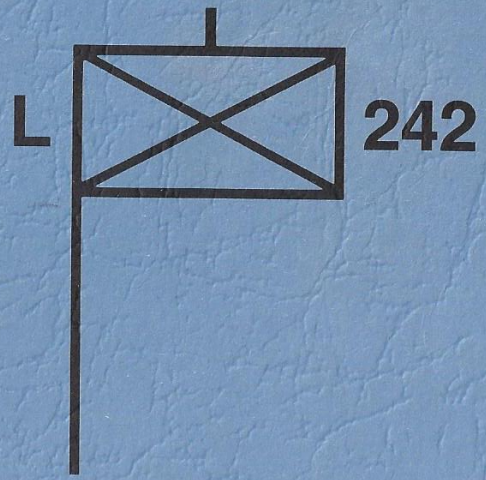
men of love company

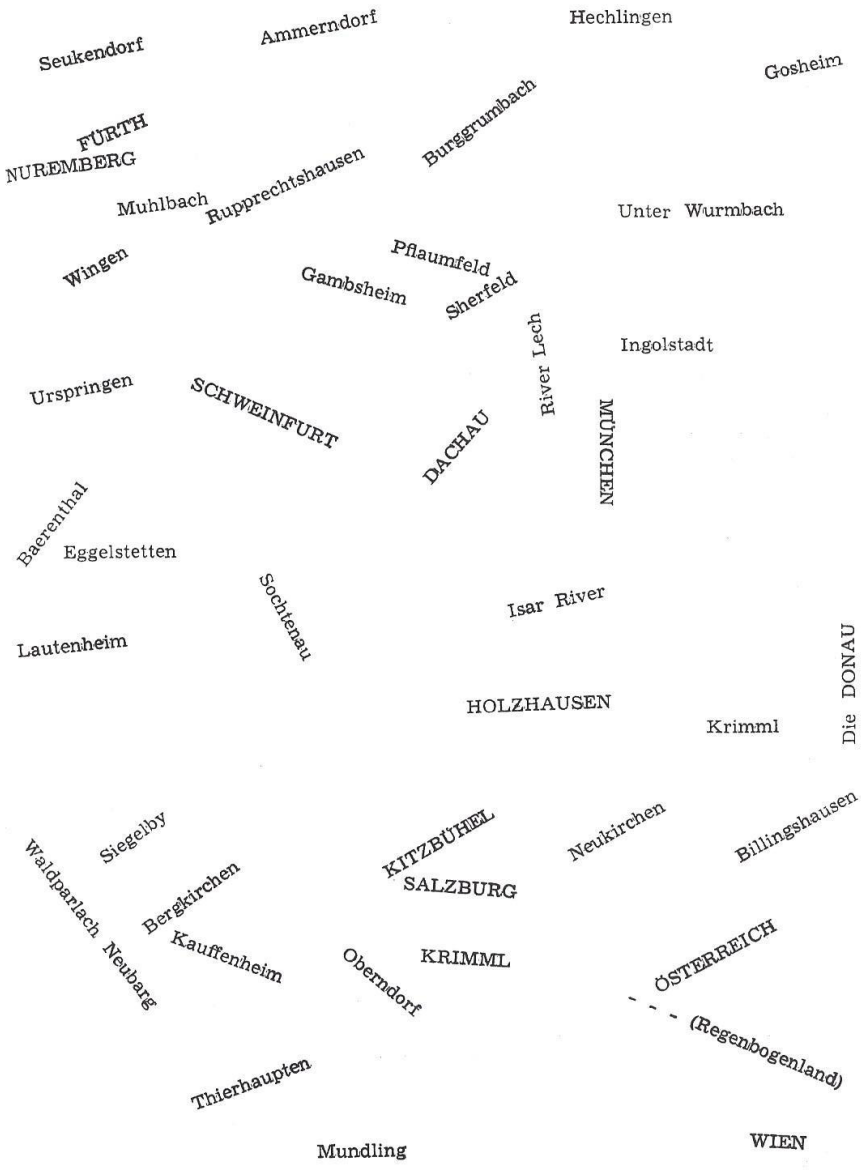


Soldiers & Fräuleins

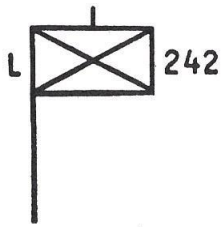
Special Foreword
to
Men of Love Company
and
Soldiers and Frauleins

This new printing of Men of Love Company and the first printing of Soldiers and Frauleins are done for the World War II Veterns of the 242nd Regiment, 42nd Infantry Division. Proceeds from whatever sales they make are all for their use. The author alone is responsible for the writing.

S.H.R.



men of *love* company



by

MR. SHERMAN H. RUESCH

221 FOURTH ST. IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO

This volume is dedicated to the enlisted men and officers who came overseas together as Company "L" 242d Infantry, and to the replacements who joined them as that original number decreased;

But more especially, it is dedicated to the memory of those eighteen men who lie in the white stone fields of France and Germany.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Garrison to P O E	1
2	Atlantic Crossing	13
3	Marseilles and "C P-2"	23
4	40 Hommes — 8 Cheveaux	33
5	Filthy Vergaville	39
6	On Line at Strasbourg	47
7	Pillar to Post	57
8	Königsbruck	65
9	Haguenau Forest	75
10	The Moder River Line	87
11	Defense of Haguenau	104
12	In Rest at Lagarde	123
13	Wimmenau	136
14	The Jump-Off	154
15	Slugging Through the Hardt Mountains	170
16	Dimbach	181
17	Wurzburg	189
18	The Battle for Schweinfurt	198
19	East to Nuremburg	208
20	Fürth	213
21	On to Munich	223
22	Fertig	231
	Appendix — Roster	235

FOREWORD

A brief foreword seems necessary to explain a few things about this book, — why it was written, what it purposes to be, how it was published, and how it will be distributed.

The book is for the men about whom it is written, for their wives and mothers, for their fathers and brothers, for their sweethearts and friends, and for anyone else who may care to read it.

As we draw away from the war years, our memories fail us and imagination plays tricks with us. It's hoped that this account will serve as a basis of truth for some of the stories we'll be telling in the years to come so that we can convince our skeptical friends that we were in the war at least a little bit, though we can't lay claim to have won it by ourselves. The story should also limit us as to the places we can claim to have been and the fighting we can claim to have done. Any one man, however, can us this as a basis and can build onto it all the personal exploits he wishes, true or otherwise. The writer couldn't possibly have seen or heard all that took place within the company.

