters looked like lacy valentines where he had cut "information valuable to the enemy" from them. We were told before going overseas that our letters would not be read word for word but only read to see if any information had been revealed. Lt. Barber must have given them very careful scrutiny so I kept my letters pretty free of personal thoughts for Alice. I resented his over-eagerness.

My hole was pretty popular with the rest of the fellows on my squad. One of the fellows, Verble, had been a fry cook in civilian life and one evening he "liberated" a French chicken and was cooking it for us outside of my hole. A German sniper saw us and opened up on us from a nearby tree where he was tied in, hiding for just such an opportunity. We all jumped in my hole and it was quite crowded but we managed. Having no weapons, we could have been in for a long evening but I called to an Infantryman nearby telling him we were pinned down by a sniper and gave the G.I. the sniper's location. The Infantryman made short work of the sniper, taking only a few shots before killing him.

We were going to the front one day in hedgerow country. At this time I had another squad of T/5s, such as myself, because all the privates were already assigned to litter squads and everyone who could carry was desperately needed due to heavy casualties. There were extra T/5s with other assignments but who were needed as litter bearers and three of them were given to me. They were Carl Stanley, the company Mail Orderly, Leslie Miller, the company Latrine Orderly and Joe Lvoncek. I don't think he had any other responsibility but acted as an extra squad leader when needed.

We set out for the front and being the squad leader, I was first in line, running in a stooped position in order to stay below the top of the hedge row. The Germans were behind the next hedge row about 50 yards to our right. Each hedge row has openings in them used by the farmers to go from one field to another and this one was no exception. After we had passed a couple of openings, Joe, who was the last in line yelled, "West, I'm hit!" I ran back to him and discovered a sniper had shot his canteen and the warm water, which he thought was his own blood, was running down the back of his leg! We then reasoned that the sniper watched me each time I crossed an opening, then counted three more, which was Lvoncek, and shot at him. I didn't even know he was firing in our

direction. Someone was always firing somewhere. Well, Joe wasn't hit, much to our relief, but he did have to replace his canteen. Funny things happen, even in combat.

One day Lvoncek came back from the front with another tale of being fired upon. (We always had something to tell upon our return.) He told how frightened he had been and how fast he had run to get out of the line of fire, and he said, "I ran like a *Geezil."* He meant to say he had run like a gazelle. *"Geezil"* was a cruddy character in the *Popeye* comic strip, so from that moment on, Joe was *"Geezil".* We really had a good time with him. He used very elegant language with good diction, a nice selection of adjectives, and his slight Wisconsin accent, along with his great sense of humor, made him a delight to talk to. His speech was serio-comic and he always had a smile. He was a bachelor in his mid thirties, much older than most of us, but he kept up with us twenty-year-olds with no problem.

On July 25th at 8:00 a.m., while we were still on Hill 122, bombers from the 8th Air Force approached from the southwest and began BOMBING ST. LO! We had seen huge formations of bombers pass overhead on their way to Germany but we had never seen strategic bombing before and I thought the bombers were dropping only part of their load and were flying in a large clockwise circle, only to return and drop some more. The reason I thought this is because they came from the southwest continuously for three hours and we didn't think there were that many airplanes in existence. The Air Force was using four-engine *B-17 Flying Fortress* and *B-24 Liberator* heavy bombers as well as twin engine *B-25 Billy Mitchell* and *B-26 Boston* light bombers. Following that, *P-38 Lightning* twin engine fighters came in and strafed the town. This was the only time I ever saw P-38s used on ground troops because at other times we saw them weaving back and forth flying cover high above the bombers headed for Germany, leaving their twin contrails behind them in long, gracefully curving lines. But now, they dove from the sky, strafing and streaking back up into the air again. If course, *P-51 Mustangs* were also used but most especially the old work horse, the *Jug*, the *P-47 Thunderbolt,* weighing in at 7 1/2 tons, the heaviest fighter in the world at that time. They strafed and dive bombed the German ground forces with no mercy. I felt sorry for the German soldiers who were undergoing the TERRIBLE onslaught from the sky, having been dive bombed and strafed just seven nights before. I could understand the sheer terror they must have been experiencing. As we began to get wounded German soldiers from the bombing raid, I heard some of them mumble, *"Jabo, Jabo".* (Pronounced "Yah-bo.) That was a German contraction for *Jagd Bombenschaden,* or *Fighter bomber.* Our P-47s were called *Jabo's* by the Wehrmacht and they were becoming well acquainted with the *Thunderbolt.*

Company "A" was about four miles north of St. Lo but we were close enough to see the bombs dropping from the bombers. I remember remarking to a buddy that if the bombs could be stopped in mid air, they could be climbed like a ladder because they were so close together.

During the three hours of continuous bombing the ground beneath our feet literally shook from the explosions. Joe Ben Lilly, the Company clown, hopped up on

the hood of his ambulance and squatted down, imitating a monkey, and jumping around making monkey noises. We always enjoyed his Southern Missouri Ozarks humor.

We saw one B-24 get its right wing shot off by German ack-ack which caused it to spiral to the ground. None of the eleven or twelve crew members escaped the plane because of the centrifugal force. I felt terrible.

The next day when we got the Army daily newspaper, *The Stars and Stripes,* we read about the attack and it was only then that we learned that 3000 bombers took part and they were not flying in circles. They were flying from England, making their bomb runs, then returning to their home bases. WHAT A SIGHT IT WAS.

Later, I learned that Frank Dempsey was killed by our own bombers. Smoke used to delineate the target had blown back across the American lines and some of the bombs had been dropped short. Frank and I had gone to Junior High and William Chrisman High Schools together, as well as seeing each other at church functions with the Zion's League. He attended Stone Church. We were drafted together, making the trip to Fort Leavenworth on the same bus. He asked to be assigned to the Infantry, his brother told me just a year or so ago. We had participated in three years of Infantry ROTC training at Chrisman, which convinced me that the Infantry was no place to fight a war. Frank thought otherwise.

On July 26 we went into St. Lo for the second time, not to be chased out again. We advanced through town, the front line being on the other side. Our Battalion Aid Station was set up in the former headquarters of the German Army Field Commander on the far side.

A 60th Engineer (Combat) Battalion armored bulldozer was clearing a street through the town. (The bull dozer was armored because of snipers and also the engine noise would drown out the sound of an approaching German shell. He was well protected and could operate in complete safety.) Some brick buildings had been completely leveled causing the streets to be filled up to the equivalent of the second floor. One building five stories high had only one wall standing and a toilet bowl was mounted to the 5th floor wall high above us.

The beautiful Catholic church on the hill was almost destroyed.

A 500 pound bomb makes a crater about 15 feet deep and 50 feet across. 3000 bombers carrying 4 1/2 tons of bombs, in the case of the B-17s and B-24s, had almost obliterated the center of town. This meant that other than the bulldozer, no vehicle moved in town. The ambulances could come no nearer than a cemetery on a hill at the northern city limit where they established a collection point for the wounded. We carried wounded G.I.s from the Battalion Aid Station at the southwest side of town around and through the maze of bomb craters past the depot and over the Vire River, back to the cemetary, where, in spite of graves being blown open, the ambulances waited. We found that the large crypts above ground gave good protection from enemy shells, also.

On page 54 is a picture of St. Lo after it had been cleaned up some. The Independence, Missouri 1940 census listed a population of 16,066. St. Lo was about the same size. Imagine what Independence would have looked like after an onslaught of 3000 bombers.

ST. LO

THE NORTHERN FRANCE CAMPAIGN
JULY 26, 1944 - SEPTEMBER 15, 1944

After the three hour, 3000 bomber raid on St. Lo July 25, we were able to advance to the edge of the hedgerow country. Up to this time if the Infantry had taken two hedgerows in one day, it was considered to have been a successful day. The average distance from one hedgerow to the next was possibly fifty yards. It made almost no sense to go straight across the field to the next hedgerow when trying to advance because the Germans were then firing from three sides; so the adopted manner of taking a field was to send machine gunners to the right and left to the hedgerows perpendicular to the front line and pin down the Germans on both sides of the hedgerows so they could not fire at the advancing G.I.s as they crossed the field to the next hedge. It was still a very dangerous exercise because they were, of course, fully exposed to the enemy then. Mortar fire could be called in to fall behind the hedges which helped keep the Germans down for the moment. The hedgerows were generally five or six feet high and provided a great deal of cover from small arms fire except when it came from that very hedge. We were glad so many times for the height of them because we could then treat a wounded G.I. without so much danger of being wounded ourselves.

So when we finally broke out of the Hedgerow Country, we breathed a collective sigh of relief. Beyond us lay the wheat fields of Northern France which looked much like the state of Kansas.

We had crossed the English Channel and joined General Hodges' 1st Army, which had made the Invasion, and, true to Lt. Bruffey's statement while on Tennessee Maneuvers, the 35th Infantry Division had been thrown into the fracas as Shock Troops. Now, having absorbed the enemy's counter attacks, as we were supposed to have done, we were on the road to a different kind of adventure.

General "Blood and Guts" Patton had come over from England and organized his 3rd Army and we were transferred from 1st to 3rd Armies at that time.

General Patton's method of operations were radically different from General Hodges', being a specialist in mechanized warfare. This meant utilizing the Infantryman in another roll. Third Army was composed of three corps. Each Corp had one armored division and two infantry divisions, so each corps was composed of about 45,000 combat troops plus support troops. Our Armored Division was the 6th. We had trained together in the United States. Our other Infantry Division varied. Sometimes it was the 29th and at other times the 30th. It just depended on where we were assigned.

As we started across France General Patton would choose two parallel roads headed east that were maybe ten miles apart. He would send an armored column down both roads and the columns would go as fast and far as possible each day. So instead of

making fifty yards a day as we had on the Normandy peninsula, we were making fifty miles or more. We were exuberant! There was little combat and we rode across wheat fields as though we were on a vacation trip. The Germans had only two options in this situation: 1. Withdraw as fast as we were advancing, or, 2. Surrender to the Americans. They withdrew as fast as they could but MANY ended up surrendering. It was the job of the infantry divisions to capture the Germans in the area between the two parallel roads used by the Armor. Some Germans were so eager to surrender that they did so to division Medics who carried no arms.

It was at this time that our four friendly P-47's were having a field day. They circled over the armored columns and beyond, to the Wehrmacht convoys which were driving madly toward their own rear echelons, which were in turn, evacuating as quickly as possible to avoid capture. The P-47's devised a method of destroying a complete German convoy. It was very simple - - dive bomb and strafe the lead vehicle in the column, stopping it and setting it on fire, then do the same to the last vehicle in the column. This stopped every moving thing and the P-47 pilots then began strafing the entire column, leaving it all burning. As our convoy drove by later we would see the occupants of the vehicles still sitting inside, the drivers with their hands on the steering wheels, but burned into black corpses. They didn't have time to get out. Occasionally we would see a few bodies on the ground beside the trucks where they had attempt to find refuge but they too, succumbed to the murderous fire of eight 50 caliber wing-mounted machine guns firing down at them from above. There was no place to go - no place of safety.

The Vire River runs through the center of St. Lo and we had carried over a Vire River bridge many times evacuating the wounded to the other side of town. Now, beyond St. Lo, we had to cross it again on about August 3rd. It wasn't a large river; more like a rocky, gravely, shallow Ozarks stream 50 feet across and a foot or so deep. My squad and I were about to wade across when a sniper a long distance upstream began firing at us. He was so far away, in fact, that the bullets had lost their *zing* and were only going *phhht*, meaning most of their velocity was gone, however we were reluctant to cross. Our Litter Platoon Leader, S/Sgt. Harley "Hap" Palmer, came along at this time and said, "Come on, let's get across," and began running. I followed and the rest of the squad did the same.

The only things that limited our eastward progress were gasoline and food supplies. We stopped periodically to replenish them. This continued across France until we REALLY ran out of supplies. At this time I was assigned to Battalion Headquarters as a radio operator and we stayed in Nancy, France for six weeks in late summer waiting for more supplies. Daddy had been in Nancy during the first World War in his service with the 35th Division. I believe "A" Company stayed in St. Jean, France during this lull.

THE BATTLE OF THE FALAISE GAP

On August 7, 1944, General Von Runstedt, the German Field Commander in the West, launched a counter attack in an attempt to split the American 1st and 3rd Armies. After the St. Lo breakout and General Patton had formed the 3rd Army, General Hodges 1st Army was assigned the northern front, reaching the south flank of Field Marshall Montgomery's British 8th Army. Third Army extended south from First Army.

Von Runstedt hoped to reach the Gulf of St. Malo on the English Channel and acquire a seaport in order to obtain supplies by sea because the 8th Air Force was dealing the railroads and highways fits. He attacked with a large force, hitting the 30th Division near St. Hilaire. In doing so he surrounded one battalion and continued his thrust.

The 35th Division was literally "thumbed off the road" and thrown into battle to help stop Runstedt's dash. We spent the first night near St. Hilaire when "Bed Check Charlie" came over dropping bombs. This was the first time I heard a bomb when I was not the target. It was a quiet night and "Charlie" was over the 134th Infantry. When he dropped his bombs they made a soft whistling sound, being two miles away, instead of the shriek made when they were directly overhead.

Casualties were heavy. My squad was sent to one of the Infantry Battalions to help care for the wounded in those four companies. We carried and carried and carried. The distance from the front line to the Battalion Aid Station was far and on long carries, a person's wind gets shut off with a stabbing pain in the opposite side of the chest. This is caused by the twisting of the torso to counter the weight of the person on the litter. We finally decided to use a two-man carry instead of a four-man so we wouldn't be leaning to the side and cutting off our wind. It was brutal. As we were carrying, an Infantry Captain and his First Sergeant overtook us and the Captain said to me, "Doc, can we help you while you rest?" Those two wonderful men took our places and carried that wounded G.I. back to the Aid Station for us! After all our training in the States, being taught to respect officers and higher non-coms because of their positions of responsibility, here were two men who were not too proud to help some worn-out Medics. When we reached the Station we all thanked them from the bottom of our hearts, because we were so grateful to them. We never saw them again - - they went about their business and remained unidentified to us but I'll never forget what they did.

At the end of 24 hours of continuous carrying between the front line and the Battalion Aid Station, with no sleep, we were relieved. We didn't go back to "A" Company but rather, stayed at the Aid Station in case we were needed again. We found a safe place to sleep; a stone barn which was built on a steep hillside with three open sides

beneath the barn floor. The ground was covered with small rocks a couple of inches in diameter and being natural to the area, there was no way to clear them all away. We lay down on top of them and slept like babies for several hours before we were called for more litter duty.

One day we heard girls screaming in the nearby village and the Captain and his driver jumped into his jeep to find out what was happening. When he returned he told us that the townspeople were rounding up all the girls who had "fraternized" with the Germans while they were occupying the town. The girls were being taken to the town square where their hair was being shaved off as an exercise in humiliation.

Henry N. Desmarais, from Lawrence, Massachusetts, came from a French Canadian family. He spoke French as well as English at home and indeed, was equally fluent in French. While we were in camp in the United States, "Desmo" would get out his deck off cards and do card tricks for us. He was a very intelligent boy (18 years old, the same as a lot of us) and the words flowed effortlessly (and endlessly) from his mouth in his New England accent. The spiel with his card tricks hardly varied word to word from one occasion to the next, so that we could almost give his monologues for him.

He always had a twinkle in his eyes and a smile on his face. When he wasn't doing card tricks he was singing one of his famous, or rather, infamous, bawdy songs in which he also had great talent. At any rate, "Desmo" kept us well entertained a lot of the time, card tricks and all.

When we arrived in Normandy he was happy to find "they speak French just the way I do" and being fluent in French proved to be very helpful one time while we were at Mortain in the Battle of the Falaise Gap.

My squad and a two-man ambulance crew with their rig, had set up a small Aid Station in a French peasant's farm house. Some how, we were cut off when our Infantry withdrew and the Germans took over the area. The six of us were surrounded for a couple of days. We weren't afraid. I guess by this time we had experienced enough difficult circumstances that this was just "one more" of them. At the beginning of the Normandy Campaign, things might have been different, but now, it was OK.

The farm house was the typical old stone building, extremely bullet-proof because of the thick walls and we were in no danger of being hurt if we stayed inside. Besides, this was just one more interesting adventure to be remembered. At one time a fire fight broke out between the Americans and Germans and bullets were whizzing through the yard making the geese flutter around as they became frightened by the "phhht" sounds of the bullets, but after a while it stopped.

We weren't rescued by our forces or found by the Germans. I actually think neither knew we were there. "Desmo" got out his famous deck of cards and invited the old peasant couple whose house we had occupied, to watch his card tricks, and for the first time we saw him perform them in French. We almost knew what he was saying during each trick. The old couple was completely captivated by his charisma (and baloney), and soon he had them eating out of his hands. He was masterful! They clapped and laughed and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. (So did we.) As he finished, they

talked in French for a while, then the couple left for the barn. He told us he had given them "the old free-fro" (one of his colloquialisms) about fighting for their freedom, needing a place to treat the wounded (should we get any) and would they mind if we stayed in their cottage while they stayed in the barn? Of course, they were honored to give something of themselves to the "Liberation." "Desmo" told them they were welcome inside at any time, especially at meal times,
so they came in at those times.

This one room cottage had a dirt floor and a large fireplace on one wall. There was the traditional iron hook extending from the inside to hold a pot of soup, etc., over the flames and it rotated to one side when not in use.

When they came in for their meal they built a fire and warmed their soup and put it on the table in bowls. They brought out a large piece of cheese and a liter of wine. This was their meal, after which she got out her home-made broom of twigs tied to a tree branch and carefully swept the dirt floor. A couple of times when there was no war activity in the area, the neighbors came over to visit and exchange news. (They never did go to the neighbor's farms and I think it was because we were there, that the neighbors came out of curiosity.) It was always the same. As the visitors entered the house they went from person to person, bowing solemnly and saying, "Messieur" to each man and "Madame" to each woman. They were very serious and formal.