So, you readers, if brother Joe or husband Pete or son Charlie or friend Dick has told you that at Schweinfurt he went out with a tommy gun and took, single handed, a machine gun position or a pillbox; if he says that his WP grenades blasted out an emplacement that had prevented the breaching of a strong point in the Maginot line or the Westwall; if he says that he picked up his P-38 only after shooting the oberfeldwebel who carried it; if he claims to have brought in 20 fully armed wehrmacht soldiers at Nuremburg or that he helped round up some of the SS guards at Dachau — — just don't doubt him too readily. He wasn't just a Paris commando. He was at those places and he dodged lead.

We men of Love Company did our share of fighting, and only a part of that fighting is recorded here. If the GI from this outfit isn't quite covered with decorations, don't think that means he wasn't in some action or that he failed to comport himself with honor and distinction. In some outfits awards were handed out like good conduct medals, and clerical sections were set up to pound out recommendations on a production basis. In a division that wasn't too free with decorations, the 242d Infantry handed out the least of all the units. Within the 242d, the Third Battalion was the lowest in awards, and Love Company was at the bottom of the five companies in the battalion. That didn't mean that we did the least fighting or had the fewest brave men. It meant that our skipper believed an award was supposed to be for something particularly outstanding. You had to get wounded in action or really stick your neck out in performing hazardous duty to be cited for a decoration. The skipper was right, but it's a rather anomalous situation when only a dozen or so out of 193 men in a rifle company get awards and the regimental headquarters and service companies safely to the rear of it get awards by the bucket full. No wonder many combat men consider a bronze star as a cluster to a good conduct medal!

The writing of this account was spread over a year's time. Part of it was done while we were actually in combat zones, part in a hospital at Nancy, part of it in Austria (from Pertisau am Achensee in the Tyrol to Vienna), and this note was scribbled on a Swiss furlough train. When enough was done so that the end was in sight, the manuscript was taken to the printing plaint of the Salzburger Nachrichten Zeitung where the writer dealt directly with the workmen. He could speak little German and they could speak only a few words of English.

Printing of the book went along slowly. The composing

room was overworked and understaffed. And it was a long trip for the writer from the upper part of the Salzach valley, and later from Vienna, to Salzburg. Paper and ink were scarce. Cloth binding was unobtainable since Austria has always imported her entire supply.

When the proof copy was about finished, the writer was due to be redeployed, and there wasn't time to go over it carefully. Some of the proof errors were left unchanged because it was felt that they added somewhat of a flawor to the book that could only have come from having German speaking workmen set up a book in English.

At this writing, the manner of distribution is uncertain. The writer is on orders transferring him out of the regiment on the first leg of the long trip back to the States, and the book is at least a month from completion. He had planned on mailing out individual copies from Salzburg to the home addresses of all concerned. Now that may not be possible. Instead, the 400 copies ordered will be sent to him in the States and will have to be remailed individually from there.

The writer makes no apology for the fact that this is not a professional job. The amateurishness of the writing speaks eloquently enough to make that unnecessary.

If the book helps those of us who were there to remember with pleasure the close comradeships that arose out of our months together in Europe and helps us a little in keeping in contact in the years to come, it will have accomplished the writer's main purpose. If it makes possible an understanding by the folks at home as to why we may have changed a little and gives them an appreciation of why we will want to get together in a closed fraternity for a bull session and a little binge now and again, — that will be even a little more than hoped for.

I

GARRISON TO POE

We were 187 men and six officers formed together into an infantry rifle company at T/O strength — Company "L" ("Love" Company) of the 242d Infantry, 42d (Rainbow) Infantry Division. A bunch of men tied together by army organization into the form of a company with squads and platoons and headquarters section, with lines of authority and command and with a definite job for each man, but, withal, still just a loosely tied bunch of men.

Each of us had his own interests and his own gripes and "bitches." Each now had his own long thoughts of home or of the people in the state we were about to leave. The thoughts of many of us might have been similar, but that was the result more of coincidence and of present circumstances than of anything else, for we were not yet a real team — not yet the fighting unit such a company is meant to be.

We had been gathered together not only from every part of the country but from every branch and service of the army. Some of us had come into the Infantry at the time of enlistment or induction and had spent all our service in the Ground Forces. A few had volunteered to transfer there from the Service Forces. But there were former Medics and MP's and ASTP and Air Corps men and others who were shanghaied into the Infantry and into the Rainbow Division. Some of these were AA boys taken into the outfit on transfer back to the States from the Canal Zone. Three or four had been in Alaska and the Aleutians and at least two had come back from the South Pacific. The youngest in service were 20 or 30

brought in immediately after completing basic at IRTC camps to fill up the company before shipment.

Few were very happy in the Infantry. Garrison life had been pretty rough toward the last of our time at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, with tactical problems and speed marches and the rush to complete the many odds and ends of pre-shipment training. Camp rules were strict on passes and Rainbow SOP weren't anything for us to write home about. The salute, the dress, curfews, military courtesy and discipline generally, the farcial application of the "buddy" system, the frequent issuance and countermanding of orders, last minute changes to previous last minute changes in the training schedules, the endless streams of "poop" coming down through channels, the usual army "hurry up and wait" — these were not things likely to tie us together into a unit with common interests.

"Bitch sessions" — informal ones — were the order of the day and of every night's get-togethers in latrine and barracks and day room, to say nothing of the company orderly room and even the office of the C. O. The privates in the platoons, the NCO's, even the officers, made no bones about lack of pride in company, regiment and division. Most everyone was out for himself — bucking for a rating, a discharge, or a transfer. Esprit de corps was something that had nothing to do with us except to the extent that we lacked it.

It wasn't really quite that had. There were close buddies among us and small groups of guys who took passes together. There were squads that worked well as units. Much of the "bitching" was the same sort of thing you'd find in any army camp throughout the country. There was just more of it and it was more pointed and bitter than usual.

Most of us didn't think much of the training we had had at Camp Gruber. Some of it was outdated and some was

just not applicable to the work of combat teams. Privates didn't think much of the non-coms and officers, and the latter weren't overly confident in their men. Besides, many of us didn't know each other well. Some had been in the company only a few days or weeks, and not more than a score had been part of it for more than a few months.

This, briefly, was the picture on that November morning when the company moved down "C" Street to the loading depot and boarded Train Number Seven "by the numbers." What happened from that day until the organization's deactivation after the war, both from an official, "record of events" point of view and from a personal, man for man view, is what this narrative hopefully starts out to relate. How well it does the job army records and the verdict of the men and officers who survived will tell.

* * * *

First call on that 16th day of November 1944 was at 0430, and everyone got up with much grumbling and moaning. We'd slept little with nothing but a blanket between us and the cold barracks floor, for our bunks had been taken out the day before. We moved about getting washed and dressed and carrying our packs outside. Then there was a final GI scrub party, and everything was set for the last inspection and for turning the buildings and station equipment back to camp autohirities. Then breakfast out of doors.

Everyone was set and ready to go even before 0600, and then began the old army deal of waiting and making false starts and waiting again. The barracks were closed, and we were ordered to wait outside in the cold. We hunched along the sides of the buildings and on the front steps trying to keep warm. A few hardy ones curled up and slept in spite of the shivvering cold. Last minute dashes were made here and there to retrieve lost and

forgotten items. Someone wanted to know who the Hell took his canteen cup. Company and battalion runners dashed about with seeming aimlessness. Here and there guys brought out fruit and candy to eat even though breakfast wasn't much more than an hour behind us. The Old Man had the Top tearing his hair over forgotten details. The last man sneaked back quietly from Guest House No. 2 where he'd bid his wife a final, hurried good-bye. Junior officers bustled around on minor errands trying to look dignified and important. The cooks pulled out with the kitchen truck to get mess equipment loaded onto the train. One G I who'd been dropped from the records as AWOL came in, escorted by MP's, just barely in time to make the last roll call.

Hurry up and wait! Hurry up and wait! Finally, at 0830 the company was formed on one side of the battalion quadrangle, but then the officer who ordered the formation left, and we fell out in twos and threes until there was no formation at all. We sat and lounged around the area "bitching" and griping and moaning for another hour. At last the formation was called together again by another officer, and we marched out of the area to the motor pool and loaded onto trucks.

By 0945 the hubbub was transferred from the battalion quads to the loading depot. We left the trucks and formed facing the train. A bugle signal was given, but we were confused because the "poop" on what it would be for each movement had been changed three or four times. Some of us turned right at the single blast, while others turned left, and still others broke for the entrances to the cars. Everything was held up while we reformed facing the train.

Now the junior officers really strutted their stuff, showing off before the massed troops. One "shavetail" came importantly down the way trying to handle a swagger

stick as if he'd been in General MacArthur's boots for years. He's excited with the importance of the figure he cuts. He's hurrying down, to tell a Pfc driver that First Lieutenant Jones wants his jeep brought 200 yards up the track, and he's trying to look as purposeful as Rowan carrying the message to Garcia. He's all spit and polish. GI's snigger under their breaths and make ridiculing gestures as the overly straight back goes by.

The bugle signal finally worked right, and the formation broke into groups entraining car by car. Two regiments had pulled out earlier in the week. This train carried the last battalion of the last regiment to leave.

At 1110 Hollywood Harry zipped by in his jeep. At 1115 the old Katy engine bucked into a start like a car with a woman driver. The division band struck up with "The Rainbow Song". Love Company was on it's way.

* * * *

We settled down on the train. The right packs and packages got quickly to their owners, and there were the right number of men to each compartment, section, drawing room and car. Most of us were travelwise, though a few were having the first trip on a Pullman or troup sleeper and needed help finding the water and the wash rooms and had trouble getting undressed and dressed in berths. There was the expected amount of "bitching". The platoons that drew troop sleepers envied those who got regular Pullman cars, and the whole company griped because headquarters — the bunch that always rode the gravy train — got what they were sure was by far the best car on Train Seven, barring not even the officers.

Soon there was comparative quiet. Some of the boys watched the landscape and chatted desultorily about it. A few read or wrote letters. The chow hounds got out their candy and fruit and sandwiches. Some sat alone with nostalgic thoughts, while more callous ones got out

new decks of cards and chips and were on the way, soon, to transferring their available funds into ever fewer and fewer hands.

Three or four "V D" cases were brought into the headquarters car under guard. Everyone else was curious, and the VD's were painfully aware of their conspicuousness.

Love Company was assigned one of the two kitchen cars on the train and had to feed another company along with our own personnel. The first three meals were watched with considerable interest and curiosity by reason of a protracted argument between the Top and the Exec at that time, Lieutenant Casazza. "Casaz" had been a mess officer at Ft. Dix, and he let it be known that he intended to have the men from the two cars at one end file through to pick up paper plates and untensils, then "about face" and go back through to pick up food and return to the seats to eat. The troops in the cars on the other side of the kitchen would then file through to the cars where the first group was already eating and return to pick up their food. First Sergeant Primiano heard the plan and blew his top. Who in Christ had ever heard of feeding that way on a train? Why, it'd take all day to get out one meal, and the men would fall all over themselves and spill food from one end of the train to the other. Ridiculous! Casaz said that was the way the "book" prescribed and he'd been feeding men for years and he'd always done it that way, and how the Hell else would it be done, anyway? So Primy said the cooks should take the food through the cars to us. That way only half a dozen poople would walk through the cars and not the whole goddammed trainload of men. Mess Sergeant Johnson stood to one side during the argument looking more pop-eyed than usual and wondering which side he'd better throw his support to. It ended with the agreement that they'd try it Primy's way first and then the other.

The first meal, the cooks came through with the plates and then brought the food. They'd thrown in with Casaz seeing an easier deal in doling the chow out to the usual line coming through the kitchen, and they did a good job of puffing and groaning and wiping off perspiration as they came along. Casaz followed behind them, shaking his head and muttering about "When I was at Ft. Dix" and something about the cooks deserving a break once in a while. Primy sat in his seat and purred when the food reached him and said what was the goddammed sense in everyone chasing through the mess car when the food could be brought to us like that. "Am I right, Johnson? Am I right? And, say, Johnnie, how about some extra oranges next time you come this way?" Both sides had exponents, some for the fun of the argument, some to butter the Top, and some to "brown-nose" the Exec.