We had camouflaged the ambulance and covered the windshield with a blanket (a standard practice) so it wouldn't reflect sunlight which could be seen from the air. For our own personal safety we divided the night up in two hour segments and the six of us took turns standing guard down at the road. Having no guns, the only protection we had was to be aware and alert to enemy movements. Should it become necessary we could leave before they arrived.

As I was standing guard I heard a German tank down the road but it stopped before it reached our area. Later the area changed hands and the U.S. Army was again in control. We were glad but it was such an interesting experience. We eventually returned to "A" Company, none the worse for wear.

The weather had been hot and dry making the ground very hard. While walking along, I heard a shell coming in and I hit the ground. It landed sixty or seventy feet away and I lay there waiting for all the shrapnel to land because some of it goes up very high in the air. I got up and began walking again, intending to look at the shell hole just out of curiosity, and had my eyes on the ground when all at once I heard a buzzing sound and actually saw a piece of shrapnel hit the ground a few feet ahead of me and bounce like a rubber ball. I ran over and picked it up to take back as a souvenir but dropped it immediately. It was still very hot from the explosion. It may still be lying there for all I know.

Incidentally, by looking at a shell hole it is possible to tell what direction the shell came from. At the explosion, the momentum of the shell causes the majority of the pieces of shrapnel to cut furrows in the ground in the direction of the shell flight. Only a few pieces cut the ground in the opposite direction, so an irregular star-shaped pattern of furrows several inches deep extend from the hole.

The 110th Medics had the best Chaplain in the Army, I'm convinced! Chaplain Thomas was a Captain and a Baptist minister. He came up to our company from Clearing Company and Battalion Headquarters fifteen miles behind the lines anytime the situation allowed it. He didn't try to come up for a church service just on Sunday. In fact I don't know if he ever came on Sunday because all our days just sort of blurred into one. But whenever he did make it, he and his Chaplain's Assistant, a Corporal, would usually load the portable field organ in the back of their jeep and bring it along. It was a tiny reed organ operated by foot pedals. The assistant was also an organist.

We were still in the area where I saw the piece of shrapnel land, and unannounced, up drove Chaplain Thomas ready for church. He was not allowed to preach a denominational sermon, particularly for the Baptist Church. There were only three types of services in the Army: Protestant, Catholic and Jewish .One of his favorite scriptures was John 14:1-3: *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And when I go, I will prepare a place for you, and come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, ye may be also.*

Chaplain Thomas never conducted church while wearing his helmet, consequently we took ours off, and because we usually met outdoors, we used them as seats. (A helmet served in several different ways.) While we were having church and Chaplain Thomas was preaching, if we heard a shell coming our way, he would stop talking and wait for it to explode, then continue his sermon. He was finally wounded by artillery fire and we never saw him again. What a wonderful man he was! He was replaced by another Chaplain but we VERY seldom saw him. I don't even remember his name. He was known only by his absence. Too bad. We really missed Chaplain Thomas because in those troubled times we NEEDED our Chaplain.

My squad and I were walking to the front line one day when the enemy started shelling us. We had been maintaining the recommended 10 yard interval between each person to reduce the possibility of all of us being wounded by the same shell. When the barrage began we raced for a large foxhole nearby dug by the German infantry before they withdrew. It had a piece of sheet metal covering it. We thought that was great because as the shells burst, shrapnel was raining down on the metal making a hail-like noise but we were safe as bugs in a rug. We soon realized Hank Lubbers (LOO-bers) hadn't come to the hole with us, so during a lull in the shelling we hollered, "Hank, Hank!" No answer, and the shelling resumed. Shrapnel still rained on the metal roof for which we were thankful. As the shelling slackened again and Hank would be able to hear us, we called to him again. Still no answer. Then we began to say to each other that good old Hank must be dead. Finally, after some time, the shelling stopped and when we were certain that it really had stopped, we crawled out and began looking for Hank's body. Then, here came, all 6'2" of him, gaunt framed, rough-speaking, with his "behind-the-plow" gait. I said, "Hank, where were you? Didn't you hear us calling you?" He said, "Yeah, I heard you." "Why didn't you answer us and tell us you were not hurt?" He answered with all the logic in the world, "I knew I was OK." And though we were relieved and happy to see him, we certainly couldn't argue with his reasoning.

Late one night, after midnight, during the Battle of the Falaise Gap, my squad and I were at the 1st Battalion Aid Station. An Infantry Company Aid Man came in from "B" Company saying that one of the "B" Company men had been wounded between our front line and the German's front line. He was in "No Man's Land", I guess. The Aid Man asked if anyone would volunteer to go out with him and bring back the wounded G.I. We did. It was dark. After being inside a blacked-out Command Post, going out in the night makes it difficult to see for some time.Our Infantry had "taken the high ground" of a good sized hill and the Germans were down a bit over the crest on their side. We reached the front line and told the Infantry perimeter guards that we were going out ahead of the line to get a wounded G.I. and would return through the lines in this same area.We made sure of the Pass Word and Countersign so we could safely approach them on our way back. We left our line and very silently made our way toward the G.I.'s location. As we neared the German lines, which were maybe 50 yards farther down the hill from us, we began hearing the Germans trying to start a gasoline engine for some reason. Maybe they used it to power an electric generator for their C.P.

As we carefully made our way along, we heard our Field Artillery open up five or six miles behind us and soon the shells began passing over our heads and dropping in on the German location. I have never seen such beautiful or accurate artillery work as that! The 161st Field Artillery had coordinated their powder charges with just the correct amount of elevation on the twelve guns to cause the shells to seemingly skim over the top of our hill and drop right down on the Germans! It seemed we need only to reach up with our hands to be able to touch the shells. FANTASTIC! We lay still waiting for the barrage to end because we had not quite reached the location of our man. When the barrage was over and it was safe, we moved on and found him. He was already dead. We couldn't identify him because of the darkness so the Aid Man committed the blunder of taking off one of the G.I.'s dogtags to return to the Co. C.P. where the Captain could read it. (Dogtags are not taken off until burial by the Quartermaster - - one for the grave and one kept by Q.M.'s Graves Registration.)

Leaving the body there, we made our way back to the "B" Company C.P. and went into the blacked-out Command Post tent.

The Captain looked at the dogtag and swore. It belonged to a Sergeant of the Company who apparently was very highly valued and thought of. It is too bad we couldn't have reached him in time.

After our return to "A" Company, 110th Medics, we saw a G.I. 2 1/2 ton truck approaching. It stopped in our area and we saw it was full of German *SS* troopers. The *Scheutz Steuffel* were Hitler's Elite Guard; hard, tough fighters who made a very formidable foe. I don't know why our area was chosen but the truck, which was preceded by a jeep from G-2 (Division Intelligence) stopped, and a Captain got out, demanding that the *SS* troopers get down from the truck and form ranks, standing at attention.

Our officer was evidently of German ancestry because he spoke fluent German. He called "Achtung". The *SS* troopers snapped to, except for one. He just slouched there.

The Captain went over in front of the *SS* trooper and yelled "Achtung" again. Nothing happened. The Captain got in the *SS* man's face and yelled "ACHTUNG!" The trooper made a half-hearted attempt to stand at attention, giving the Captain a sneering, contemptuous look. Such arrogance I had never seen before in German prisoners.

Sometime in the middle of August the Quartermaster set up a shower station in a wheat field and we all took our first shower since we left Bodmin, Cornwall, England in late June or early July. (our next shower would be in three months.)

In the meantime we cleaned up after morning chow using mess-kit washing water. Describing the method used by the Army to wash mess kits will explain how we were able to get hot water to wash in: The Kitchen Truck furnished three fifty-five gallon G.I. cans which were heated with white gas heaters and, like the kitchen field ranges, had to be pumped up with a tire pump to keep air pressure on the gas tank. Each of the heaters contained in a large hollow donut submerged at the bottom of the can of water and through which the fire passed before being discharged to the open air through a chimney. The water eventually boiled. After eating we emptied our garbage in another G.I. can then went to the first washing can which was filled with boiling-hot soapy water. There were long-handled, stiff brushes which we used to scrub our mess kits. The next G.I. can had water which contained a disinfectant into which we merely dipped our mess kits, eating utensils and canteen cups. The third contained just rinse water. The water was so hot that the metal immediately air-dried in the summer.

This rinse water was our bath water. We would fill our steel helmets with rinse water and take sponge baths as well as we could, using an ambulance rear view mirror to shave (I didn't have to shave very often at the tender age of 20.)

All across France our Corp Armored Division, the 6th Armored was along side of us. Our vehicles and theirs mixed on the roads.

Back home before the war we bought Manor Bread and it was delivered to our house by Victor "Bud" Lane. Bud had been assigned to the 6th Armored and was in "Combat Command B". The 134th Infantry Regimental Combat Team worked with "Combat Command A" so even though we saw the 448th Anti Aircraft Battalion trucks, which was Bud's outfit, I never did get to meet Bud even though we were always within just a few miles of each other.

After winding up the Battle of the Falaise Gap we got on the road again to catch up with the rest of the war which had been progressing steadily east across the French wheat fields.

Shortly after, I was told that Grover E. Beck, the man from "A" Company who had taken radio operator training before me in Alabama was no longer able to take part as a Battalion radio operator and I was to go to Battalion Headquarters and replace him. I would be working with Ervin A. Bagley, Technical Sergeant and Battalion Radio Chief, and also PFC James Peter Themetrius Paneyotes Anagnostopulous, better known as Jim Anagnost. Jim was Greek (as you probably already guessed), probably no more than five feet tall, with black curly hair.

The three of us were to operate the Battalion radio twenty four hours a day. Jim always read his mail aloud from his "girl friend" whenever he got to a "good part." Those parts were almost always the same: "Dear Jim, I had a date last night with .....and each time we kissed I thought of you." And each time Jim would say, "Man, oh man, BROTHER!", and kick his leg in the air in a complete state of jubilation. He fell for her line time after time and loved each letter. Erv and I just laughed because he put on such an innocent show.

He smoked a pipe, or rather, carried one, thinking it made him more adult and sometimes he would play "Submarine Captain" by holding the pipe in his mouth so that it extended up his cheek, stopping in front of one eye. Then he would pretend to look through the "pipe" periscope and hold his hands in front of him as though he was operating the submarine periscope, saying, "Freighter on the starboard bow. Prepare to launch torpedoes." He was funny.

All this time there was not too much combat, the Germans running and the Americans chasing. We passed many beautiful Chateaux in the Loire River district. We saw Chateau la Brienne, Napoleon's summer home.

On one occasion, our radio was giving us problems so we drove back to Division Rear Echelon, thirty miles behind the lines, to the 35th Signal Company, to have it repaired. During this time General Patton had given orders that all captured German vehicles should be turned in to the appropriate Divisions' Quartermaster companies. G.I.s had taken any German Army vehicles that would run, gassed them up and included them in the American convoys. This caused confusion to P-47 pilots because they did not know whether to attack them or not.

Each vehicle was required to display the "color of the day" by tying a large yellow or pink panel on the roof. Even though the German trucks had the proper panels, it was still confusing. So when we reached Rear Echelon, all the German vehicles in the 35th Division had been turned in and were parked in a large field.

The G.I.s were standing in the noon chow line when four P-47s appeared overhead. They must have thought they had come upon the entire German Army because they peeled off, one by one, strafing in their dives and dropping their 500 pound bombs. We were on top of a hill and the P-47s came down very low above us and we could see the bombs drop away from the wings. They landed down around the vehicles sending lots and lots of earth skyward. The men in the chow lines scattered and no one was hurt.

I had no idea there were so many G.I.s around until, suddenly, from all the farm houses in the area, came the colored "smoke of the day" from the farm house chimneys saying, "We're friends, don't bomb us." The P-47s certainly had gotten their attention.

Our Battalion Intelligence Officer, a Captain, and erst while grocery clerk, gave a most comical performance, however. He had never heard a shot fired in anger and when the P-47s began their attack, our Captain ran madly around the area screaming, **"They're bombing us, they're bombing us!"** and ran to the latrine trenches and hid behind the canvas screen. It was completely ridiculous.

We continued across France, mostly without action of much importance, but once before we reached Nancy, 134th Infantry made a crossing of the Moselle River. I don't know the details but from what my buddies told me later, even the Station Section and Kitchen Truck came under artillery fire with shrapnel going through the Station tent. This was one time when being four or five miles behind the front made no difference.

The Division took Nancy, France. Patton had gone so quickly across France that we had outrun our supplies so the 3rd Army stopped dead in its tracks.

"A" Company stayed in St. Jean, France and Battalion Headquarters remained in St. Max, a suburb of Nancy. Daddy had been in Nancy in 1918 with the 35th Division. Our sojourn lasted for six weeks as supplies were accumulated.

Also in Nancy was 3rd Army Headquarters. I was out sightseeing one day walking through St. Stanislaus Square and heard a blast from automobile air trumpets. I turned around and saw General Patton riding past in his jeep. The jeep had twin silver air horns, a couple of feet long, one on each fender. Old "Blood and Guts" was riding in the passenger seat, with a chrome plated steel helmet on his head, and revolvers on his hips. What a character he was. Most out-going and aggressive. "Pat" Patrick (who greeted Lt. Barber in St. Lo.) said, "Yeah, Blood and Guts; our blood and his guts." We didn't care for Patton too much because of his extreme aggression. He was effective though, I must say.

We finally built up enough supplies to start the war again and resumed our eastward trek. It was no longer Summer now, with Fall setting in. Our radio truck had to remain closed most of the time for us to stay warm and Erv Bagley had purchased a small kerosene heating stove in Nancy to warm the back of our 3/4 ton weapons carrier in which the radio was mounted. One evening we foolishly decided to fill the Coleman white gas lantern for the night. The heater was on and as we poured the gasoline into the lantern the vapors flashed and the radio truck caught on fire. The driver got in and drove it away from the other trucks as we doused the flames. Col. Hall came out and gave it a few choice words because he never was in favor of radio communication, for some reason. I had gotten my movie camera from "A" Company's storage tent at Division Rear Echelon, earlier, where we kept out barracks bags and extra equipment. I had stored it in a metal compartment in the back of the radio truck and I fully expected to find it burned to a cinder but after the fire was out, I opened the compartment and lo and behold, it was perfectly safe. My movies were OK and still are.

Erv burned his hands when the vapors ignited so I wrote his letters to his wife as he dictated, for some time after that.

The 110th Medics had consistently scored the highest marks in the Division Radio School in Alabama, probably because we were so interested in it. In fact the Captain chose Beck to go to school even though I had wanted to attend. When the next school opened I requested to be assigned to it and was accepted even thought there was a question about our Battalion T.E. (Table of Equipment.) We didn't know if we would ever get a radio.

We did very well and when my turn came to operate in France, I jumped at the chance. We did everything we could to maintain a good station because by that time, the T.E. called for no radios. I don't know how we happened to keep one. We were on the radio, 24 hours a day, and because the Division NCS (Net Control Station) soon found out that we could be depended upon, they began sending their QYTs (checking the correct time), QZFs (a frequency check) and so on. We were the most dependable station of all the division radios.

Being fifteen miles behind the lines meant the civilians were back in their homes. That meant curious little boys were constantly poking around the radio truck. The three of us began "playing games" with them. One of us would watch the boys, waiting for one of them to touch the radio antenna which was mounted on the truck. When they got close we would turn on the dynamotor and wait. As soon as they touched the antenna one of us would close the Morse Code key, sending a current to the antenna and grounding it through the boy. It was mean, but great fun.

The Fall season was upon us and I soon found myself away from Battalion Headquarters and back with "A" Company, which I rejoined at Chateau Salins, France in November. The Fall rains had set in and the wind was cold. Perfect weather to go back to combat, which was just beginning to get going.

Chateau Salins had been hit rather heavily with a lot of tree limbs, glass and shrapnel in the streets.

To my great surprise and pleasure, up drove Chaplain Thomas to conduct a church service. He went to a stone church nearby and invited us to join him. The roof was gone but that didn't stop the good Chaplain. As you might expect, during the service the Germans began shelling. Chaplain Thomas didn't flinch. He just stood there and waited for the barrage to end, then went on with the service. It was after this service that he was wounded. It was his last service for "A" Company.

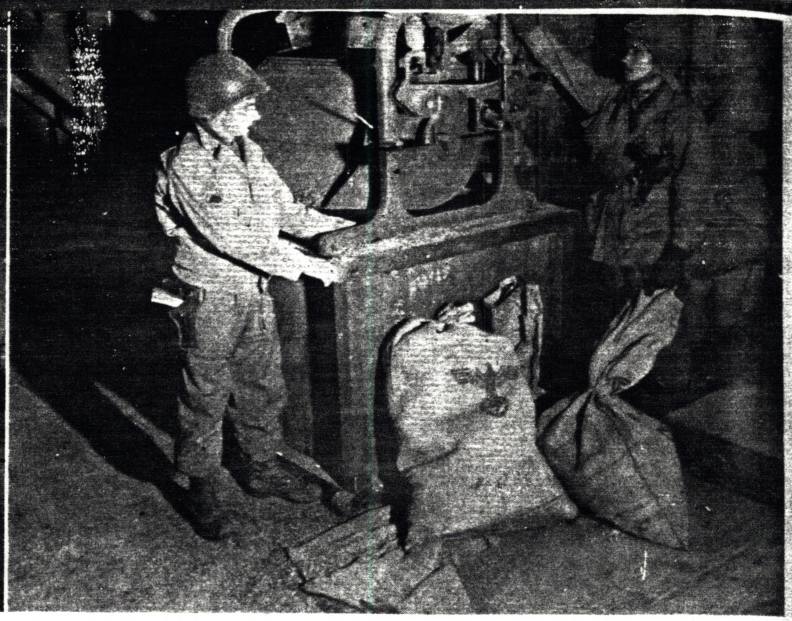
On page 66 is a picture taken in Bioncourt, France while I was back at Battalion Headquarters. Left to right are: Mess Sergeant Cyril "Cy" Tworek and Motor Sergeant Louie Beelart. In the wagon are : Ambulance Drivers, Pfc.'s Joe Ben Lilly, George Pickett and Wilburn Bryant.