When supper was served, Casaz did the purring from one side of the kitchen car and asked us as we filed by if we didn't think this was the only way to feed. Primy, on the other hand, was letting himself be heard through at least two full cars and was running back and forth adding to confusion in the crowded lines. The cooks dished it out fast and snappy.

Casaz won, maybe partly with his silver bar, but that didn't and the argument. Primy continued to "piss" and moan and to tear eloquently at his hair, and they'd lock horns over the subject every time they met throughout the trip. "Now, listen, Primy", the lieutenant would say, "you gotta admit that these cooks do a pretty good job and you want to give them a break once in a while to keep them happy. Smart money always figures it that way." And Primy would retort: "Smart money! Jesus Christ, Lieutenant! Who ever got more passes then the cooks? You mean they work hard? . . . I give up. I think I missed the boat. I should have been a cook. Why, Jesus Christ . . ."

And he'd go on for five minutes without a pause. Casaz had his way, but Primy usually got in the last word by reason of stronger lungs and a quicker tongue.

Altogether the trip was uneventful. The train stopped once each day while we got off for a few minutes' calisthenics. There was one brief and abortive attempt to carry on training, and then the schedules were thrown away. The scenery was dull and listless as is always the case on a long trip in the winter. The big towns were all passed during the night when no one was up, and there was no chance, anyway, for us to get oen and into the stations.

Now and again there'd be a shout from some guy and an excited speech from him while the train passed through his home town. Unless it was an uncommunicative guy like "Little Dod" Bowman. He didn't let out a peep coming into St. Louis and wouldn't have if someone hadn't thought and kidded him about having his growth stunted from living in that smokey hole. There was more talk of native states on the way across Pennsylvania than any other state. The big "Quaker" delegation in the company whooped it up for long enough to draw derisive remarks from a few of the others.

For a while there had been speculation as to our destination, but long before arrival everyone knew that supposed military secret. There was scarcely a murmur of satisfied curiosity as the train pulled up, at 2003 hours on 18 November, alongside a railroad shack labeled "Camp Kilmer, New Jersey."

* * * *

The huge camp spread out over the flat hills of the New Jersey coastal plain. Barracks, row upon row, stretched as far as the eye could see through the morning mist. PX's and mess halls and recreation buildings stood out

at intervals from among the barracks. By all appearances the place was large enough to house and process 100,000 troops at a time.

All the buildings were camouflaged, and that was a new sight for most of us. We had seen nothing but the trim, white, temporary and permanent buildings in camps throughout the states, and the unkempt, run-down-at-the-seams appearance given by the splotched designs of the camouflage seemed to bring us just a bit nearer to the realization of war. Other things served the same purpose. The offers of a last chance to change allotments and to take out insurance and sign up for war bonds were accompanied by warnings that such things were inconvenient to arrange where we were going. The issuance of the new light-weight service gas mask and training in the care, use and wearing of it; the final check of weapons by ordnance teams; shakedown inspections of clothing and equipment; restriction of troops to the camp area; the beginning of censorship of mail; prohibition against visits to the camp by friends and relatives — these and other things brought to us a knowledge that the soft days of garrison life and the days of playing at war were about at an end.

The consolidated mess was a new experience for most of us. At Camp Gruber and at replacement training centers there had been company messes where no more than 200 men were fed at a single meal. Marching to the mess hall in company formation and seeing a full company being just a small part of the men fed gave us the feeling that this was a huge camp and that we were just a drop in the flow of fighting men passing through to embarkation ports and heading overseas. The food was generally of a superior quality, proof that food cooked in large quantities can be cooked well and served appetizingly.

The most amazing thing about the camp was the speed

with which processing was accomplished. Clothing was issued to company supply sergeants so soon after submission of requisitions that they were at first caught flat-footed. The lineup for shots (tetanus, typhoid and others) went so fast that the Top was hard put to it to read the names fast enough to keep up with the four men using the needle. Most of us were in and out of the dispensary before we had time to wonder how much the needle would hurt. The same was true of the "short-arms" (of which there were three or four) and the so-called physical checks. By the time a man had said "ah-h-h" and taken a deep breath he'd been checked for body lice, had a short-arm inspection and had his feet examined. It took no more than ten minutes for a company of 187 men to be run through the whole process.

It was a hustle-bubble camp. What would have taken weeks to do at Gruber was finished in less than four days, and "finished" meant that every man in each company had been completely processed. None were missed.

When the processing was done, restrictions were lifted permitting us to go out on 12-hour passes. The 222d and the 232d had reached the camp days ahead of the 242d, and the men of those regiments got two or three passes. The 242d arrived late enough so that half the men were lucky to get a single pass before restrictions were again clamped down and all three regiments alerted for shipment. To some of us the pass meant a first chance to see the bright lights of New York City or Philadelphia. To others it was a last chance to go home. No one turned down a pass. Even the usual stay-at-homes were out with the rest of us. It was tough on the boys who came from the vicinity of the camp, so near home and yet so irrevocably separated from parents, wives, families and friends. Twelve hours were all they had to make the round trip, to make their greetings and have their last farewells.

All of us knew that some would not be returning. That last time home was deeply important.

Some made it as far as Baltimore and Boston and points half way upstate in New York. All the Jersey boys got home and back again on time. A few went too far to make it, and some stayed overtime because they felt it would be the last time and they were willing to take the consequences, however rough. No one could blame them much, though all recognized that they would be called on the carpet and given the works. The officers realized that, too, even while they were doling out the punishments.

After the passes were over and we settled down to waiting for the shipment order, there wasn't much to do but stay indoors and keep warm. Then the poker and crap games flourished. Primy got "hot" one night and just about cleaned out one barracks. The streak didn't last, though, and someone else cleaned him out in turn. When that session was ended, Primy came out as flushed and weary as if he had just finished a five-mile speed march with full field pack.

* * * *

The entire regiment marched to the loading depots and boarded old coaches of the Central Railroad of New Jersey on the afternoon of 24 November. In the coaches seat space for one man contained the man himself, his loaded duffel bag, his full field pack, his weapon, his overcoat, T A T equipment he was designated to carry, and any extra stuff he'd picked up at the last moment. It was impossible for us to move from our seats during the two-hour ride.

The train chugged along through the industrial area of northern New Jersey, past the refineries and storage tanks of Rahway, through Elizabeth and Jersey City and into the ferry terminal at Hoboken. There the railroad transferred us to its ferries for the trip up the Hudson and

across to the pier at West 59th Street. We pulled up to the pier and poured out of the ferries to march onto the street and then down one level to a platform for loading onto a transport. The companies formed there to await loading orders. Then the Red Cross moved in on us with coffee, doughnuts and chocolate bars. A W A C band materialized from nowhere. The order came to board ship, and the W A C's gave out with "Swinging on a Star." We trudged up the gangplank, marched along the main deck of the troopship, and down the ladder into the troop compartments below decks. The time was 2000 hours, 24 November 1944.

II

ATLANTIC CROSSING

Next morning everyone came up on deck as soon after breakfast as troops were permitted topside. It was a brisk day and there was a cold, sharp wind coming down the Hudson, but it would have taken a nor'easter to drive us below decks just then. Those who knew the city wanted to gaze lovingly and long at the familiar skyline and the river and the Jersey shore, realizing that a long stretch lay between this look and the next one on the way home. Those who didn't know it wanted a first sight of the big city and the harbor and the ships at the piers and the tugs and ferry boats. Every pair of binoculars on the ship was brought out and waiting lines trailed off behind each man holding one. After a while there were men on the rails, on the lifeboats and rafts, standing everywhere in the rigging, crowding up onto the gun and quarterdecks — wherever there was room to stand or to get hand and footholds. The Coast Guarders couldn't get to a hawser or guyrope without half a dozen of them to run interference. It was like the deck of an excursion cruiser on the 4th of July.

At 1145 two tugboats pulled alongside our transport, the U S S General William M. Black, and hawsers were thrown out to them. They huffed and grunted at their task until the Black pulled slowly from the pier and out into the current. A ferry passed on its way in from Hoboken. A tugboat chugged upstream with a long train of barges in tow. Another troop ship pulled out of an adjacent pier a length behind the Black.

The tugs righted the ship into the current and we began

to pick up a little speed. The buildings of lower Manhattan began to loom ahead while the uptown skyline grew dim in the low mist. Then Battery Park was just across the way, and the whole harbor stretched before our eyes. There was a rush to see the Old Lady as Beddloes Island loomed up on the right. Then Staten Island and the Jersey shore.

Other ships of the convoy were waiting ahead of us to maneuver into assigned positions. Ferries and tugs skittered in and out among the transports. Here and there merchant ships and tramp steamers were anchored waiting for places at the piers to take on their cargoes, riding high in the water and showing their rusted, barnacled plates. A trim coast Guard boat raced past us. Over toward Staten Island were a battered cruiser and a destroyer waiting for space in the dry-docks of the Brooklyn navy yard.

Soon the activity of the harbor was all behind, and only open sea ahead and barren Jersey beaches to the right were left. A few seagulls wheeled along with the convoy. A plane crossed the sky quickly. Only far view of the last land was left when the order came for us to go below in preparation for an "abandon ship" drill.

Our days at sea were to be a new adventure in themselves, though they were but a dim herald of what was to come once we reached foreign shores. Now we were at sea where we could only stand around and play the part of landlubber greenhorns. It was to be a new life. Here the Navy and the Coast Guard took over. We were dependent upon them, not only in every least item of the daily routine, but for our very lives. The Coast Guard operated the Black and one or two other ships carrying troops. The bulk of the convoy and the whole escort were Navy.

* * * *

There's nothing in this world quite like life on board ship, and as different as ordinary life at sea is from life and modes of transportation on land and in the air, life on a troop transport is something yet more distinctive and unique. On an ocean liner there are living conditions more luxurious than in any other means of transportation. Quarters and dining and recreation space are commodious. There is freedom of movement beyond comparison. Even in the lower classes of accomodations that is largely so. Freighters and tramp steamers, so far as they offer passenger space, still have more room than a train or bus or plane. Not so on a troop ship. There every inch of space on or below decks is utilized for carrying the maximum number of men and the maximum load of equipment. There's nothing that duplicates tle crowded conditions aboard a transport.

The first day out we stayed topside every minute allowed. We tried to adjust ourselves to this new life where the horizon dipped and swayed back and forth over us, where we lurched about with every step and where the extent of our world was a deck and a limitless expanse of blue-green water. We watched every move of the Coast Guarders and every shift in course of the ships and their escorts. A plane or a blimp crossing the path of the ships was followed by the eyes of every man on deck. Signalling between ships, though thoroughly unintelligible to us, was watched carefully. Many of us spent hours scanning the surface of the water for movement other than the breaking of the waves.

When the convoy left the harbor, everyone tried to find a compass to check the course and try to guess where we were headed. But utter confusion attended these efforts. The troop ships and the escorting destroyers constantly changed position in the convoy the first two days out, and there was frequent and sharp zig-zagging. No

sooner would a story get out that we were headed for the Pacific via the Panama Canal than the course would change so completely that it would appear our destination must surely be Greenland or Iceland.

Everything was new to us. The compartments below decks where we slept four deep and kept ourselves and our equipment in a space six feet by one-and-a-half feet by two feet was different from any other space we had ever occupied, and the stuffy, close air was an opposite extreme from the overly ventilated barracks to which we had been accustomed. The constant unbalance that made standing and walking an effort was the usual amount of discomfiture for landlubbers afloat. The unexplained belly cramps and G I's the first day out and the standard cases of seasickness that followed for most of us were more or less expected but still novel and disconcerting. The troop galleys, the narrow companionways, the abandon ship drills, the smoking lamp, the ship latrines, the salt water showers, the public address system — all were new and interesting. At least that was so for the majority. A few had been overseas before, and a smaller number had even been on the Black. The latter were the Coast Artillery and A A boys who had returned to the States from a tour of duty in the Canal Zone on the same ship roughly five months earlier.