Page 67 shows the interior of our Kitchen Fly and chow line. Left to right: Warren A. Schladenhauffen, Cy Towrek, T/5 Floyd "Robbie" Robinson (2nd Cook), and John Fetzer.

Page 68 shows some Infantry men coming through the chow line. Cy always cooked extra food because of wounded and others coming through.

One day Jack Schwab came to me after returning from the front and said he had his picture taken . This is the picture (page 69) showing, left to right, Harry Hebb, T/4

"Bioncourt buggyride"



"Double check"—T. D. men examine milling machine for booby traps

Habkirchen, Bliesbruck, Gersheim, Reinheim and Nieder-Gailbach had to be cleared house by house. The Nazis were forced out of each by hand grenades, rifle grenades, and bazookas. In six days of fierce fighting only an average of two miles were gained, but another bridgehead—this time into Germany itself—was established and secured.

On 19 December the 35th was ordered to hold and consolidate. During the night of the 20th and 21st the division was relieved by the 44th and 87th Divisions. It then moved to Metz on the 22nd and 23rd of December and was attached to the XX Corps.

This ended a period in which the division had fought continuously for 162 days. The artillery battalions had maintained fire direction centers 24 hours a day. Staff sections had not ceased operations except to move—3,888 consecutive hours of operation. This was a record that few, if any, divisions surpassed in World War II.

"Are you sure?"—Interrogating captured German prisoner

"We outflank"—35th armor passes outskirts of Chateau Salins to outflank enemy

Breaking into the town at both ends of the main street the enemy tanks worked toward the center, firing point blank at buildings and troops, forcing the Yanks to withdraw to St. Jean Rohrbach.

On 24 November the 1st Battalion, 134th, with tanks of the 6th Armored Division, launched a powerful coordinated counter-attack upon Hilsprich, avenging men of the 137th and recapturing the town.

The 35th, with the exception of the 134th Infantry, was now pinched out and from 27 November until the end of the month, elements of the division dropped back into areas behind the lines for rest, rehabilitation, training in pillbox assault, use of special assault equipment and organic weapons.

However, certain elements of the 35th still remained firmly in position. The 216th Field Artillery Battalion found that it had several thousand yards of range left. This was offered to the 26th Division which had relieved the Santa Fe. The offer was quickly accepted and for two more days the 216th continued to hit the enemy.

The assault on Germany itself now became imminent. Each man knew that the terrible effort of coming across the battlefields of France would soon bring the fight to German soil.

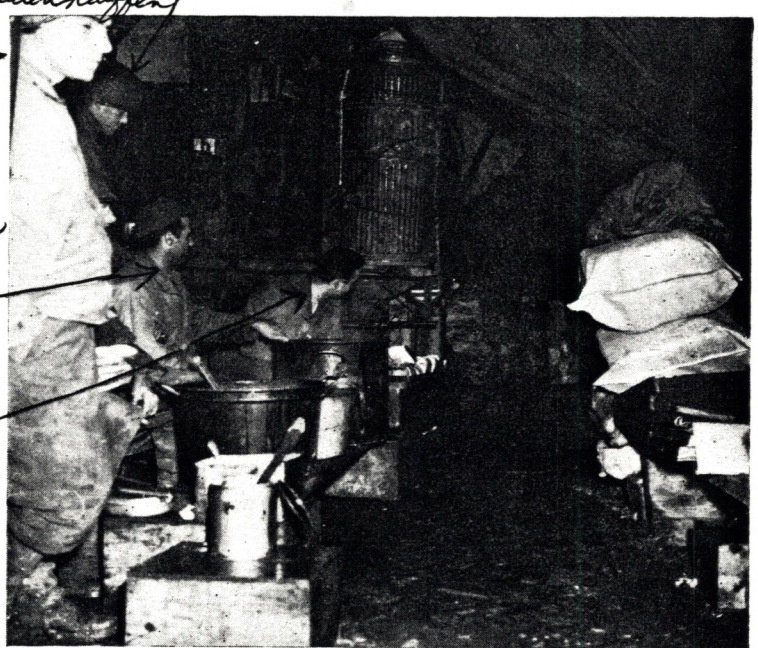
On 2 December the 35th Division relieved elements of the 6th Armored and prepared to attack on the morning of the 4th. The line of departure was almost the same location as the line the division had left on 27 November, extending along the Moderbach River from east of Foret de Puttelange to a point west of Puttelange, through the town of Remering on to Hirback, then southwest to the vicinity of Gueblange.

At 0400 on the 4th, the Santa Fe attacked forcing three river crossings in eight days: the Moderbach, Saar, and Blies Rivers. The 134th was on the left and the 320th was on the right. The objective was in the vicinity of Grundviller, Ernestviller, and Woustviller.

S/Sgt Kopul Iwarek, Mess Sgt

(later Tec 5)
Pfc Harren a Schladenhauffen

"What time's chow?"



Tec 5 Floyd "Robbie" Robinson

Pfc John Fetzer

See picture 9 pages ahead.

Co. "A" 110 Medical Bn Kitchen Truck

Tec. 5 Floyd "Robbie" Robinson

Pfc. John Fetzer

S/Sgt. Cy Twork
Mess Sgt.

(See picture 9 pages back)

"So proudly we serve"

Co. "A", 110 Medical Bn. Kitchen Truck

1st and 2nd Platoons, Company D of the 134th, crossed and entered the town of Habkirchen, Germany.

These two units held this bridgehead alone for 48 hours against repeated counter-attacks by 300 SS troops with tanks. During this period casualties were high. The Company Commander and all but one officer of Company B were lost. Company C made one of the most dramatic defenses of a bridgehead in the division's history. For this heroic work Company C and the 2nd Platoon, Company D were honored with the Distinguished Unit Citation.

On the same day, the 3rd Battalion of the 320th inched forward against machine gun and tank fire to the outskirts of Bliesbruck. Resistance was fierce and even with the aid of an air strike the battalion was unable to enter the town.

During the early morning hours of darkness on 13 December the division began a large scale offensive. If a successful river crossing could be made in strength, it would place the Santa Fe at the gates of the Siegfried Line.

At 0400 the attack began. The 137th passing through the hard won and enlarged 134th bridgehead, turned to the northwest and pushed to the high ground north of Fravberg. Small gains were made.

The 320th, in the meantime, managed to get its 1st Battalion across and by nightfall had captured Hill 312, northwest of Bliesbruck. The 3rd Battalion by afternoon cleared a portion of the German-filled houses in Bliesbruck. Tank Destroyers from the 654th and tanks from Company C of the 737th Tank Battalion were also employed but little gain could be made.

The Germans were fighting ferociously, and the 35th was paying a heavy price.

Bag of this tank crew 2 MK IV and 2 MK VI tanks

Medics to the rescue again

Co. A, 110 Med. Bn. Men
Harry Hebb and TEC 4 Jack J. Schwab
in front. Joe Forte is rear

Jack Schwab and Joe Forte. The Engineers have cleared the path of mines as the white tape shows.

We advanced toward Saareguemines, France, a fairly large city on the Saar River. Before we reached the city, however, and in order to go to the Battalion Aid Station at the front, we had to drive over the top of a hill which had no trees or any kind of cover. There was a sign just before reaching the crest which said, "CAUTION, THIS ROAD IS UNDER ENEMY OBSERVATION" Our ambulance drivers had been over it many times and they really tromped on the accelerator each time we went over the top. I believe the Germans had their artillery already zeroed in on that portion of the road because when we topped the hill each time, they fired their 88's at us and the shells always came pretty close. One time they hit the road maybe fifty feet in front of us and for a few seconds, the road was obscured by black balls of smoke with red-orange fire inside, not to mention shrapnel coming out. You don't see the red fire unless the shell is very close. Of course the noise is very loud.

On our way to Baker Company, 1st Battalion, 134th Infantry, we had safely negotiated a forest in which the Germans had left booby traps connected to trip wires in the fallen leaves. These were very difficult to see, being located just above the ground. A lot of men had legs blown off at the calf.

One kind of booby trap was called the *Bouncing Betsy.* When tripped, it flew up in the air four to five feet before exploding the a man's stomach. Nasty!. We walked very slowly and carefully as we passed through the forest. The Engineers had not been there yet.

We reached the small village where "B" Company was and my squad holed up in a stone farm house near the Company C.P. We stayed there a day or so. During this time my head renewed its acquaintance with the very low door jambs to the French basements. Few of them were six feet high and were it not for my steel helmet, I would have bashed my brains out many times while running for the basement during an artillery barrage.

While at this farm house we witnessed a spectacular tank battle. Across the road was a stone barn. One of our Sherman tanks which had been equipped with the new 90 mm gun, was hiding on our side of it.

Out in the field about a quarter of a mile away was a German Tiger tank hiding behind another stone barn. When the battle began, I left the basement where we had gone for safety, and went up to the front room and kneeled below the window to watch. Our tank would pull out from behind the barn, turning the turret to the right as the tank went forward, take sight on the Tiger's barn and fire. Then it would rev up the engine and quickly pull back behind its own barn. The Tiger would do the same at our tank. All this time I was still kneeling on the floor of the house looking out the window. Our house was in the line of fire of the German tank. If he missed the barn, he hit the bank of the front yard just outside my window.

It finally became too dangerous so I went to the basement again and lay down on a pile of turnips using a barrel of kraut for a pillow. I was surprised at the number of "duds" fired by the Tiger. We heard quite a few shells coming in, ZIP-BANG, and hit the

terrace without exploding. *Zip-Bang* is always the way I described the tank shell sounds. They were high velocity and flat trajectory taking only a second or two to reach us. They shook the ground when landing but that is all they did in the case of duds.

The old couple who lived there seemed to believe that because they were non-combatants, they were safe from enemy fire and decided to do the family wash in the yard. It only took one shell (which unfortunately was not a dud) to injure the old lady. She was hit in the face with many small pieces of shrapnel, none of which were serious. Her husband brought her down to the basement where we were and as we were cleaning her up, he said, "Yoi, yoi, yoi." He didn't want her to get in our ambulance alone, so with the ambulance driver's permission, he got in with her and began the ride back to the Battalion Aid Station.

During this time our Sherman was unable to hit the Tiger and vice versa so our P-47s were called in. The four of them arrived and circled overhead as they surveyed the situation. (Of course, by this time I was back at the window kneeling on the floor, watching, danger or not.)

The leader peeled off and began a dive toward the Tiger. I saw black smoke trail off his wings and then the thunder of his eight 50 caliber machine guns. During this strafing dive he released both of his 500 pound bombs, then pulled up sharply to avoid the explosions. He was followed in turn by the three other planes which did the same. That was the end of the tank battle!

What a thrill it was to have a "front row, center" seat and watch such an exciting event. Experiences like this were truly, once in a lifetime happenings and I have been forever grateful to have safely survived them.

We reached the outskirts of Saarguemines where we stayed in a French Cavalry Barracks. The main building had a high steeple on top and the 161st Field Artillery Battalion had established a Forward O.P. (Observation Post) there. I climbed up to watch the Forward Observer as he watched the Heinies. The Saar River was about half a mile east of us on the other side of town and the Germans were holed up across the river in a group of stone farm houses. (Little did I know I would be in one of those buildings later with the 134th Infantry Aid Station.) The houses and barns had red tile roofs, which was common in this part of France, in contrast to the thatch roofs we saw in Normandy.

Knowing the Germans were there, the Observer had evidently already zeroed the guns of the Battalion in because all he did was radio the grid coordinates back to the artillery Fire Direction Center four or five miles behind us. He called for a five-round fire mission which meant five rounds each of the twelve guns, 60 rounds in all. Back at the guns, each crew laid out five shells, set the fuses and powder charges and loaded the first shell while the guns were being aimed. At the order of the Fire Control Officer, they all began firing.

The Forward Observer turned to me from his radio and said, "They're on their way." Soon we heard the shells whisper as they passed overhead. (They were too high and were not coming toward us for us to hear them whistle. Only the Germans heard the whistle.) Almost immediately they hit the farm house roofs making clouds of red smoke

each time a shell hit. The German soldiers came running out of the buildings for safer ground.

This was the first time I had seen the Forward Observers operate. I had always before seen the guns fire or the shells land. This was a different treat.

SAAREGUIMINES, FRANCE

We had moved on from the Cavalry Barracks to downtown Saareguimines, fifteen miles south of Saarbrucken, (*Saar Bridges)* Germany. This area at one time was German territory and much of the population spoke German as well as French. We thought some of the population might have been pro-German.

On December 9, 1944 I was in the Litter Bearer quarters with a dozen or so others. An Infantry Medic from the 1st Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment came to our building saying that a G.I. in "B" Company had been wounded by a sniper and was unable to walk back to the Battalion Aid Station. The Company Aid Man asked for volunteers to return with him to bring the wounded Infantryman to safety and treatment. (At the time I couldn't understand why I would put myself in danger, voluntarily, because naturally, I was afraid to go to the front. And this was for someone I didn't even know, but putting myself in place of the wounded G.I., I couldn't say "No," so three of us volunteered to go.) T/5 Ed Milhouse, PFC. Robert Roden and I left our buddies in the Litter Bearers' quarters and started walking down the long hill with the 134th Infantry Medic.

At this time the 134th Infantry had taken most of Saareguemines and the front line was the Saar River at the bottom of the hill. The Germans were occupying a pottery factory on the east bank of the Saar leaving some troops behind on the west bank to deter the advance of our infantry. (See the picture of the pottery factory on page 74.)

We were in the downtown business district and this was the dreaded "street fighting" where every window and door was a potential hiding place for an enemy soldier.

The "B" Company Medic led us down a street which would take us to the Saar about six blocks away. We crossed a viaduct bridge over a large railroad marshaling yard about twenty five tracks wide. It reminded me of the railroad yards at the Kansas City Union Station.

We crossed the viaduct staying close to the concrete hand rail as partial protection against enemy fire, and re-entered the business district.

The buildings on both sides of the street were several stories high and came right to the sidewalk as any downtown building does.

We were walking single file hugging the walls following the Aid Man. I was last in line carrying a red cross flag hoping it would protect us. As we passed down the street with brick buildings on both sides a German sniper began firing at us from our rear. (They NEVER fired when we could see them.) Being the last in line, I was nearest the sniper so he fired at me striking the building to my right. Each time a bullet hit the building a red puff of smoke came from the bricks as the bullets ricocheted down the street. (It wasn't until much later that I found none of the others knew he was firing at us because the sound echoed between the buildings and the bullets were hitting behind the others.) Strangely, I was determined not to let the sniper know I was afraid so I just kept walking down the sidewalk. (And watching the puffs of red smoke in the one and a half foot distance between the wall and me.)

35th DIVISION ON THE SAAR RIVER AT SARREGUEMINES

When we came to the doorway of the building where the G.I. was lying the Aid Man went in. We had been maintaining the usual ten-yard interval between each man. Milhouse went in as did Roden when he reached the doorway. That left me on the sidewalk ALL ALONE still with thirty feet to walk and with the sniper still firing. This seemed to be the perfect time to satisfy the sniper's ego and let him know he really and truly had been scaring me to death all the time. Enough of this "I didn't know you were firing at us" nonsense. I began running SO FAST I couldn't make the turn into the door and my left shoulder slammed against the door jamb. At that same instant the sniper put a bullet into the jamb beside my ear and splattered wood chips in my left eye. Before he could fire again I was inside. SAFE!

Typical, as in most European houses without central heating, this house had a central hall from the front door to the back with rooms on each side with their own door and heating stove or fireplace.

We went in the first room on the right where the G.I. was lying on the floor. We put sulfa powder on his leg and covered it with a four-tailed compress bandage. The wounded man could not walk or get on the litter by himself so we lifted him on. It was then we discovered the litter could not make the turn from the room into the hall so we went back into the room and put the front litter handles on the window sill with the Medic and Roden holding the back handles. Milhouse and I returned to the sidewalk, grasped the front litter handles which were about six feet above the sidewalk and began scooting the litter out of the window with the idea that the two men inside would come outside, then we would lift the litter down and carry it back to the Collecting Company.

We had it about half way out of the window when another sniper directly across the street shot Milhouse in the leg. He fell, then ran back up the steps into the building. The wounded G.I., who previously had to be lifted on the litter, sat up and crawled back unassisted into the window. When he was safely inside I dropped the litter to the sidewalk and ran back in also. (The litter may still be there for all I know.)

Now we had two wounded, both in the leg, and no way to transport them to safety. I was the only non-com left without a wound. Knowing it was foolhardy to go back to the sidewalk I scouted the house and found we could get into the backyard if we went to the second floor and crawled out on the roof of the back porch.

The rest of the men came upstairs and we did just that. (I don't remember why we couldn't go out on the ground floor entrance.) We jumped to the ground, wounded legs and all.

Knowing we couldn't go back up the street we went down a steep embankment to the marshaling yard and crossed all the railroad tracks which were probably 100 yards wide.

At the far side of the tracks was a stone bluff with a ground-level entrance to a cave. We headed for the cave for protection and to let the two wounded men rest.

Inside the cave we found hundreds of French civilians seeking refuge from the war which was taking place in their city. PFC. Roden had studied French in high school and with great difficulty, explained our predicament to the people. One civilian led us for

quite a distance through several tunnels to a stairway which took us up to the street level again.

We were on the street not knowing which way to go when along came two men in a 134th Infantry jeep. We stopped them , asking if they knew the location of Company A, 110th Medics. They did and offered to take us. There was only room for six men on the four passenger vehicle. The two wounded had to be passengers and it wouldn't be fair for me to get on and leave the PFC. or the Aid Man stranded and lost so I told Roden to get on with the Aid Man, Milhouse and the wounded G.I. and I would find my way back to the company.