Seasickness produced the usual fun along with its more unpleasant aspects. Those who were lucky enough to avoid it couldn't help but poke fun at those who were hard hit. The sudden dash of a G I to the rail was watched in silent anticipation and then with whoops and catcalls whether he made it or sprayed the decks. Below it was another matter. We held our noses and our breaths to avoid stenches that otherwise might easily prove our undoing. Not a few successfully avoided regurgitating during the day only to give up on a last trip to the latrine ("head"

in Navy parlance), at night, or on entering the companionway leading to the galley, the latter having by far the more potent odor. Some lost meals just from being so unfortunate as to stand next to someone else in the act. Nor was ruggedness any indication of ability to keep from swallowing backwards. Husky Beltrame hit the rail alongside little Thomas. Haimm, who'd been to Panama and back, was under the weather part of the trip. "Hungry Lou" Pellowitz and Berry Anderson and Coslow and other rugged guys had to shun the chow line. On the other hand, the Top, Pee-Wee Burnette, Ebenau and 4-F Ruesch stuck it out with old salts like Steve and Scrubby Farrington and Cathouse Dailey. Little Dog got his meal ticket punched only twice during the whole 14-day voyage, and even that little food was, he said, a total waste. The officers were about 50-50. The Skipper spent a couple of days entirely out of sight "Love 5" was on and off the whole time. Lieutenant Skilling kept entirely to his quarters. Moose and Tuck and Billy J. laughed cockily at them all the way across.

Abandon ship drills were held daily. At first they were fun, and throughout the whole time they were a source of needed exercise. The ship record for such drills had been four minutes and 59 seconds, but the 242d cut that timb by nearly 30 seconds the sixth day out. The routine was precise. Order was stressed as much as speed. All of us were required to stand at our bunks on the alert signal and to be fully dressed and wearing life preserver and belt with canteen. On a given signal we moved by squads and platoons in single file up the companionways and to our designated spots on the main deck.

The public address system didn't lose its interest for us during the entire trip. From the first "Now hear this" to the order to hit the gangplank at the point of debarkation, complete silence greeted every announcement that

came over the thing. We were impressed at the beginning with the word that any order to abandon ship would come over the loudspeaker, and no one was particularly anxious to be caught flatfooted when or if such an order came. "First call," "lights out," drill calls, everything came over the P A system. The preliminary whistle brought attention, then came the "Now, hear this," then the order to be observed or carried out, and then everything repeated to be sure of no mistake. "The smoking lamp is lit topside." "Troops return to their quarters." "Sweepers, man your brooms." "Prepare for abandon ship drill." "The smoking lamp is out topside." "Prepare to darken ship." Those were the familiar calls. The officer at the microphone had a radio voice, and the system itself worked so well that there was no missing announcements made and no mistaking the commands given.

Details were light. All we had to do each day was to take care of ourselves and police our own quarters and participate in an occasional rifle inspection on deck. A few were on special duty as clerks or as K P's, but that was more a break than otherwise. Those guys all got enough to eat while the rest of us got two poor meals a day, and some of them even got special quarters. None of "Love" got roped in on the deck-swabbing detail.

Each morning after breakfast everyone stayed on deck until 1000 when the inspection of quarters was completed, and if the weather was warm — which it was most of the trip — we stayed on deck the rest of the morning. The compartments were too stuffy and too foul to stay in long unless the weather was very cold. In the compartments, we could only sit or lie on the hammocks or crowd around uncomfortably in a narrow passageway for poker or "dominoes" or blackjack. The Red Cross gave each man a "ditty bag" containing an overseas book, cigarettes, candy, cards, soap and writing paper. The ship's library

was well stocked, though our use of it was somewhat restricted. There were regular church services.

By the fourth day out the novelty of life aboard ship had somewhat paled. The last of the birds disappeared that day, our sole remaining link with land. The spells of seasickness were over for most of us, and we felt good physically, but with nothing to do boredom and the ennui that comes from total inactivity began to close down on us. There was too little to alter the sameness of day after day. There was the rifle inspection, the abandon ship drill, the daily P X ration, the distribution of "Galley Poop", a mimeographed gossip sheet put out by our Special Service, and that was all.

About the tenth day language books were distributed, and the ship began to ring with French and German phrases pronounced in every conceivable American dialect. Goethe would have turned over twice in his grave at some of the outlandish sounds represented as being German. The soft southern drawl, the New England twang, the flat, clipped New York and Jersey voices, the broad, openmouthed western drawl — they played queer tricks with gutteral German and romantic French. "Donkey shine . . . Wee-wee . . . Dass is nix gude . . ."

The Coast Guard SS Officer got up a Sunday fight card between men of the crew and GI passengers. They were three-round bouts staged in a ring on the upper deck where space was so limited that the audience had to be roated after two bouts in order for most of us to have a chance to see any of them. The boxers from the crew were in shape, our men were not, and the latter had to struggle to maintain their balance as well as to meet their opponents. Coslow had trouble disposing of a colored mess boy he'd have been able to polish off in a single round on terra firma. The only other company man, "Jab-ass" Brinson,

who can lick his weight in Panama bobcats, fought too soon after a hernia operation to do any good.

About eight days out it was rumored that the ship would pass the Azores some time during that day or night, so everyone stayed on deck the full day not to miss a chance of seeing land, especially since it would be the first sight of a foreign shore. But no land was seen all day, and even the most persistent, who stayed up all night, couldn't be sure whether they had seen the shadowy coast of an island or some clouds low on the horizon. About the best that could be claimed was sight of a few birds on the eighth and ninth days.

Two days later a grapevine system, worked out from the bridge to the crew and then to us via boys on KP or working as clerks, had it that the convoy would soon be passing the rock of Gibraltar, so we began watching again, and everyone who had binoculars brought them out. Not until evening of the sixth of December, however — the twelfth day out — was land sighted. At first a long, high ridge became visible directly to the east of our convoy. Later, more land appeared to the southeast, and the convoy headed between the two. After dark, red guide bouys appeared in a "V" shape with the prongs extending toward us and the wedge pointing between the two land masses. Then lights appeared along the two coasts, and the distance between the two seemed to diminish as we drew nearer.

Soon we heard the whistles of tugboats and harbor launches and saw them move about among the ships of the convoy. Then a blimp could be seen from its guide lights to be floating back and forth over the narrowest stretch of water. It was a strange apparition in the sky. At first it seemed to be just a group of unattached lights floating by themselves like a flight of ducks. Then part of the blimp became visible against the background of the mountains,

and it seemed more like a ferris wheel chair that had taken off from the rest for a solo.

Finally someone yelled, "There's the Rock!" and everyone tried to get to the port rail to have a look. In a few minutes someone else reported the Rock a mile farther along the coast. At the bow of the ship half a dozen "Rocks" were sighted, one of them even on the starboard side where the coast of Spanish Morocco stretched out in the distance. Most of us had actually gone below decks to bed when the convoy finally did pass by that British landmark.