As the jeep drove off, I was still jittery after being sniped at, and I looked all around to see if more snipers were in sight. Then I turned to see what direction the jeep was going so I could follow it but it was already gone! I was lost - and alone.

I started walking, always looking around for snipers. There was no one in sight at the first intersection so I kept walking straight ahead for several blocks up a hill and around a long curve to the left which was taking me out of the downtown district so I curved down to the left to re-enter the business district. I saw someone move in a window of a building but no one fired.

After thirty minutes of walking I ended up at the intersection where I started except I was going south instead of east. I saw G.I. standing guard outside a business building and lo and behold, he was a member of Co. A, 60th Engineer (Combat) Battalion, which was also part of the 134th Infantry Regimental Combat Team. I asked him if he knew where Company A, 110th Medics was located. He said, "Sure, right in back of this building."

Believe it or not, when the jeep left with our men, it had turned right at the first intersection and went only 100 feet, then turned left behind the 60th Engineers. We had been only 150 feet from Company A when we came up to the street from the tunnel. I had walked 1/2 hour pretty well scared for nothing.

Upon reaching the company area some buddies saw me and said, "West, Lt. Barber wants to see you." I found him and he said, "Tell me what happened to you today." After I did he said he thought he could the three of us the Bronze Star Medal, an award given "for heroic achievement." I said, "Aw, Lieutenant, it wasn't any big deal". but he insisted, saying the others had already told their stories to him.

Well, it worked out OK. Later, we three were presented with the Bronze Star Medal "for evacuating an injured man under intense sniper fire."

At the end of the war this medal proved to be worth five points toward the 85 necessary for discharge from the service. Our five battle stars for the campaigns of Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland and Central Europe were also worth five points apiece, letting us pick up 30 points an all. Those, together with points for service in the States and overseas gave me 79 points, which proved to be sufficient ten months later when the necessary points for discharge was reduced to 70.

35th Infantry Division

Citation for

BRONZE STAR MEDAL

TO Technician Fifth Grade Warren S. West, 37508767, Company "A"
110 Medical Battalion

For heroic service in connection with military operations against an enemy of the United States near Saarguemines, France, 9 December 1944. This soldier, a litter bearer, assisted by two comrades, with disregard for intense sniper fire, went forward to evacuate a wounded soldier. With his companions, he reached the wounded man and in the comparative safety of a building, administered first aid. Placing his patient upon a litter, assisted by his companions, he effected the evacuation of the wounded soldier under the heavy sniper fire. His devotion to duty, disregard for personal safety and his courage, denote him an asset to his unit. Entered military service from Missouri.

GO No. 15
HQ 35th Inf Div
5 Mar 45

//S//
PAUL W. BAADE
MAJOR GENERAL U.S.A.
COMMANDING

Footnote: Ed Milhouse retired as a Methodist minister. Bob Roden is (or was) a minister also and once again the good Lord had protected me, keeping me safe from harm.

On page 77 is a reproduction of the Bronze Star Medal commendation.

After Sarreguemines had been partially taken, and the Saar River had been crossed, a 134th Infantry Battalion Aid Station was set up about 150 yards on the other side. (See the arrow in the picture on page 79.) The Germans were still in the pottery factory (page 74), also on the other side, and our ambulances had to drive down the street parallel to the river and factory to reach the blown railroad bridge which we used to evacuate the wounded from across the river.

The Krauts evidently had an artillery F.O.P. in the pottery factory. We could hear their burp guns signaling the artillery, and each time we drove down the street we had to run a gauntlet of artillery fire. It was a mad dash down the street and then come to a screeching halt beneath the bridge where we were safe from direct fire. (See the picture on page 80).

One time as we got out of the ambulance to walk across the blown railroad bridge, some American tankers had a German prisoner. (It was well known that tankers did not often take prisoners because there was no place to keep them.) One tanker was standing about where the photographer who took this picture stood, and motioned to the P.W., then pointed over the hill to another tanker who put his grease gun in the back of the P.W. The P.W., thinking they were about to kill him began to plead, "Nein! Nein!, Komerade!" They were just playing games with him and took him back to the P.W. cage.

As can been seen in the picture on page 80, the bridges around Saareguemines had been blown by the retreating Germans. We had no way to get vehicles across the river, not even a jeep. We all used the railroad bridge which had been blown down on our side, and it was really quite convenient because it rested on the road on our side and the railroad support on the other. We could walk up the railroad tracks, using the bridge as a ramp from the road to the railroad levee on the other side, quite a few feet higher. Because no vehicles could get across, the wounded were taken from the front line to the Battalion Aid Station and treated. Then, instead of being loaded into ambulances as was ordinarily the case, we carried them from the Station down the bridge to the road where the ambulances waited in the safety of the concrete abutments.

There were so many casualties that I enlisted the help of German *SS* Troopers in carrying our wounded down the bridge from the Station. I don't know how it happened but the next issue of our division newspaper, *The Santa Fe Express,* said that Corporal Warren West, Company A, 110th Medics, was using *SS* Trooper prisoners to help evacuate the wounded. The P.W.s didn't care for that extra work but the Infantry saw that they cooperated..

We placed the patients under the cement bridge and loaded them on 1st Battalion Aid Station Medic's jeeps by which they were taken back to the "A" Company Collecting Station.

"The Boche destroy"

We carried wounded men across this bridge in Saarguemines from the 1st Battalion Aid Station 134th Infantry located at arrow (150 YDS PAST BRIDGE). See lower picture on next page. (S.S. troopers carried across this bridge for my squad)

"Moving a Bailey bridge"

"Holding a lake back"

"Bridge out"

"Road repair"

"Engineers span the Saar"

At the arrow in the lower picture on page 80 is a typical small canal, just one boat wide. This picture was evidently taken later, after the front had passed on because the wooden bridge spanning the canal was not there when we were trying to stay on the other side of the Saar River. The Engineers had put a 2 X 12 board with a hand rail on one side with the nail heads exposed so that it could be taken down more easily later. A group of us were crossing it. An Infantryman in front of me was wearing his bandoleer (a webbed cartridge belt held up by suspenders) and, as was the practice, he had two hand grenades, one on either side of his chest with the handles stuck through suspender loops where the grenades were readily accessible if he should need them. As he passed, the safety ring of one grenade caught on a nail head, pulling the pin. His chest was blown open, killing him instantly. We didn't stop, but continued to the railroad bridge ahead to cross the Saar. We could do nothing for him.

The upper picture on page 79 shows the scene just across the canal. This is where we turned to the right and got on the railroad bridge.

The arrow in the same picture on page 79 marks the direction of Infantry 1st Battalion Aid Station about 150 yards beyond the Saar which was set up in a stone farm house. This group of farm houses are the same ones mentioned in paragraph five on page 71. "Tommy" Thompkins, the Aid Station Staff Sergeant, stuck his head out of the door while he was not wearing his helmet. He was struck in the head and killed instantly by shrapnel from a German shell.

This had been a difficult river crossing and we were very much relieved when Saareguemines had been cleared. I was happier still when we were transferred upstream (south) to the town of Sarresming but this, too, proved to be another river crossing. A bridgehead was established and we moved across the river, staying in a Beer Hall. The Germans had been in it the night before and we found the straw they had been sleeping on behind the bar, but it was full of lice. We didn't use it. It was a struggle to maintain a foot hold there because the Jerries were offering considerable resistance. We had read in the *Stars and Stripes* about Field Marshall Von Runstedt's attack in Belgium and when we got orders to relinquish our area to another Army division, which would relieve us, we were more than happy to leave, not knowing we were going from the frying pan into the fire. We knew it was an important move because we had to take off all identifying numbers from our vehicle bumpers, for example: " 35 110 MED A-1", which meant 35th Infantry Division, 110th Medical Battalion, Company vehicle A-1, which was the Captain's jeep. Then we covered our 35th Division patches on our left shoulders. This was a secret move. General Patton (3rd Army) was transferring a number of divisions up to the south side of the salient or *Bulge* at the same time General Bradley (1st Army) contained the north side.

Our convoy started December 24 and we stopped in Metz, France for the night. Our Battalion stayed with an Evacuation Hospital where we were invited to their Christmas Eve party. We didn't realize it then but this was to be our last time in a combat-free area for a long time to come, and some of our worst experiences were just around the corner.

As we left the Christmas Eve party, a German Me-109 fighter plane flew very low down our street on an observation flight, being encouraged to fly especially fast by the many orange tracers from our *Quad 50s,* which were groups of four 50 caliber machine guns fired from trucks and mounted on rotating platforms controlled by the gunners. The platforms rotated with the gun sights. The Messerschmitt escaped in spite of the orange streaks hurtling toward him. I can imagine how fast the pilot's heart must have been beating. He was brave.

On December 26, after spending Christmas Day in Metz, our convoy continued on its' way to the south side of the Bulge, driving past the castle in Luxembourg City, Luxembourg. We arrived in Belgium the same day and were committed immediately.

THE ARDENNES CAMPAIGN
DECEMBER 16, 1944 - JANUARY 25, 1945

When we arrived at our assigned position in Belgium, Company "A" located itself at an intersection on the all-important Arlon-Bastogne highway. The Germans needed to keep this important highway out of American hands because of its value in transporting supplies, troops and just about anything of value in the prosecution of the war. For "A" Company it meant being on the main route the ambulances would need to drive between the Battalion Aid Station and our Company. It also meant being on the highway which led back to the Clearing Company ten or fifteen miles behind us.

At the intersection of the highway and another road leading to the Litter Bearer's quarters were several large houses very suitable for troops to live in. Our Company "A" occupied one and Company "A", 60th Engineer Battalion used the one next door.

There was plenty of room for our ambulances, weapons carriers, jeeps and most importantly, our kitchen truck. This was a 2 1/2 ton GMC with the entire truck bed housing three field ranges. The bed was covered with the regulation canvas roof supported by staves similar to the old covered wagons.

Our First Cook, Lambert Hron, was about 6'6" tall and had plenty of head room. He was a large man with a large, loud voice. He had a cheerful disposition with a hearty laugh.

"Cy" Tworek, our Mess Sergeant, was much shorter but weighed probably 200 pounds so it was rather cozy inside with Second Cook, "Robbie" Robinson plus a couple of cook's helpers, Joe Potash (a 1939 Polish immigrant) and John Fetzer, of German ancestry, from Chicago. (Joe and John were extremely helpful in interviewing German and Russian P.W.s that came through the Station.) All five men worked well together.

Warnach, Belgium was a village about one half mile down the road which intersected the Arlon-Bastogne highway. This is where the Litter Platoon stayed. There was a small town square and in the center was a large black iron pot or cauldron supported by three long poles. The villagers said the pot was used by captured American P.W.s in which they made soup, using melted snow for water. This was a far cry from the way we treated German prisoners.

The house where the Company C.P. and Station were was large and every afternoon for those who were not at the front, there was a movie shown. My good buddy, Ed Howe, who was a former movie projectionist, had been to assigned the role of "Battalion Movie Man" back in Alabama. In some way he "procured" the Battalion 16 mm sound movie projector and he would darken the largest room in the house and connect the projector to the Company electric generator. Then he would show (every

day, it seemed) the movie, *Two Girls and a Sailor* starring Van Johnson, June Allyson and Gloria De Haven with Harry James' orchestra. Even though I saw it several times, it has long been a favorite and Alice and I have it in the colorized version to watch with the VCR. It is still a favorite.

The Graves Registration (Quartermaster Corp) came to the area every few days to take back dead soldiers, or *Stiffs*, as they irreverently spoke of them. They were indeed stiff, however, being frozen in the position in which they died. They were literally stacked in one ton trailers and taken back for I.D. and burial.

One day while at Warnach, we had walked the half mile to "A" Company headquarters to eat chow. I heard a loud noise and looking next door toward the 60th Engineers, I saw a man cutting a railroad tie with a hand-held machine which had a long, flat bar mounted on one end and smoke coming out of the side. The bar seemed to melt through the tie as much as a hot knife would through soft butter and it was throwing out all kinds of wood chips! Thus was my first introduction to a chain saw - - - -I hadn't known such a thing existed.

One day while still in Warnach, we were told that the C.I.C. (United States Army Counter Intelligence Corp) and the F.B.I. were next door at the 60th Engineer's "A" Company. Someone had blown a safe there and there was quite an investigation about it.

We knew who had done it - - - - none other than Tony Griemel of Fort Leavenworth fame - - - - but who, after seven months of grueling combat, had proven himself to be a "soldier's soldier." So when the C.I.C. and F.B.I. came to our Company with questions, no one, not even our Company Commander, "knew" anything about it. Tony had made such a miraculous change in his life that no one was willing to ruin him now. The C.I.C. and F.B.I.. left without any clues.

Tony, along with a few other of us who had come from Fort Leavenworth together had been promoted to T/5 back in the States. After the war when the high point men were transferred from the Company, Tony was promoted to Staff Sergeant, a fitting tribute to a REAL SOLDIER!

The Ardennes forests were heavily grown up with fir trees making it impossible to see very far into them. When we left the Battalion Aid Station for the front, line we would walk quietly along not knowing there was anyone but the four of us around. Then we might hear, in a soft voice, "Hi Doc." Then an Infantryman would step out from behind a tree where he was on guard duty, and wave.

The snow and forests created an eerie silence which was only broken by the sounds of mortars, machine guns, German burp guns and artillery. Those were always present.

Many times, more than I can count, we might hear a single rifle shot - then silence. We would look at each other and say, "S.I.W." (self-inflicted wound), then wait. Soon, into the Aid Station would hobble, or be helped by buddies, an Infantryman who had taken about all the war he could, and in order to take himself out of danger, he had shot himself in the foot. The left foot if he were right-handed or the right foot if he were left handed. The signs were always too clear and we felt sorry for those individuals.

Barefoot Nazis Routed From Sleep by 35th

Nov 4 - 1944 - Times

BY EDWARD BELL.

With the Third Army South of Saarbrucken, Dec. 4.(AP)—Lieut. Gen. George S. Patton, jr., pulled a "sleeping dog" play on the Germans in the resumed drive toward Saarbrucken today—and it worked.

Without the usual artillery prelude, troops and tanks slithered forward through the mud before dawn and caught the Germans sound asleep with their jackboots off in one sector.

Without a single American casualty, one company from the 134th infantry of the 35th division moved into the town of Puttelange, twelve miles south and slightly west of Saarbrucken and captured 109 SS (Elite Guard) troops, eighty of whom had to be roused from their sleep.

The Germans had their boots off, but they had on six layers of clothing. They came out in the mud in their bare feet.

Troops capturing these Germans were under command of Capt. William N. Denny, a Missourian, and Capt. John W. Williams, Lincoln, Neb., who won all-America mention in his college football days.

The article is self-explanatory, however, Jack Schwab and his litter squad participated in this river crossing. It took place in the winter time and they waded across the stream getting their feet wet. Jack said some of the SS troops surrendered without shoes on.

Alice sent this article to me which she cut from the November 4, 1944 Kansas City Times.

Best Regards, Howard Wilson (One of Warren's Buddies)

THE KANSAS CITY STAR, TI

There are signs that Hitler may be rushing troops from his western to his eastern front, a silly procedure: he had just brought some from the eastern front to the western front. We'll bet when he was a house painter he painted himself into corners.

LUTREBOIS

WARFARE FINDS A BEAUTEOUS SETTING IN BELGIUM, where these Third army soldiers are advancing to occupy the village of Lutrebois. The Yanks doubtless would be willing to do without the charm of the snowscape in order to avoid the handicap the white blanket imposes.—(Wirephoto). SCENE NEAR BASTOGNE. I WAS RIGHT HERE

This is a scene just outside the village of Lutrebois, Belgium. Mom sent me this picture from the Thursday, January 25, 1945 issue of the Kansas City Star.

I have written in the lower corner: "Arrow marks the location of the stone barn where our casualties waited to be taken back to the Battalion Aid Station. The trees were so thick over the trails that stars were visible only directly overhead."

Company "A" evacuated 137th Infantry casualties here. "Pood" Omen sat down at the "X" to rest. So did I. Pood said,"West, I'm just too tired to go on" so we waited for a while.

The next day Nick Burstyne's squad was pinned down by machine gun fire, which came from the right.

The picture on the next page shows two of "A" Company's Litter Squads evacuating from the stone barn marked in this picture.

There were more casualties at Lutrebois.

CHAPTER IX
The Ardennes Bulge

"Oh, if a man should come up an' ask me, I'd say we got a dum good lickin'."

"Lickin' — in yer eye! We ain't licked, sonny. We're going down here aways, swing aroun', an' come in behint 'em."

"Oh, hush, with your comin' in behint 'em. I've seen all a that I wanta. Don't tell me about comin' in behin t— "

—Stephen Crane, The Red Badge of Courage (1896).

South of Bastogne, as the New Year comes in, there are still the Old Year's dead, with ice matting their eyelashes, and the burnt tanks softened by the drifting snow.

—Sgt. Saul Levitt, "They Held Bastogne,"
Yank, (British Ed.),
Jan. 28, 1945.

We attacked the woods. Thank God, we are still alive.

—Record of Events,
Morning Report of 4 Jan., 1945,
A company of the 1st Battalion.