Morning saw both shores receding into the horizon. The course of the convoy was changed several times during the forenoon, so that no one seemed quite sure of our destination. When the Spanish coast disappeared and the rocky cliffs of Algeria were still visible to starboard, everyone began talking about the fact and reached the sad conclusion that, after all, the convoy would not dock at Marseilles but was headed through the Mediterranean to the Suez Canal and thence to India or the South Pacific.

This thirteenth day aboard ship was the coldest of the whole trip, and during the afternoon and evening the sea was really rough for the first time, rough enough so that there were fresh attacks of seasickness. We had to spend most of the day below decks, coming up only to check on the course and to get a breath of fresh air. By evening we were entirely out of sight of land again.

On the morning of 8 December we came on deck and experienced a sense of relief at seeing land again on the port side, though it couldn't be said that that particular land had any warmth or was at all inviting. The day was cold and wet and dreary. We could see a dull-colored, irregular coast line. There was no beach. The land looked rocky and was bare of any growth. There were sharp cliffs at the water's edge and tier on tier of jagged peaks behind

them as far back as we could see. The water beat on those steep walls of rock, and huge waves crept up them to fall back in turgid white spray. A heavy mist carried out to the near ships of the convoy to form a fine rain. That must be a coast that sailors dread and that many a sailing vessel of former days was dashed to pieces against.

As the morning were on, the ships seemed to hug the barren, forbidding shore closer and closer until we landlubbers began to wonder if only old sailing ships had been dashed against those rocks.

Island peaks appeared ahead, and the convoy skirted them to reach the mouth of the harbor of Marseilles.

III

MARSEILLES AND "CP 2"

From the harbor entrance not much of the city of Marseilles in visible. Mostly you see only barren, rugged hills all along the coast, backed by ranges of mountains in the distance that look rocky and desolate and forbidding. What parts of the city are visible had been made almost as much a wasteland as the natural landscape. Bridges and viaducts and roads had been broken and chopped up, and we could see the blasted remains of warehouses and factories and homes. The closer we got the more uninviting was the prospect. As the convoy slipped through the breakwater and into the quiet of the harbor proper, we read a sign on a pile left there by previous occupants of the city, reading "Eintreten verboten!"

In the harbor proper the scene was one of wreckage und confusion. Everywhere were scuttled and sunken ships. Decks were partly submerged and awash. Stacks were tilted at an angle. Screws stuck out of the water and bore the thick rust of long disuse. Prows were buried or pointing to the heavens. Everything was dirty and trashy. There was so much flotsam and jetsam that we couldn't see enough of the water to tell its color.

The Black pulled against an improvised pier, and we disembarked promptly at 1115. We marched to a warehouse to drop our duffel bags and then stood around outside getting a look at a part of France and at the motley people who live and work in dockyards the world over. We were marched from the dock area through littered streets and past a PW enclosure to an entrucking point. All of us were popeyed with curiosity, and there wasn't

much to be seen that we missed — from the snipe-shooting, ragged Italian laborers at the docks to the dark, voluptuous, teen-aged gal who stood in an inviting pose outside a ramshackle tenement building, to the miserable packing case hovels of the PW's inside a fence covered with grimy laundry, and to the wizened, barefoot French kids who cluttered around the trucks begging for "shocolat and chew'n gum" and puffing deeply on the butts we threw away.

The trucks took us through the suburbs of the city and some 20-odd kilometers out into the hills to Command Post Number Two of the Delta Base Section where we arrived at 1530.

"C P-2" was a group of kitchens and latrines and portable showers units scattered over a broad, windy hill along the edge of the Rhone River delta. The soil there is barren and rocky enough that only a little stunted brush is scattered over its rugged surface. The hills around and the mountains in the distance are at least dotted here and there with scrubby cedars and pines, but this one hill stands out alone, completely bare either by nature or from having been cleared by previous soldiers foraging for anything that could be made to burn.

By mid-afternoon of that cold December day the hill had been transformed from barren nothingness into a welter of men and tents and throbbing activitiy. Long rows of pup-tents stretched in parallellines between the kitchen shacks hugging a wide dirt road and the line of half open, board latrines 200 yards away — one kitchen and one latrine per company, with two rows of tents, 45 in each, running between the two. With the three infantry regiments and part of the attached units of the division present, the lines of tents and shacks seemed to stretch endlessly along the hilltop and down its slopes wherever there was enough level space to be used. Another division

was said to be on beyond the next hill, and still another was supposed to be just moving out.

Pitching tents proved to be a sizeable job in the hard, rocky soil, and it was surprising to find any uniformity at all in the rows. Tent pegs were broken and knuckles and fingers were bruised and skinned. Cursing and shouting and laughter mingled in bedlam. The whole hillside was seething with tremendous activity, and there was about it something of the strong flavor of a mushrooming western mining town. Soon fires were going along each company "street" and groups of men at each were brewing coffee and chattering excitedly at all that was new.

Before long there were groups wandering off in every direction on foraging expeditions. The sharp, cold wind on the exposed hill gave us all a feeling of urgency about collecting wood, and huge piles of logs and branches began to show up, first here and there and then all over the place. A few started out first thing for the scattered houses along the roads to locate sources of wine and beer and souvenirs, while some of the more far-sighted scouted for materials to add comfort and warmth to their tents. Most of us were back voluntarily in time for supper, but stragglers pulled in all during the night.

A routine was developed out of the confusion. Calls of the day were established. Regular details were set up for getting firewood, for security guard, for KP, for the latrine. Then came restrictions on freedom of movement and rules on military courtesy and uniform and the like. Within a few days there was a check on clothing and equipment, replacements were issued, and there were new items given out, like shoe pacs and halazone tablets and shoe dubbing and ski sox. Rainbows were issued and then an order was given forbidding wearing of them.

* * * *

There were no passes at first, but each night small

groups took off clandestinely and on foot for nearby towns, and each morning there were swelled heads and cottony mouths and sensitive stomachs and wild tales of new beverages and not-so-coy mademoiselles. When the first passes to Marseilles were authorized by Regiment, there was a mad rush to get them and a flurry of borrowing and of getting American bills and silver changed into francs. Nearly everyone got to go at least once in the eight days spent at CP-2.