Taking advantage of the thinly stretched forces of the four American divisions charged with the defense of the Ardennes sector, the Germans had launched a great counteroffensive on 16 December — at a time when the 134th Infantry still was very much involved at Habkirchen. Field Marshal von Rundstedt's blow (more accurately, as far as inspiration is concerned, the Hitler-Model offensive) fell with a suddenness Bradley to permit concentration of forces for attack elsewhere. The German effort had objectives no less than the capture of the great supply center of Liege and the indispensable port of Antwerp. And the momentum of the attack was such that it appeared for a while — particularly to those unacquainted with the situation — that such decisive results would not be long in coming. The situation demanded immediate action. General Eisenhower called the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions out of strategic reserve in the Reims area, and on 18 December they arrived at St. Vith and Bastogne respectively. Other units were hurried across the channel from England. These measures were taken to stabilize the situation. But at the same time the Third Army was to shift its forces to make a counterattack — not later than 22 December — and this was to be followed by an attack by the forces under Field Marshall Montgomery (all forces north of the penetration, including the U. S. Ninth, and most of the First Army were placed under Montgomery's command, while those forces south of the bulge remained under General Bradley). The response of the Third Army in moving up to deliver the counterattack was one of the remarkable logistical achievements of the war.

Other divisions had gone ahead of the 35th, but now its turn had come, and the 134th Infantry, following a rather circuitous route because of air attacks which had come against

We continued our slow advance toward Bastogne. Sometimes it seemed our daily progress was no more than we had experienced in Normandy.

The front lines in this area were not a pair of solid lines, one American and one German, as they were in open country or the hedgerow country that we had been through around St. Lo.

This particular part of Belgium is made up of many forests separated by large expanses of open fields, as may be seen on page 89.

The front lines of both armies were contained inside the forests where the dense fir trees made excellent cover and protection from the enemy. As long as we were in one of the forests, we were unobserved by the enemy and our deep slit trenches gave us a great amount of security.

In this particular area the Infantry Battalion Headquarters where our Battalion Medical Aid Station was located, was maybe 1/4 or 1/2 mile behind the front line in yet another forest. The only way to get from the Battalion Aid Station to the front line was to cross the open expanse of pasture land, which itself was probably 1/4 mile across. The enemy was in its own forest on the other side of this field.

The winters in Belgium are not like the winters we experience here in Missouri. When we have snow here, it melts and then later we may get another snow which also, sooner or later, melts. This can continue throughout our winter.

In Belgium, being more than 50 degrees north of the equator, the snow never melts all winter long. The first snow of the season is covered by the second snow of the season. The third snow does the same, so by the time spring arrives, the snow is very deep.

The simplest, quickest way to cross these open spaces was to use the path made by those who preceded us. In this way we were not compelled to wade through deep snow and slow our progress while under enemy observation. Any time we were in the open spaces the Germans were watching us and lining up their mortars on us. We were too far from them to be in a lot of danger from rifles, so they relied on mortars, instead.

The fuses on mortar shells were usually set on *Quick Fuse* as opposed to *Time Delayed Fuse*. With the ground frozen hard, the *Quick Fuse* shell would explode immediately upon contact with the earth, spreading shrapnel in all directions, possibly wounding or killing anyone within a few yards.

An artillery shell, because it comes in at such great speed, whistles as it passes through the air giving time for us to fall to the ground for safety. A mortar shell is merely lobbed up into the air and falls almost vertically to its target. This slow approach means it is virtually silent as it comes. A split second before it hits the ground there is a *Phhhht*, then the explosion, leaving no time for a soldier to protect himself. (I used to joke with my buddies, however, saying that I was just afraid enough to be able to hit the ground before the mortar exploded, after hearing the *Phhhht.*)

The Infantry Battalion Surgeon, or C.O., told us the Infantry was taking casualties at a high rate and the Infantry Company Aid Man could not take care of all the wounded, much less evacuate them to the comparative safety of the Battalion Aid Station. He told

Upper—"They shall not pass"
Lower—"Near Luxembourg"

"Covering fire"—near Sainley, Belgium

Clearing Company area in Luxembourg 2nd Co. Surgical Tech. watching Engineers with mine detector.

"Mine hunt"

"35th Inf. advance near Surre"

the four of us who made up the litter squad to go to the front line, assist in treating the wounded, and then, when night came, begin carrying them back on litters. Being under enemy observation during the day at this particular time, the night was the only safe time to evacuate.

On this day I did not have a squad of my own. I was working with Jack Schwab, instead. We left the safety of our forest and began the walk to the forest which hid our front line. As we trudged down the path through the snow, we knew the Germans were watching us. As usual, it was an exciting walk as we carried our empty litter. We also carried a red cross flag which sometimes gave us safety because the United States and Germany had signed the Geneva Convention Treaty. On this occasion it didn't protect us. We walked down the very gentle slope to the lowest part of the field where a creek, maybe two feet wide, crossed our path. The creek was under several feet of snow which insulated it from the Arctic-like weather we were experiencing. The only place where the water was exposed to the atmosphere was at the path we were using. This was too small a space for it to freeze because of the flow of the water.

My three buddies had crossed over before me. There was about a ten yard interval between each of us so that in case a shell came in, we would not all be hit.

I stepped across the creek and had just passed about a foot beyond it when an enemy mortar shell came down behind me and exploded. Of all the open, frozen country it could have landed in, it landed in the two foot width of the creek. The creek, being unfrozen, allowed the shell to penetrate maybe a foot before exploding. So, instead of spreading shrapnel in all directions, it sent it straight up in the air, passing about a foot behind my back. The concussion blew off my steel helmet but I was untouched!

When we reached the comparative safety of the forest, one of my buddies, began to cry, relieving himself of the total fear which we all were experiencing. Jack Schwab, my *Garbage Pit Buddy* of Normandy fame, in his droll sense of humor said, "You know West, I don't like it here." (The understatement of the day.)

We were able to treat the wounded G.I.s and after nightfall, we began the difficult task of carrying them the 1/4 or 1/2 mile back to the Battalion Aid Station.

God had protected us again.

In order to stay warm in the bitter weather I wore two-piece long under wear, wool O.D. trousers, shirt, field jacket and overcoat. On the outside of the overcoat I wore my raincoat which acted as a wind-breaker. I wore overshoes, gloves, muffler and a G.I. knit cap under my steel helmet to keep my head and ears warm. On the outside of all this was the pair of Aid Kits that squad leaders were required to wear. I felt like a zombie walking along. On the night of January 15, it was 13 degrees below zero.

When going to the front line to relieve one of the litter squads, we usually went at night because the German were firing at Medics again.

The Infantry ate their personal *C Rations* for breakfast and *K Rations* for lunch, maybe topped off with a *D Ration* chocolate bar which also made good cocoa. But at night they got a hot meal about 10:00 p.m.

We Litter Bearers usually went up with the *Kitchen Train* or the *Ammunition Train* because they knew the way to the particular Infantry Battalion that we were assigned to. These two *trains* went to the front at night because it was much safer than going during the day. The *Ammunition Train* consisted of many Infantrymen carrying all the ammo needed by the infantry. This included bandoleers of 30 caliber rifle ammunition, 30 and 50 caliber machine gun ammo, bazookas, 60 and 81 mm mortar shells and possible 105 mm artillery shells for the Regimental Cannon Company.

The *Kitchen Train* was formed by more G.I.s plus the Company kitchen personnel who cooked the food at Regimental Headquarters a mile or so behind the line. They put the food in *Marmide Jars*, which were nothing more than giant Thermos-type containers. The *Jars* were metal, 18" - 24" high and 15" wide. Inside were three or four shelves or layers where the separate food was carried, hot. Each of the layers could be lifted out, one by one, as needed, and served in total black-out conditions.

In the serving line we merely held out our mess kits and the hot food was "placed" in them, including dessert. We usually tried to arrange to have the dessert placed in the mess kit lid to maintain some clearance and avoid somewhat, the *Duke's Mixture* that always occurred. We had no idea what anything was as nothing was separated. We might have a bite of potatoes and gravy followed by cake and gravy.

At least it was hot. We appreciated it because the snow was so deep and the weather so cold. The coffee was hot to begin with but it, too, soon cooled.

Meanwhile, back at Warnach, we all were snug as could be in our assigned Litter Bearer house. EVERYONE WHO COULD, lived inside or at least had some warm place to go. The poor Infantry boys lived outside almost always; at least the outpost guards did. The Field Artillery and Anti-Aircraft people had to stay with their guns.

All the towns and villages were full of Army people, having displaced the civilians to a great extent. We didn't move them from their houses if they did not have another place to go, however. We might just *share* their house with them.

One old lady who lived in Warnach pulled her husband in a children's coaster wagon everywhere they went. We never did see him limping, so maybe he had a bad heart, but she pulled him to the highway every day for some reason. They were in no danger from artillery fire because Field Marshall Von Runstedt was contained in the Bastogne area about ten miles north on the Arlon-Bastogne highway.

One of the men on my squad was very hesitant about going to the front (as we all were). He had been a Fry Cook in civilian life and he told me if I would get a replacement to go to the front for him, and allow him to remain behind in Warnach, he would cook supper for us while we were at the front.

I don't remember what excuses I came up with each time it was our turn to go, but many times he was able to stay behind and "do his thing."

Knowing that we usually returned by midnight, Verble always had a sumptuous feast waiting for us. In fact, we ate better than the rest of the Company. He would go to the kitchen truck and "liberate" eggs, chicken, potatoes, vegetables, dehydrated milk, etc. He made gravy, and because the snow was over a foot deep, he made Snow Ice Cream for

us each night. He buried the mix in the snow and it froze while we were gone. It was a little icy but did it ever taste good! The rest of the Litter Platoon never did find the ice cream while it was buried because of the many footprints in the yard. We did share it with the others, however.

All this time Alice had kept the "letters from home" coming. She wrote every day but the mail service, being as it was, wasn't too dependable. The mail traveled on ships across the ocean and took a couple of weeks to reach us. V-Mail was not much, if any, quicker but only one sheet could be included. The sheet was photographed and placed on a strip of film. I guess the film came over by ship too. After arriving in Europe the strip of film was printed and mailed in small envelopes to the addressees. V-Mail saved cargo space and people were encouraged to use it.

At any rate I was always eager to get Alice's letters even though they might come in bunches. I would just sort them out by date and read them chronologically. The green ink on the outside of the envelopes was always a dead give away about the writer, aside from her penmanship. I don't know what I would have done without her letters. We (G.I.s) were so far from home and had been gone so long.

At the occurrence of the Bulge, English-speaking German soldiers in American uniforms and driving captured American army vehicles, infiltrated our lines to spy and do other forms of mischief, such as killing anyone they found.

When our turn came to go to the front my squad and I would get the password and countersign from our Collecting Station or the ambulance drivers who would take us to our assigned Infantry Battalion. We would start down the Arlon-Bastogne highway, an two lane asphalt road with dense fir forests on each side, coming almost to the road.

At short intervals as we drove, we would come to Infantry road blocks which had been established to stop the German infiltrators. At each stop an officer would stick a Tommy Gun in the ambulance window and ask for the password of the day. He would respond with the countersign. So we worked our way along the road very slowly because of the security checks we passed through

(The password changed each night at midnight and no one dared leave the area without knowing it. The common question before going to the latrine after dark was, "What's the password?")

Our passwords and countersigns always contained the letter "R" because of the difficulty the Germans had in pronouncing them correctly. An example might be: Password - "Rhino". Countersign - Righteous".

Evacuating the wounded through the forests at night was a different experience. The ambulances did not go to the front line; only the Infantry Battalion Aid Station jeep went that far. After finding a wounded G.I. we would treat him and place him on a litter. We had devised a method of bringing back two wounded G.I.s at one time on a jeep by placing the litters across the sides behind the driver's seat. This way we saved our backs from a long carry in complete black-out as well as getting two back instead of one.

The nights in the forests were darker than anyone can imagine. The only way the jeep driver could follow the road was to have one of us walk along in front of the jeep holding a white cloth behind us. At the same time we would look up above us where the

"Prisoners of the Ardennes"

This is near the 1st Bn aid station near Marvie

"Jerry forgot these" German 50 MM Howitzers

Aid station this way.

the Nazis fought with the utmost tenacity. The 1st SS Division committed many atrocities. Some of their soldiers were captured in complete American uniform and using American weapons and vehicles. Bottles of acid were also found on them, with instructions that the wax tops were to be broken and the contents thrown into the face of their captives.

The Germans were fighting in excellent defensive terrain with good road networks. The entire area was filled with towns and villages and every house was transformed into a miniature fortress. Every hill and every small woods had to be taken separately. The 137th fought for 13 days before it battered down the defenses of Villers-la-

"Luxembourg interrogation"

"Burial party for Hun"

"One less"

"Photographers bag"

trees from each side of the road met overhead, leaving a lighter color where the sky showed through them. The jeep had a blackout light which was just a very dim light, recessed inside a housing, and shaded by a couple of louvered slots. The slots kept the light focused on the ground just ahead. The light shone on the white cloth and the one carrying the cloth looked up, following the lighter sky overhead. Together we made it through the forest. The driver could not have done it alone. He couldn't have looked up and driven because he could not have seen the road. He put the jeep in low gear and low range (low range gave the jeep six forward and two reverse gears) and idled it through the forest at a snail's pace, just fast enough to keep up with us who were walking slowly ahead using the sky through the trees above the road as a guide.

On page 93 is a picture of German 150 mm cannon near the 1st Battalion Aid Station outside the village of Marvie. Many times at night when we were evacuating before this area was captured we heard the 150s firing. They had a deeper roar than the 88s. I suppose this is one of the guns we heard. At least I like to think so.

Here in the Bulge we heard the new 90 mm tank guns firing. Our old *Sherman* tanks had 75 mm cannons which were woefully inadequate when meeting a German *Tiger* tank, so our newer tanks had 90 mm guns mounted on them which helped some against the German armor. The 90 had a distinctive sound. The shell moaned as it passed above us and the way it echoed back and forth between the hills indeed made an eerie noise. We could imagine what a psychological weapon it probably was as the Germans heard it.

We were evacuating the wounded through the forest one night when --- **VERY LOUD OVERHEAD**, we heard, **"CRACK, CRACK, CRACK".** In the space of one second, three artillery shells passed by startling us and making us jump because they were **SO LOUD!** and we had never heard anything like that before. We knew they were some sort of American artillery because they continued on toward the German lines. After passing by they sounded like a railroad train going over the joints in a railroad track because they broke the sound barrier continuously beyond us. Then, we heard the three shells explode as they hit the ground, "BAM, BAM, BAM!" in rapid succession. Finally, after the shells had exploded on the ground behind German lines, the original sound of the cannons arrived, going, "boom, boom, boom", softly in the distance behind us. The terrible noise in the silence of the night was so startling!

On page 95 is a picture of this gun: the 4.5" field piece. The gun was secret and when it was dug in to fire it was dug in deeply protected by sandbags so that only the end of the muzzle was visible to us as we passed. When it was on the road moving to another area it was covered by canvas we never did really get a good look at it. This picture is the best view I ever had.

When we treated the wounded Wehrmacht soldiers who had been taken prisoner, our buddies who came from German-speaking families often talked to the P.W.s. We found the Germans called our new artillery *Silent Death* because the shells, being faster than sound, had already exploded before the sound of their coming arrived! They also called it *Automatic Artillery* because after the guns had all been loaded, ready to fire, instead of a man pulling a lanyard to fire each gun separately, all three were electrically

"German paratrooper"—wounded

"Harassing fire"

"Mortars at Bastogne"

4.5 FIELD PIECE. "AUTOMATIC ARTY"

"Arty. at work"—during drive to knock out Von Runstedt's push

OUR SECRET ARTY. PIECE THAT WE COULD NOT SEE FOR SO LONG.

"Moonlight and cold"—Luxembourg-Belgium border

"Dive bomber attack"

connected to the Fire Direction Center which fired them rapidly in sequence, all three guns going off in about one second.

The new 4.5" field piece along with the other new weapon, the 90 mm tank gun, must indeed have un-nerved more than one poor German soldier.

We didn't hear all these facts about the 4.5" and the 90 mm at the outset; it was only by talking and listening that we were able to figure out the 90's eerie moan echoing through the forest, and that the 4.5s were fired in rapid succession electrically, breaking the sound barrier as they passed by. I have been with several German soldiers who were unconvinced that the guns were not automatic, however. I can understand their disbelief.

Aside from the damage created by them, these were truly two psychological weapons!

We finally reached Bastogne where the 101st Airborne Division had been surrounded for so many days. They had landed their gliders in open country on the north side of town. The Germans had buried many wooden posts on end in the fields so that any glider landing there would be damaged and probably the paratroopers riding inside would be injured. These gliders were very light, being made of wood and canvas, and offered no protection whatever, allowing the stakes to tear through the bottoms of the gliders as they skimmed the ground.

We stayed in the basement of a building which had been a message center of some outfit which had previously occupied the building. Many telephone wires went out the basement window onto the sidewalk.

I had my movie camera with me at this time and my squad and I went out to the sidewalk to take some movies. I still have them showing one of my buddies, Herron, washing my face with a handful of snow. We did have fun occasionally.

The *Battle of the Bulge* was finished. The next stop - - Holland.

Our convoy to Holland took us near Brussels and Liege, Belgium. I got a pass to Liege and while on a hill overlooking Liege, I was taking some movies of Cy Tworek and others, when a German Buzz Bomb went over. The Germans called them V-1 weapons. They were small, about three quarters the size of a P-51 American fighter. Because of the skies being hazy, their being small and fast, we seldom saw them during the day but we could always hear them.

The Germans, being very methodical, sent them over on the hour and half hour so at night we would sometimes go outside and watch for them because they were so easily seen in the dark. The fire coming from the engine looked like a 110 volt light bulb getting only 25 or 30 volts, making an orange glow as we saw it approaching. We could also see the auto pilot correcting the path of the bomb as it wavered from one side to the other.

Being a *Pulse Jet*, the sound was a series of rapid explosions which sounded to me like *blurps* coming out of bubbles under water. It was a very strange sound and also VERY LOUD as jet fighters are when they operate without sound suppressers.

It was not an accurate weapon at all and flew only as long as there was fuel in the tank. The Germans had figured the target distance, winds, etc.. and fueled the bomb accordingly. When the fuel was gone the engine died and the V-1 would dive for the ground carrying with it the one-ton warhead.

One night when we had come back in from *Buzz Bomb watching,* and my squad and I had gone to bed, we heard one coming and as it passed overhead the engine stopped! "Pood" Omen said, "Here we go, West!", but somehow, the engine began firing again and carried it farther back to the rear. We heard it quit again and a few seconds later, the one ton of TNT exploded. The next day when our ambulance drivers came in from Clearing Company at Rear Echelon where they had been on duty, they told us it had crashed at Division Headquarters but no one was injured even though a house had been destroyed.

When we neared Brussels, again I got a pass to go to town. This was a far cry from our prior seven months of combat! We really ate up the thrill of seeing real, live civilians walking the streets instead G.I.s walking in broken glass and tree limbs.

Again I took my movie camera and photographed the one-city-block-long Palace with its equestrian statue of King Leopold in front. I also took movies of the famous Town Square, a cobble stone square with very old buildings of unusually ornate carved stone.

I just couldn't appreciate what I was seeing under the current conditions and knowing that we would soon be in the middle of the war again.

We continued on our way to Holland where we would prepare to cross the Rhine River into the Ruhr district of Germany.

As our convoy neared our future, but temporary, home in Maastricht, Holland I began seeing 37th Engineer Battalion trucks.

Don Shuler, my old friend in the Second Church Zion's league back in Independence, had made the D-Day landing in Normandy as a member of the 37th

Engineer (Amphibious) Battalion. As his unit was an amphibious battalion, he did not leave the beachhead until the prospect of the Rhine River crossing in the Spring. So in spite of the dangers of D-Day, he led a pretty good life most of the war.

When the 35th Division arrived in Holland and after I began seeing the 37th Engineer trucks, I got a pass to Maastricht where his Battalion Headquarters were, in an attempt to find him. After quite a bit of walking I found him and we had a good day together. I still had my movie camera and we took each other's pictures that day. Of course the U.S. Army censor developed them before mailing them back to the United States so Alice, my folks and Don's folks saw movies of us only a few weeks old.

While in Holland, the 137th Infantry took Venlo. We heard that only two shots were fired in the operation; true or false, I don't know. However, because the Dutch, or *Hollanders*, as they preferred to be called, were allies, even more than the French, great care was taken to avoid damaging the cities and the results were nothing short of amazing.

There were times when the French did not treat us well, but many of the Hollanders spoke English, having learned it in school so they would be able to communicate with us as we liberated them.

While in Venlo we did something I am ashamed for. The weather was still very chilly and being in the middle of town, we had no stove wood. Our alternative was to chop up the furniture in our house and burn it. We shouldn't have.

At the end of *The Ardennes Campaign* the 35th was transferred from Patton's Third Army to General Simpson's Ninth Army.

Any unit always commits only a part of its command at any one time. A regiment will hold one battalion in reserve, a division will hold one regiment in reserve. The 35th Division had never been completely "out of it" before but when we joined Ninth Army, we were placed in Army Reserve. This was a first. General Simpson at one time, before I joined it, commanded the 35th. We all wondered if it happened because General Simpson had a soft spot in his heart for us or that he knew we had really experienced some terribly tough times since Saareguemines. At any rate, it was a welcome relief. It was at this time, far, far behind the front lines that we saw our first electric lights since we left England July 4, 1944. The army truck convoys were using their headlights and what a wonderful sight it was to see a city in the distance lighted by electricity. Prior to this our lights consisted of white gas lamps with mantles in the C.P.s and Aid Stations. Of course any time a light was on during black-out conditions, double entries to tents prevented light from escaping.

And then, too, each of our squads had long, long ago "liberated" our own squad kerosene lamps. This was the first time most of us had ever trimmed a wick or cleaned a lamp chimney. We learned how to prevent the wick from smoking the chimney, although cleaning it was a daily chore. We took turns and really became quite proficient in making a sparkling, clean lamp chimney.

CROSSING THE RHINE RIVER

We left Holland and went into Germany near the west bank of the Rhine River in preparation for our crossing. After a short stay we prepared to move on.

Tony Griemel and others had found a beer hall with "stock" inside. They sampled schnapps and all kinds of wares but for some reason Tony had too much to drink. As the time came for our convoy to pull out, he wasn't present.

Some of the fellows went to get him but he wouldn't listen to them. Tony was not one to argue with. Our First Sergeant, Charles "Puttie" Putnam, went to the beer hall to get Tony but to no avail. We were all becoming concerned because Tony would be counted AWOL, which in time of war, was a serious offense. It could ruin the fine record he had established for himself since joining the company in March 1943.

The Captain went to the beer hall to ask Tony to come to the convoy but he had no influence on Tony.

So Puttie asked me if I would go and urge Tony to come back with me. Tony and I had always been good friends so I went with some hesitation, into the beer hall. We talked and Tony was adamant.... and drunk! He would not leave and I could not reason with him. I didn't argue with him because when he was drunk he was also MEAN! I finally convinced him (peaceably) to come back with me and we reached the company just as it was ready to pull out.

The company made another move toward the west bank of the Rhine River. Puttie went with the first party to obtain quarters for the rest of us who went the next day. We had been assigned to a high hill overlooking the river. The river valley, probably a mile wide, stretched between high, steep banks which contained the river in times of flood. The west bank was the "high hill" where we were assigned.

After our arrival the next day, Puttie, knowing my interest in airplanes, told me about the destruction of a Messerschmitt 109 German fighter plane the day before. He watched the Me-109 fly over the valley to draw ack-ack fire and also ascertain the size of the Allied build-up west of the Rhine. The Me-109 was followed by four P-47s above and to his rear, four P-47s to his left and four more to his right preventing him from climbing or swerving to either side. He was thus "escorted" across the valley and forced to fly into the hill on the other side. He was destroyed without a single shot being fired!

While on this high hill, Pood Omen and I went up on the very top where it overlooked the Rhine River to look at an abandoned German anti-aircraft artillery position. We heard a liquid-cooled airplane engine flying from our rear, toward the river. It was "contour flying", changing its elevation with the rise and fall of the ground, staying very low above the ground. As it came up to our level in the Ack-Ack position, barely

thirty feet above us I said, "Oh boy, Pood, look at this P-51!" It was skimming the ground and popped up over the ack-ack position. His nose spinner was painted in a black and white barber pole spiral. As he came even with us we could see the pilot in the cockpit and the Black Cross on the fuselage with a Black Swastika on the rudder. I hit the ground, foolishly, because he was already gone. The "P-51" was actually an Me-109, which, although being slightly smaller, is shaped similarly to the P-51. His obvious mission was to draw fire from our ack-ack to determine our build up strength.

He "poured on the coal", his exhaust trailing black smoke, as he sped away but our ack-ack put up such a thick barrage he was shot down before he crossed the river and valley to safety. Even if he wasn't able to radio back that there were lots of American and British troops, his failure to return surely gave the Germans a little of the information they wanted. Besides that, the German soldiers on the other bank witnessed the destruction of one of their few remaining fighters.

While we were in this same area, we were next to the British 8th Army on our left flank. The RAF had a new fighter, the *Typhoon*. It, too, had a liquid cooled engine but unlike our P-51 and the Me-109, it had a large radiator on the bottom of the fuselage, just behind the propeller. This model was very similar to the *Tempest*, also a British fighter. They had oval-shaped wings, somewhat like the British *Spitfire*.

I'm not bragging, but because of my intense interest in airplanes, I could identify most of our planes as well as the British and German's. I always said I could identify more planes that our anti-aircraft gunners because they seemed to always be firing at anything that flew over and this was one occasion of just that.

The Typhoon flew over the area and our ack-ack boys opened up, throwing tracers and 40 mm shells all over the sky and all around the Typhoon. I told my buddies it was a British plane. It flew back and forth, showing the red, white and blue roundels on the tops and bottoms of its wings, trying to get the gunners to properly identify it as *friendly*. They never did but it did get away from our gunners. I'll bet he was careful not to stray over the British/American Army lines again.

Before our crossing of the Rhine River, General William H. Simpson sent a letter of gratitude to the 35th Division, a part of which follows:

"Assignment of the 35th Division to Ninth Army a few weeks ago afforded me a feeling of particular gratification. I am frank to confess that this feeling is prompted in part by the fact of my previous association as one-time Commander of the organization. Aside from this warm personal interest in the division, I am also mindful of the splendid achievements of the division since the early days of the invasion.

"It is unnecessary for me to point out that the performance of the 35th Infantry Division in Operation "Grenade" constitutes another glowing chapter in the splendid record achieved by the unit in this theater of operations."

/s/ W. H. Simpson
/t/ W. H. SIMPSON
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army
Commanding

Our turn came to cross the Rhine River. It seemed to be about the same width as the Missouri River in the Independence area. The crossing continued around the clock and late at night we climbed into our 10 ambulances, together with the company jeeps, weapons carriers and the 2 1/2 ton kitchen truck pulling our 250 gallon water trailer, and inched our way to the river. It was slow going. All the forces on the west side had to be meshed and integrated to use this one bridge in order to get to the east side.

A picture of the bridge is on page 102. This picture was taken from the east side of the Rhine because the current is from left to right and the Engineers were on the upstream side of the pontoons. We got on the bridge at the other end.

I don't know how long it took the division to get its 15,000 men across but it took most of the night to reach our assembly area on the other side. As can be seen from the picture, the bridge was a pontoon bridge composed of many rubber pontoons large enough to carry even Sherman tanks as they made their way across. The pontoons were all connected by a steel roadway and as each vehicle passed over, the individual pontoons sank alarmingly deep into the water. The bridge was constructed in the shape of a large arc facing into the flow of the water so that the current actually held the bridge sections tightly together.

Every pontoon had an Engineer laying down facing upstream with an M-1 rifle, ready to shoot at any floating mines the Germans had placed in the water. Any floating object was illuminated by *Artificial Moonlight*....anti-aircraft searchlight batteries with their beams projected horizontally along the ground which gave about as much light as a full moon might.

As we crossed, of course, Bed Check Charlie, the German Night fighters, were overhead attempting to disrupt the progress of the army. I have never seen such a display of anti-aircraft fire in my life. Twelve German planes came over during the night while we were in the bridge area and all twelve were shot down

The ack-ack even got one of our Grasshoppers, a Piper Cub artillery liaison plane. Being a fabric-covered plane, it went down in a mass of flames. I even saw one of our barrage balloons go down, hit by our own guns as they fired at the enemy planes. Of course, being filled with helium, the gas did not burn; just the fabric.

There was so much flak that we soon had to leave the comfort of riding in our ambulances and walk. Why? The shrapnel, as it both fell and was propelled downward by the explosions of the shells, was hitting many G.I.s in the shoulder, severing the arms of some, so we spent our time caring for the wounded as we progressed along the road, placing them in the ambulances and walking the rest of the night.

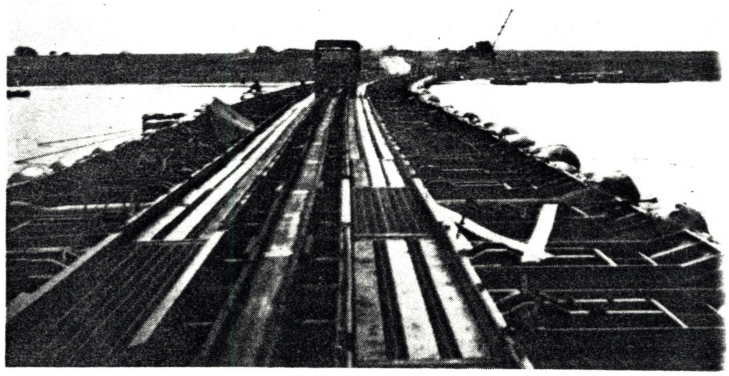
These were the only men wounded during the river crossing; and none by enemy fire. We landed near Dinslaken on the east side of the river, having crossed from Rhineburg.

heavy artillery, self-propelled and mortar fire, but broke up all organized resistance in Recklinghausen-Sud and advanced as far as the Rhein-Herne Canal. The 320th also pushed ahead in its zone just north of the canal. Division artillery fired on towns, factory areas and Nazi strongpoints and hit a moving train, setting it on fire. Some batteries were firing within mortar range, using charge No. 1 for the first time since the 35th landed in France.

For the next week the regiments held and improved their positions along the Herne Canal. On the 6th, the 320th was attached to the 75th Division which was aiming at Dortmund.

On the morning of 9 April, both the 134th and 137th secured bridgeheads over the canal against fairly heavy resistance but by evening, patrols of the 134th's Intelligence and Reconnaissance platoon had entered Gelsenkirchen after a gain of three kilometers.

As in every division water crossing, the

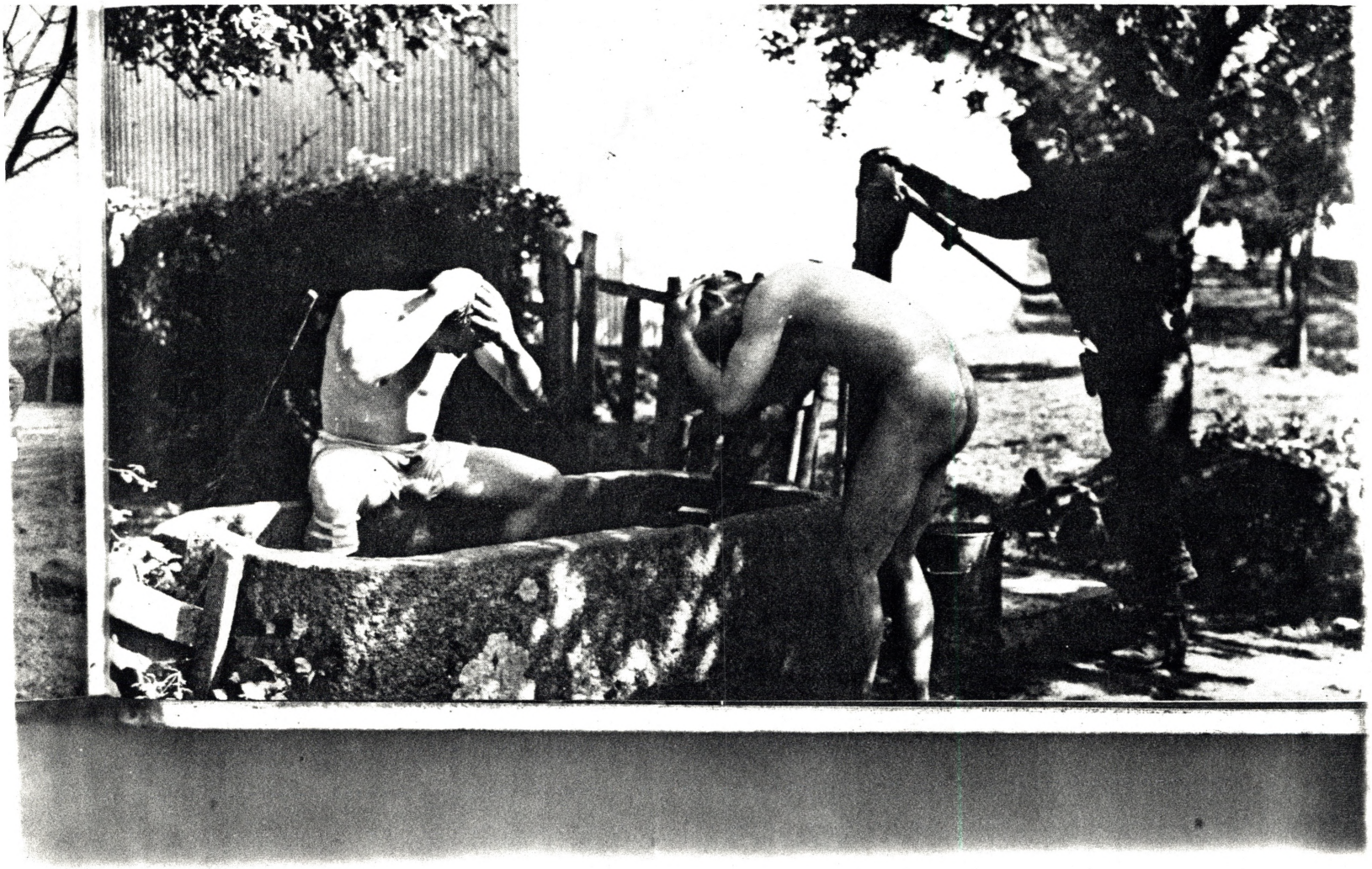


"Across the Rhine"

DIRECTION OF CURRENT →

60th Engineers worked like beavers. A railway bridge over the Emscher, converted for vehicular traffic by Company B was used by so much 35th traffic that it was called "Remagen Jr." At this site one company captured 19 Germans who had fired at the

"A real luxury"



THE RHINELAND CAMPAIGN

SEPTEMBER 15, 1944 - JANUARY 25, 1945

As the title says, the Rhineland Campaign started September 15, 1944 but there were interruptions, mainly the Ardennes Campaign, that took our minds off of the Rhine River.

The Rhine River crossing has apparently taken my own mind off the sequence of events, also because I neglected to relate one incident which took place. It is too late to go back and change all the pages that would necessarily be changed, so I will insert it now hoping not to interrupt the train of thought too much.

While the division was waiting in Corps reserve on the west side of the river, tickets for a concert became available, two tickets per 100-man company.

Krefeld, Germany, is 10 miles west of the Rhine. Andre Kostelanetz, with his orchestra and his wife, Lily Pons, were scheduled to perform for the G.I.s in the area. Lily Pons was a coloratura soprano. The company had two tickets and I was one interested in this kind of music so someone else, I don't remember who, and I, were transported to Krefeld for a wonderful concert. Mr. Kostelanetz came out on the stage wearing G.I. O.Ds. His orchestra was dressed in the same manner but for the life of me, I don't remember what Lily Pons wore. Oh well, c'est l'guerre.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch.....

This was our first experience in operating in enemy territory. Thus far, we had been in friendly countries: France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Holland. Now we were in Germany, itself where the civilian population was a potential enemy.

Realization that we were in enemy territory came when we entered the first town after being taken out of reserve and committed. As we entered the town we saw that the second floor windows of all the houses had white sheets hanging from them indicating surrender. What a sight.

Street fighting in the downtown district of a large city is quite different from that of the countryside. Every window of every store can hold a potential enemy soldier. Shells exploding echo back and forth between the buildings and unless the actual explosion is seen, it is sometimes impossible to determine where it occurred.

The first troops entering a city often find obstacles. Street car wires are hanging from their poles and lying in the center of the street. Electric wires are also down, the power stations long before, put out of commission

Glass from the store windows covers the streets and trees are down, many times across the streets. Tree leaves are everywhere.

In the country shrapnel does not show in the grass, but in the city, both enemy and friendly shrapnel litters the streets.

A sergeant from our 60th Engineer Battalion devised a unique method of sweeping shrapnel from the main thoroughfares used by the convoys. He attached a large piece of steel beneath the front bumper of his 3/4 ton weapons carrier and wired it to a DC generator which he had placed in the back. He then drove slowly down the streets clearing one lane at a time. We could hear the shrapnel jump up from the street and slam against the electro-magnet. He saved many a tire from being punctured by large jagged pieces of steel with his innovative idea. I never did hear that he received any award for his work, but he certainly deserved one.

Many times while in a large city we would be living in buildings to stay out of the weather. We would hear the ack-ack open up in the distance, then more begin firing nearby. Finally a German airplane would fly overhead trailing black smoke, not because it had been hit, but because the pilot was "pouring on the coal" to escape the anti-aircraft shells bursting around him. A lot of my buddies would try to see the event from the safety of the doorway to escape any falling flak but in reality they couldn't see anything from there. I would shove my way through with difficulty, and go out on the street to see the show. The same thing happened when American and German fighters were dog fighting. Everyone wanted to watch but few wanted to go outside because of the danger of being hit. I would work my way out and watch the planes weaving circular contrail patterns in the sky as they chased each other. These instances were one-in-a-lifetime experiences and I didn't intend to miss them! These pilots were engaged in very personal, mortal combat. Occasionally we could hear their machine guns firing at each other so very high above us. Their engines must have been running well above the *Red Line* marked on the RPM indicator as they attempted to either escape the other plane or catch it in their gun sights. It seemed sometimes that their pistons must be ready to fly out of the ends of the cylinders, because the engines were being revved up so dangerously. I never heard engines abused as they were. It was so exciting!

The Ruhr Valley on the east bank of the Rhine was a great industrial district of steel mills everywhere. The Germans knew they had lost the war and we were in the process of reducing the German troop concentration in the *Ruhr Pocket* to nothing.

We were in the great steel producing city of Essen where the steel works had been bombed into oblivion. Hank Lubbers, of the *Battle of the Falaise Gap* fame (see page 60, paragraph 4) was still one of my squad members. He was also one of our company German interpreters, having grown up in a German-speaking family on a Nebraska farm.

Essen had been taken and Hank, Pood Omen and I were walking across a railroad viaduct very similar to the Independence Avenue viaduct on the south side of the Armco Steel Mill in Kansas City. The mill manufactured railroad locomotives before the war but it had been converted to tank production. We looked off the bridge to our right, down into the plant and saw many unfinished tanks.

We were walking briskly along and overtook two German girls who were talking to each other. As we passed them, Hank spoke to them in German and they had very

surprised looks on their faces to have an American G.I. speaking to them in German. When we were past them I asked Hank what he said. He answered that one of the girls was saying, "I was so afraid of the American bomber raids on our city." The other girl responded, "Yes, but I was more afraid when the *Amies* (their word for Americans) captured the city."

Then Hank said to them, "You don't have to be afraid of us," and we continued on our way.

Harry Moran was an old National Guard member who had put in his One Year of Service before Pearl Harbor and discharged. With the attack on Pearl Harbor all the "old" National Guard members were recalled to the service "for the duration plus six months." Harry was a mechanical genius but as was typical with the farm boys from Nebraska, he had little formal education, working instead on the family farm. He told us he had put together a "caterpillar" type tractor and we believed him. And, also like others of the old outfit, and even though he was well in his thirties, he was unmarried.

Harry was well-liked in the company, slow of speech, and with a bashful grin on his face most of the time. He was not easily upset in spite of occasionally becoming more involved in the war than he cared to be.

From the night we entered St. Lo for the first time with the Infantry, Harry, a T/5 ambulance driver, seemed to have the "ability" to be where the action was and to draw fire much as syrup draws flies.

At times when returning from the Battalion Aid Station at the front he would come up to me with his bashful grin and say, "Well, West, I did it again." Then he would tell the story of what had happened to himself and his ambulance.

On one particular occasion he returned after having his 5th ambulance hit by the enemy, however it was not artillery fire this time. He was driving along a street in town and his rear wheel ran over a German Teller mine. These mines are designed to blow the track off a Sherman tank, at the minimum. Harry ran over one. There is no telling how many vehicles had already run over it because sometimes the Germans used a fuse attached to a ratchet. Each vehicle that ran over it moved the ratchet one more notch toward the point of explosion. Harry's ambulance was the unlucky vehicle that ratcheted it the last time and exploded the mine. A Teller mine is about a foot in diameter, five inches thick and packed with TNT. When this one exploded it tore both rear wheels off the ambulance together with the axle and gear box, sending the whole unit over a five story building. It landed in an Infantry mortar crew pit behind the building. By a stroke of good fortune it missed the entire mortar crew.

I went to the crew later to talk to them and they didn't know what had happened at first, then realized they had the rear end of a vehicle in their pit. They were surprised and lucky.

Harry kind of lost his nerve after this fifth time and the Company Commander kindly took him off ambulance duty and gave him the job of driving the 2 1/2 ton kitchen truck which never left the company area, which was usually three or four miles behind the line. Harry was safe at last.

CENTRAL EUROPE

The war in northern Germany had all but ended. As we cleared the Ruhr Pocket of German soldiers it became more and more evident that the war would indeed soon be over. The Wehrmacht was in full retreat, being nothing short of a rout.

They attempted to take their slave laborers with them but the laborers had been starved to such a degree that many were unable to keep up with the Army. When they failed to do so, the Wehrmacht soldiers shot them at the side of the road. We passed literally hundreds of slave laborers laying beside the road in their black and white striped prisoner uniforms. They were all dead.

We passed through the cobblestone streets of Hameln, twenty-five miles south west of Hannover, famous for the story of the *Pied Piper of Hamlin.* (Notice the difference in the American and German spelling of "Hamlin.") Our convoy forded the Weser River just as the Pied Piper supposedly did. I could not prevent my imagination from visualizing the children. Then I imagined seeing the rats following the Pied Piper into the river as we crossed.

As we neared Hannover, "Puttie", our 1st Sergeant, told us he had two tickets to a concert that night to be given by the great violinist, Jasha Heifetz. As our war was about over, for all practical purposes, activities such as this were beginning to happen.

Again, as with the Andre Kostelanetz/Lily Pons concert in Krefeld, there were only two of us who were interested in this type of music. And again, I don't remember who the other man was but we were taken to the Hannover Opera House for the concert. The inside of the House was five tiers high and built in the shape of a giant horseshoe. It was my first (and only) time in an opera house. What a wonderful treat it was to hear Jasha Heifetz in person.

During the winter months we had been watching the 8th Air Force overhead on their way to German cities. The B-17s and B-24s flew fairly low, 10,000 - 15,000 feet, maybe. At any rate they were low enough that we could easily see the separate con trails from each of the four engines, trailing across the sky. When 1000 to 1500 bombers flew overhead it was a **magnificent,** beautiful sight, the sun being literally blocked from view, and the drone of 4000 to 6000 engines must be heard to be appreciated. Above these bombers were P-51 and P-38 fighters weaving their own lacy curves as they wove in and out. The slow speed of the bombers made it necessary for the fighters to fly in this manner, or else the bombers would be left with no escort. And again we could occasionally hear the sounds of American and Germans fighters locked in mortal combat, abusing their engines in an attempt to stay alive. When it came to life or death situations

as those were, the engines were of secondary importance.

We on the ground had it rough, with the possibility of dying usually present. We knew the bomber crews had warm, dry quarters and nightly passes into town when they returned to England after a mission. But when they flew over us toward the heart of Germany my hat went off to them.

As they approached, the German flak would open up and literally black out the sun with the smoke from the shells as they exploded, all at the same altitude. I often thought the crews could almost get out of the planes and walk on the smoke, it was so thick. Those guys were on their bomb runs, the bombardiers were taking their sightings and the planes could not deviate in speed, altitude or direction of flight at all. They **flew directly into the heart of the anti-aircraft fire**. This was where **extreme bravery** was evident----this was not a job for the weak-hearted, but for truly brave men and my heart and admiration went out to them each time they flew over. Probably most of them were in their early twenties. They were just boys in men's clothing.

We took the German city of Bochum, which was about the size of Kansas City. Because of the Allied bombing, it was 83% destroyed. A person could stand on a chair and practically see across a town mainly composed of piles of bricks.

We were approaching the Elbe River and the Germans were surrendering en masse to the Allied forces. In fact we read of some Germans surrendering to an unarmed American Medic, so intense were their desires to become prisoners of Americans rather than surrender to the Russians, of whom they were deathly afraid, and probably with good reason.

While near the Elbe River we again outran our supplies because of the swiftness of the German withdrawal.

A couple of our men took THE company carbine (which was used only at night by the Company guards) into the hills and killed a deer because we had no food. We dug potatoes and some of the company men, the "Nebraska Farmers", butchered the deer on a clothes line pole so all 105 of us had venison, and mashed potatoes and gravy. It was one of the best meals we ever had in Europe.

The Infantry took jeeps with 30 caliber machine guns mounted behind the passenger seat and REALLY hunted deer. We could hear them up in the hills going rat-a-tat with their machine guns. They really 'brought home the bacon."

The war ended for the 35th Division when our Infantry met the Russians on the Elbe River just 55 miles southwest of Berlin. The sad thing about it is that General Eisenhower had agreed to allow the Russians to take Berlin so we just sat in place for a couple of weeks waiting for that to happen. Because the Germans were surrendering to the Americans in preference to the Russians, we all thought the Americans could have walked into Berlin without a fight. As it was, the Russians had to fight for every inch they took. It also permitted the Berlin Wall to be built and caused the necessity of the Berlin Airlift to be established by the Allies. The airlift provided food for the Berliners when the Russians blocked the highways to Allied forces which were trucking in food and fuel supplies.

While near the Elbe River we heard a *Zug* (German for "Steam Locomotive") coming on the railroad tracks near us. We soon saw it with two white flags mounted on the front of the engine denoting surrender. It stopped when our M.P.s flagged it down.

An M.P. told us the train had come through our lines in hopes of getting supplies for a German hospital on the other side of the lines. (Actually, the line was rather tenuous, since there was no longer any fighting.)

While the train crew was taken for consultation, an M.P. standing next to me watching, said he formerly operated a steam engine back home and maybe we should try our luck. He and I hopped on the engine and he grabbed the throttle and released the brakes. I found the long lever that reverses the position of the steam inlet valves to the cylinders which cause the engine to go forward or backward. We started out---I also found the whistle rope. We had gone 1/4 mile or so, back and forth, and back and forth, blowing the *peanut vender whistle* and having lots of fun when the M.P. Company Commander saw who was "engineering" and stopped us.

That M.P. really got a good chewing out. Since we didn't know each other, he couldn't identify me. I didn't mention it to my Captain so he didn't find out even though my buddies knew it.

The train crew was granted permission to take back hospital supplies.

In this a same area of Germany was a village named Gardelegan. It had been the scene of a mass murder of slave laborers and G.I.s who had the opportunity, were visiting it daily. I got a chance to go and took my movie camera with just a very few feet left.

The story of the massacre by German forces is as follows:

The slave laborers were being withdrawn with the German Army but, being starved and weak, they could not keep up with the withdrawal so they were herded into a large stone barn which had been filled with gasoline-saturated hay. When the doors on each end were closed and locked, the hay was set on fire.

There was a shell hole in one end of the barn through which several prisoners attempted to escape but they were shot as they came through. The people of the village less than a quarter of a mile away did nothing to stop the killing. When we, as visitors arrived, there was one dead slave laborer hanging half out of the shell hole where he was shot. By this time, however, the U.S.Army had taken control of the situation and all the men of the village who had previously "heard no screams" as the killings took place, were now actively engaged in burying the dead. An Army tank was standing guard over the workers who were handling the charred corpses with their bare hands and separately wrapping each one in sheets gotten from the homes in the village. Other men were digging separate graves for each of the bodies. I have one short movie scene of the burial party.

All of the civilians of the village were assigned one or more graves to take care of for the rest of their lives.

ARMY OF OCCUPATION
April 27 - July 10, 1945

The war for us was over. Having met the Russians, there was nowhere else to go. We formed a convoy and began our westward trek back through Germany to begin our duties as part of the 15th Army of Occupation. Company A stopped at Springe, a town south of Hannover, where we would spend time from April 27 to May 17. It was here that the war was declared officially over on May 8, 1945.

When we heard the news, I got my movie camera out and some of the fellows evicted Jack Schwab, the "sleeping in" Sergeant of the Guard, from his bed and I took pictures of him in his long johns. As was always the case, Jack was good natured about it.

Of course we were still not allowed to speak to the civilians unless they were very young or very old, so I didn't become acquainted with any. But now, Springe is a major center for our church in Germany, John and Jennifer Stabno, having been stationed there in church work.

Springe is in the heart of deer hunting country. We lived in the last house at the south city limits, just north of the creek. From that point on was open country until reaching the hills where deer lived. During the day we could see the deer feeding in the fields. A half mile or so down that road was a large mansion which had been Herman Goerring's hunting lodge. But at this time it was being used as a recuperating hospital for wounded German Army "soldaten". I have movies of Germans resting in the front yard of the mansion. It seemed strange to see German soldiers without their hands folded behind their heads and not running from us.

We stayed in Springe until our assignment to the Koblenz, Germany area.

Our particular town of Occupation was Kattenes, Germany on the Moselle River a few miles up stream from its junction with the Rhine at Koblenz.

Kattenes was a gorgeous town located on the steep hills where the grapes for the famous Moselle wine were grown.

While the majority of the Company stayed at Kattenes, one Station Section was sent downstream to Koblenz where a Delousing Station was set up to treat civilians. Cleanliness for the civilian population had been a problem ever since the Allied bombers had destroyed the cities. With this destruction also came the destruction of the water supplies. I visited the Delousing Station one time and I was grateful to not now be a member of a Station Section. It was a very disagreeable job.

Kattenes was the first place we stayed after the war where we were allowed to speak to the German civilians. Up to now, *The Hitler Jugend* (Hitler Youth) were considered potentially dangerous, as were all those of combat age. We soon found that the German population treated us better than the French did.

The hotel we were staying in had probably been a tourist hotel, nothing fancy though. It was definitely 1930-ish in decor and the European decor was definitely behind ours in the U.S. Next door to the hotel was a house with a family living in it. On my way down the hill to the Company Orderly Room one day, I stopped to talk to the lady of the house. She asked me, "Wie heissen Sie?" (How are you called?). I told her, "Warren." She asked me to repeat it several times then conversed with other family members. I could tell they were having trouble coming up with my name in German and apparently the closest they could come was "Werner". I was "Werner" to them from then on. They were such friendly people.

One of the girls in the family was about eleven years old with big front teeth and we nick-named her "Bugs Bunny." Of course she had no idea who Bugs Bunny was.

1st Sgt. "Puttie" teased her occasionally by saying to her, "Singen Sie, 'In der Heimat' und Ich singen, 'Cow Cow Boogie'" (You sing "In the Homeland" and I will sing, "Cow Cow Boogie.") She thought that was funny and so did we but she didn't comprehend "Cow Cow Boogie".

Back during the war in the Ruhr Valley Lieutenant Barber found a piano accordion. He couldn't play but knew I could so he "gave" it to me to keep while we were in the area, to entertain the guys. When we were ready to move on he saw that I wasn't going to take it along and asked why. I told him it wasn't mine to take. He said, "If you don't take it, I will and I don't play". I got his message. Since it was going to be with us anyway, it may as well be with one who could play it.

One day in Kattenes I was in my room playing the accordion when a call for me came from the Orderly Room. I went down wondering what was going on and saw a soldier with his back to me, with a carbine over his shoulder. I wondered who he was because our ONE carbine was locked up except for the time our guard had it at night. I approached and he turned around---it was Grant Dobson, our former Second Church Zion's League leader! What a surprise. He was a cook in the 9th Air Force and could hitch a flight anywhere he could catch a plane. We had corresponded during the war and I must have told him my location. Anyway, here he was.

After taking a few pictures with the Moselle River and Burg Thurant in the background, we went to Koblenz to look around.

He and Don Shuler, whom I had found in Maastricht, Holland, were the only people from home that I met in all of my time in the service.

(Burg Thurant was a medieval castle ruin on the top of the tall hill across the Moselle.)

All the bridges across all the rivers were down. Here in Kattenes there never had been a bridge across the Moselle. Instead there was a ferry. This was the ferry which took civilians (and our ambulances) across the Moselle to the main highway leading to Koblenz.

We watched from our quarters 100 yards down stream. The ferryman would take on a load of passengers, then go to the front of the ferry which about ten feet wide and twenty feet long, and turn a crank on the upstream side, and the ferry would slowly move across the river to the other side. He would take on another group, who wanted to return with him, and go to what had been the stern of the ferry, which had now become the bow. He turned the crank in the opposite direction that had taken him across the river, then go to the "new" bow and turn that crank. He would begin his slow trip back across to Kattenes.

We couldn't figure out what he was doing so after watching him make several trips we took a ride with him and discovered his secret. There was an underwater cable from one side of the river to the other. The cranks on either end of the ferry were attached to drums on which the cables wound. They went to a pulley on the end of each cable. The pulleys ran along the submerged cable. To make the ferry cross the river, the ferryman wound the cable up at the bow of the ferry and unwound it at the stern making the ferry at an angle to the river.

The flow of the current pushed past the ferry moving it across the river much the same as the wind turns the vanes of a windmill. We thought how simply ingenious the idea was. But until we were close, it remained a mystery.

The ferryman saw our looks of wonder and pointed to two tall steel towers high on the hills on each side of the river. We then realized that during peace-time, what was now the underwater cable, had been strung between the towers and we could see in an instant what we had been puzzling over for some time.

We didn't pay the gentleman for our two trips, taking advantage of "War Victor versus Conquered". We should have paid but it didn't even dawn on us. Perhaps the military had already worked out a method of payment for the ambulances that crossed on his ferry each day.

I'm sure down deep inside he was laughing at our innocent wonder as we attempted to understand the principal of movement that seemed so mysterious at first. It was nice of him to show us. Maybe he wasn't as much "Conquered" as we thought. He had conquered the water and gotten free transportation in return. Any money he collected was free and clear!

We began our long trip across France in preparation for returning to England. Our first stop was Camp Norfolk, France which was located in a wheat field south of Paris. It was from this camp that I was able to get a pass to Paris and see all the tourist attractions: The Invalides (Napoleon's tomb), The Eiffel Tower, our first experience with a subway train (the Metro), the Champs-Elysees, the Ile de la Cite, upon which stands the Cathedral of Notre Dame, the Louvre, the Place de la Concorde and the Egyptian obelisk, the Place Vendome, built in 1699, Montmartre and the Church of the Sacre Coeur, the Arc de Triomphe, etc.

When we arrived in Paris we were told by G.I.s who were already there that the quickest, most convenient transportation was the Metro. We had never ridden a subway train before but we soon discovered how to read the diagrams in the stations and how to transfer from one train to another. We would get on a train, for instance, while going to see the Eiffel Tower and when we got off, if there were no G.I.s around, go to a French

civilian and attempt to say *Eiffel Tower* or *Notre Dame* so he would understand it. He usually would just point in the direction we should take. We found our way around Paris quite easily that way.

When we went to the Eiffel Tower and were waiting to get on the elevator we watched several large cylinders rising and falling in some mechanism on the ground beside the base of the tower. We were wondering what in the world the mechanism was when a Frenchman, noting our questioning eyes, came up to us and said, "Hydro-leek." At least that is the way it sounded in French. He was telling us we were watching hydraulic cylinders raising and lowering the elevator. How? I don't know.

The Eiffel Tower is 984 feet high. The elevator came to take us to the restaurant at the 430 level. As we stepped on, we saw that the floor was not level. It was at quite an angle and, again, we wondered. The elevator goes one of the legs of the tower, which at the ground, is at quite an angle from the vertical. As we began to climb up the leg and the angle of the leg lessened, the elevator floor became more level. When we got to the restaurant floor, the elevator floor was level! Those shrewd Franchmen.

Our time in Paris was limited so we didn't get up the hill to Montmarte and the Sacred Heart Church but we were able to see the beautiful white walls from the tower.

While we were walking on the street we saw a news boy selling papers. Across the top in black capital letters was the headline: **BOMBE ATOMIQUE** We wondered among ourselves what the words meant and finally decided it could possibly be "Atomic Bomb" although we had never heard of such a thing.

After having our picture taken in front of the Arc de Triomphe, we returned to Camp Norfolk where the next day *The Stars and Stripes* told of the new United States atomic bomb that had been dropped on Japan.

This might be the appropriate juncture to tell another of the exploits of the . All through the war he was back at , usually thirty miles behind the front line. This was much too far to ever hear thee sounds of war, much less be endangered by enemy shells or bullets. During this time he was more than satisfied to remain there, safe from danger with three hot meals a day, bathing privileges, movies each night, a dry bed to sleep in and no foxholes to dig.

As Medics in the Medical Battalion, we were not considered to be "Combat Medics" because we were not assigned to the Infantry Regiment even though we did exactly what they did. As a consequence, we did not qualify for the *Combat Medic Badge*, which matched the *Combat Infantryman's Badge* given to members of the Infantry who experienced combat.

I would have dearly loved to have been able to wear the Combat Medic's Badge and would have been more than honored to wear one.

went into Paris on pass one day and came back to the Company wearing a Combat Medic's Badge that he had purchased at a military store. Here was one who had never heard an enemy shell explode or a rifle fired in his direction but he had the GALL to wear a Combat Medic's Badge in the presence of a company of men

As paraded around with his Combat Medic's Badge, he became friendly with us again, now that everything was completely safe.

At this same time the Division was organizing soft ball teams for competitive play between units. Our Supply Sergeant, Larry Friedlan was quite a good player and joined the Battalion team. He would be gone a lot of the time, leaving the Supply Tent unmanned. I was sent to the Supply Tent to understudy his job because he was one of the "old timers", having been in the National Guard since 1940, and was a high point man. (The high pointers were to be left in Europe and we younger ones were to be transferred to the Pacific Theater as the invasion troops of Japan.)

Being sent to the Supply Tent was a good deal for me because the job rated the stripes of Staff Sergeant. But here came and buddied up to the 1st Sergeant. The first thing I knew, the Captain called me in and said, "West, I'm sending you to Battalion Head-quarters as the new Company Clerk." I asked what was wrong with (his name will go unmentioned) who had been all during the war. "He is being made Supply Sergeant," the Captain answered. I told him, in my surprise, that I didn't type, but he said not to mind, it would be OK. So to Battalion Headquarters I went, which by this time had moved up with the Collecting Companies, and we were a complete Battalion in a single area again.

So while the others were out playing softball, I was slaving over a hot typewriter, keeping the Day Book, changing General Orders in our files as they came down and, worst of all---typing the payroll! Every typo on the payroll had to be initialed by the Battalion Warrant Officer in charge of us guys at Headquarters, and did I keep him busy. I knew the keyboard but, just as now, I had to look at the keys to type.

Mr. Oliverio was very patient, but he had to be. I was no typist and was sent to him in spite of it. I was pretty upset when the Captain told me.

The Division Artillery spotter planes, little Piper Cubs, which we called *Maytag Messerschmidts*, were flying daily right next door to us in the wheat field. The pilots were keeping their flying hours up to get flight pay and were taking men up, making a circle of the area, then landing and doing it again with another G.I I looked beneath the edge of the pyramidal tent which served as Company Clerk Headquarters and wished I could play ball or more importantly, take a ride in the spotter. One morning I decided to let my work go for a while and try for a ride. I asked Mr. Oliverio if it was OK and he said yes. As soon as chow was over I went to the airplane and leaned on the wing strut, establishing my position of being first in the waiting line. Soon the Lieutenant came over. He asked me if I would like to take a ride and I said, "SURE." We got in and took off. I expected to make a large circle to the left, then land as the practice had been. But we kept heading on away from the area. He turned around and yelled that he had to fly to a 3rd Army airstrip to refuel. "GREAT!", I thought.

After refueling we took off again and hedge-hopped just above the heads of the wheat that was in full harvest. The harvesting was being done by hand with scythes with cradles attached. The cut wheat was then thrown up on top of an animal-drawn wagon until it was quite high. The pilot banked to one side and I was afraid he was going to

catch his wing tip on the wheat but he knew what he was doing. After all, the Liaison pilots had taken off and landed between the rows of apple trees in the Normandy orchards. This was a snap.

We flew down the road toward a group of farmers (and farmerettes), the pilot chasing them from the road into the field because he was so low. They scattered in a hurry.

As our turn to recross the English Channel approached we left the Camp Norfolk redeployment camp and went on toward Le Havre and reached the second camp. All of the second camps were named after cigarette brands and we went to Camp Lucky Strike.

We were still in wheat country and with the wheat already harvested or trampled down by the thousands of G.I.s, after a rain, parts of it were mud holes. At those times the only dry spots were the floors of our pyramidal tents.

Across the field 1/4 or 1/2 mile away was "Duffey's Tavern", a favorite night spot for some of the men.

One night after a rain Jack Schwab and Joe "Geezil" Lvoncek came back through the mud from Duffey's Tavern and both were feeling "pretty good". They were walking, or rather stumbling, with their arms around each other's shoulders for the sake of mutual stability when Geezil fell into the mud. He rolled over on his back chuckling and chuckling. His round stomach making him resemble a submarine. Jack said, "Geezil, get up out of that dust." They awkwardly raised Geezil from the "dust" and went to his tent. Jack and I shared the same tent with five or six others and the rest of us had sabotaged Jack's cot. We replaced his with one that had been ripped from head to foot, then remade his bed. Jack came in, clothes and all, and lay down, passing completely through the cot and down to the ground. There he was with his head and body on the ground and both feet sticking out over the foot of the cot. Jack was always very good-natured and being a little drunk didn't diminish his appreciation of life. He laughed and laughed and laughed.

The next morning at reveille Geezil couldn't even find a complete uniform because his fatigues, although somewhat dried, were still very muddy. The Captain looked at the mud-coated clothes, smiled, and just shook his head. We had been together through ten months of the eleven-month war in Europe, and it wouldn't have done any good to chew on Geezil now.

When our "high point men" transferred, our Battalion Commander, Colonel Hall, left too. Even though I was working in the Battalion Headquarters tent, and Col. Hall was usually there, he remained quite aloof and said little to any of us. That was OK because a person like that is difficult to talk to anyway. He was the Battalion C.O. when I joined but when he left, there was no "Good Bye Party" that I know of. When he transferred, his replacement was a completely different sort.

It's too bad that I don't remember the new Colonel's name because he was very nice to be around and rank meant nothing to him. He spoke to us daily and even joined in our conversations at times, of which I will mention one occasion:

Earl Howe attended Second Church in Independence. He was in his thirties, was married with two children.

The United States Army was suffering serious casualties and more combat troops were needed Earl was sent to Camp Atterbury, Indiana. home of the newly-organized 106th Infantry Division, the last division formed in WW 2. The division was sent to Belgium where it was assigned to a "quiet sector" so the men could become familiar to the sounds of war before being subjected to the "real thing."

It so happened that this sector was the location chosen by Field Marshall Von Runstedt to attack the Allies in what became known as *The Battle of the Bulge*. The Germans went through the 106th as though they were not even there.

Earl was taken prisoner of war and spent the rest of the war in a German Prisoner of War camp awaiting liberation by the Allies, his only combat resulted in his own capture because of the inexperience of the Division officers.

Our new Colonel told me that the day Rundstedt hit the division, the division's anti-tank guns had been disassembled for inspection! That was the 106th's mistake.

Our return to England took us to the French port of Le Havre on the English Channel. We caught a "garbage scow", as I called it, in Le Havre and sailed back across the Channel, bound for Southampton.

During all my time on board ship, even during the storms of the North Atlantic, I never suffered from seasickness. But the ground swell we experienced as we left the Continent was "something else." We had gone below for our first meal and I was standing in the long, long, slow-moving mess kit washing line, smelling the hot greasy water when the first ground swell became noticeable. The ship was rolling and pitching like a roller coaster in slow motion. Each time we arrived at the bottom of a wave in the ocean and the ship started back up, my stomach felt as though it were refusing to comply, hanging, drooping heavily, full of food and not wanting to rise with the ship. By the time it DID decide to obey, the ship was already going over the top of the wave and slowly, oh **so slowly**, descending heavily into the next trough. This left my stomach hanging "way up there" with no place to go. I was really beginning to feel uncomfortable. The mess kit line was soooo long that I didn't want to lose my place and go up on top for some fresh air, then come back down and do it all over again. So I just gritted my teeth and tried to hold my tummy under control, hoping I would last long enough to get my mess kit washed, then run up for some fresh air.

I stuck it out and didn't vomit (as others had already done) and made it up to the open deck before anything embarrassing happened.

RETURNING HOME

We waited for the "Banana Boat" at an English Army camp, Tidworth Barracks, somewhere between London and Southampton. It was there that we became acquainted with the strange English expressions of speech. For instance: when going into a rest room door, we would expect to see a sign saying, "Latrine". The English camps had marked their doors, "Ablutions."

Our barracks was named "Jelalabad", reminiscent of the English colonial days in India. The barracks next door was called "Aliwal."

While in the Tidworth Staging Area I heard a loud noise and ran outside to see what it was. It was the British *Gloster Meteor*. I had just seen my very first jet plane. I wrote home saying that it sounded just like a giant blow torch. The folks at home hadn't yet seen a jet.

There were seventeen U.S. Army divisions scheduled to go to the Pacific Theater of Operations to take part in the invasion of Japan. The 35th Division was the sixteenth.

The division high point men were transferred to other outfits while we were still in Europe and we took on other low point men as replacements plus two *Provisional Battalions* which were attached to us for our return to the U.S. We were being sent back home for 30 day furloughs and on to the Orient and speed was of the utmost importance. Even though, by this time, Japan had surrendered it was unknown how many divisions it would take to occupy Japan. It takes quite a long time to organize seventeen divisions for a move half way around the world so plans for us just did not change overnight and we continued our movement.

We convoyed to Southampton and caught our first glimpse of *The Queen Mary*, formerly the luxury liner of the *Cunard White Star Line*, which was to be our transportation back across the Atlantic.

There were 14,892 troops on board. The voyage, in comparison to the 12 1/2 days it took going over in convoy in May 1944, only took 4 1/2 days this time because of the speed of the Queen Mary. During the war she never did have an escort while in troop transport duty, being too fast for the World War 2 submarines. She could outrun them all.

When we went on board our Battalion was assigned an area on the open deck. I found a cozy spot on the main deck with a small roof over that portion and so it wasn't too bad, even though it was September and in the North Atlantic. The next night an Air Force Battalion came up on deck and took our places while we went down below and slept in their bunks. We were assigned to what had been a stateroom in the days of luxurious steam ship travel. However there were no beds for two. There were bunks, five-high, cramming the room. We didn't spend much time down there.

All were given a colored pin which we had to pin on our life jackets beside the red emergency light. Mine was a *Blue "B" for Baker* button. This button served several purposes. First, it kept us in just one location on the ship and, secondly, and more importantly, it enabled us to eat at the correct time. At breakfast and supper we heard the

British officer announcing the eating schedules over the P.A.system. For our time it might say, Blue *"B for Baker" buttons* will eat at the second sitting." On the bulletin board we would find, posted, the times of each sitting. We only had to wait for the approximate time, then go down below to the swimming pool which had been floored over and converted into a mess hall. Because of there being 14, 892 troops on board, there were 29,784 meals served daily, excluding the ship's crew, so it is understandable that we only ate two meals per day.

There was lots of time for rambling and ship-exploring each day. I would turn my *Blue B for Baker button* inside a fold of my life preserver or put it under the red light and go all over the ship. I even went into the officer's quarters to see how "the other half" lived. They had a corridor, or companion way, that seemed to extend several hundred feet and it followed the upward curve of the ships' deck.

The Queen Mary was 1002 feet long with a beam (width) of 115 feet. We had a storm going back to he United States and the ship only slightly rolled. None of the bow-burying plunges that the Edmund B. Alexander took.

On our convoy going over, a Liberty ship carrying the 320th Infantry Regiment was so unstable that the keel was visible as it broke the crest of the wave in our storm mentioned on page 26.

We had sailed from Southampton, England on September 5, 1945 and landed in New York on September 10, just 4 1/2 days later.

All during the war, not being allowed to carry a gun, I had carried a trench knife for protection, should worse come to worse. I carefully packed it away in my Company Clerk's field desk in order to get it back into the country. When we arrived at our new post I was going to have a nice souvenir. While we were all at home on furlough, the points needed for discharge were reduced to 70 so I didn't even go to the new camp, and lost my knife. Oh well.

We were all assigned to trains to take us home for our 30 day furloughs. My train went up through the Catskill Mountains but the steam heat to the railroad cars had not been connected so we got pretty chilly that night as we tried to sleep. We arrived in St. Louis a day or two later where I changed trains to the *Missouri Pacific Eagle*, the streamliner that ran between St. Louis and Kansas City. There were many returning servicemen on board, so many that the seats were taken long before I got on. We all stored our Duffel Bags on the floor at the front end of the car and sat on them all the way to Kansas City, a five hour ride.

We got to Independence around 9:00 p.m. and when the train stopped, my car was a long way east of the station, on the cinder road bed. I got off and could hear foot steps running along in the cinders. It was Alice! We hadn't seen each other since January 1944 twenty months before. Only our letters kept us in contact for that terribly long interval.

We walked back west toward the station and met the rest of my family. Uncle Kenny (Mom's brother) being the joker he was, said Alice had actually seen a black soldier and was running to him instead of me. He always liked to tease Alice.

As I said four paragraphs previous to this, while I was home, the number of points needed for discharge was reduced and I was directed to go to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri in St. Louis at the conclusion of the furlough for DISCHARGE!

My departure this time was not a sad one because we all knew that I would be home for good in just a few days, *at the convenience of the government*.

After a few days of physicals, getting papers in order, getting the correct issue of G.I. clothing, and receiving our *Ruptured Ducks* (Discharge lapel pins) we were ready to go. The Corporal at the end of the discharge line asked me if I would like to sign up in the Army Reserves. I didn't even answer, I just kept walking and I didn't stop.

Later that day I arrived back in Independence to be with Alice. Without her letters to carry me through during the dark days of the war, I don't know what I would have done.

In being drafted at age 18 I thought I was loosing the best years of my life, and maybe it was so. But being discharged from the army at age 21 still gave Alice and me the rest of our lives together

So, after being together for only three weeks since our meeting two years previously in October 1943, Alice and I began the rest of our lives in earnest.

THE END

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