Transportation was provided in 2½-ton open trucks from the encampment to the center of Marseilles, and passes were for a 12-hour period. Counting the waiting for passes and for the trucks and the time for the trip in and back, each man had not more than six hours in the city, and waiting there — at the ARC canteen for showers and for doughnuts and coffee, and for movies — cut the time down even more. Not that there was an excess of things to be seen and to do. Soldiers were forbidden to eat in cafes and restaurants because of the civilian food shortage in all French cities. Many shops and stores were closed and those open had little of interest to sell and most of even luxury goods required ration coupons. Beside that, there weren't many of us who felt like splurging on things to take along or to mail home. There had been no payday the first of December, and we didn't know when there would be one.

The mid-town part of Marseilles in wartime wasn't much to attract us. What once might have been charming was now just an old shabbiness. Streets and buildings were in sad disrepair, and there were parts of the city badly chewed up by bombs and shells. The harbor held by far the most interest, though an awful one, with the complete devastation of hundreds of thousands of tons of commercial and naval vessels scuttled and bombed and burned to utter uselessness.

For anyone a stroll downtown offered the thrill of being part of a heterogeneous, teeming mob with all the extremes of wartime. There were so many different kinds of uniforms that no one could recognize them all, and within the wide range of colors and styles there were extremes of nattiness opposite dirty, mud-stained, shoddy and tattered affairs. Even military bearing ran through a wide range. Usually it was safe to guess that the best dressed and smartest, the snappy heel-clickers, respresented rear echelons, while the worst looking and acting were as certain to be combat troops.

The same extremes were almost as apparent among civilians. Furs and sables rubbed shoulders with threadbare poverty and filth. A few well-dressed men were mixed in the crowds, but there were far more who were ragged and down-at-the-heels and grimy, and more than the usual gutter bums and bar-flies stalked along the streets avidly spearing the butts carelessly thrown about by cigarette-rich Tommies and Frogs and GI Joes.

Most of us saw the sights downtown, spent an hour in the Canteen, went to a movie, had a few beers and some wine at the All-American Bar, and were ready to go back to camp. A few found cafes where they managed to buy meals by arranging to eat in secluded back rooms, and then were outraged at the poor quality and skimpiness of the servings and at the price of 150 to 300 francs. Half a dozen of the boys returned to camp richer than on leaving after selling cigarettes and chocolate bars to sidewalk pimps and bellhops and bartenders at black market prices. And some of the guys, disregarding built-up stories about an unknown and dreadful form of VD claimed to be scourging the city, boasted that they had found "red-light" houses and later made their way to the "blue-light" Army pro stations.

* * * *

For anyone a stroll downtown offered the thrill of being part of a heterogeneous, teeming mob with all the extremes of wartime. There were so many different kinds of uniforms that no one could recognize them all, and within the wide range of colors and styles there were extremes of nattiness opposite dirty, mud-stained, shoddy and tattered affairs. Even military bearing ran through a wide range. Usually it was safe to guess that the best dressed and smartest, the snappy heel-clickers, respresented rear echelons, while the worst looking and acting were as certain to be combat troops.

The same extremes were almost as apparent among civilians. Furs and sables rubbed shoulders with threadbare poverty and filth. A few well-dressed men were mixed in the crowds, but there were far more who were ragged and down-at-the-heels and grimy, and more than the usual gutter bums and bar-flies stalked along the streets avidly spearing the butts carelessly thrown about by cigarette-rich Tommies and Frogs and GI Joes.

Most of us saw the sights downtown, spent an hour in the Canteen, went to a movie, had a few beers and some wine at the All-American Bar, and were ready to go back to camp. A few found cafes where they managed to buy meals by arranging to eat in secluded back rooms, and then were outraged at the poor quality and skimpiness of the servings and at the price of 150 to 300 francs. Half a dozen of the boys returned to camp richer than on leaving after selling cigarettes and chocolate bars to sidewalk pimps and bellhops and bartenders at black market prices. And some of the guys, disregarding built-up stories about an unknown and dreadful form of VD claimed to be scourging the city, boasted that they had found "red-light" houses and later made their way to the "blue-light" Army pro stations.

* * * *

There was one disciplinary action case at CP-2. "Bus," the Red Flash from Paris, Texas, and proud of it, and "Tevey" were off duty at the kitchen and took French leave to visit the nearby town of Aix-en-Provence, bent on trying some French wine or whatever they could find. They hoofed it the three or four miles over the hills and just got a start at a bar when they were picked up by MP's and tossed in the local bastille. It was a stone and cement building, unheated and with broken windows, as well as being extremely filthy and populated by all kinds of vermin. They were locked up in mid-afternoon, and they weren't taken out for return to the company until noon the next day. They both felt they'd been sufficiently punished by a sleepless night spent on cold, hard cement benches with a single thin blanket apiece and with vermin foraging on them all night, but the Old Man busted them anyway. "Bus" muttered in his beard for days afterward, said he didn't give a good goddam, and they could shove it up —. "Tevey" went through his unique string of Tennessee mountain epithets in that thin, high-pitched, quizzical voice and ended up with his byword expression — "Fong-gu.... And I *hope* they don't like it."

Our personnel had remained about the same to this point. George Thompson left us at Kilmer for a dependency discharge, and the loss of one was made up by the addition of Des Jardins. Berry Anderson had pneumonia on the boat but recorvered in time to stay with the company. E. J. Roberts got an ear infection on the way over and was taken to the hospital near the base. He returned as we left CP-2 and then left for good while we were at Strasbourg. Lieutenant Skilling was the one officer casualty on the trip. He came with us to CP-2 and went from there to the hospital, returning a month later at Königsbruck. Nearly all the privates in the company were made "privates first class," and some of the guys who had been

There was one disciplinary action case at CP-2. "Bus," the Red Flash from Paris, Texas, and proud of it, and "Tevey" were off duty at the kitchen and took French leave to visit the nearby town of Aix-en-Provence, bent on trying some French wine or whatever they could find. They hoofed it the three or four miles over the hills and just got a start at a bar when they were picked up by MP's and tossed in the local bastille. It was a stone and cement building, unheated and with broken windows, as well as being extremely filthy and populated by all kinds of vermin. They were locked up in mid-afternoon, and they weren't taken out for return to the company until noon the next day. They both felt they'd been sufficiently punished by a sleepless night spent on cold, hard cement benches with a single thin blanket apiece and with vermin foraging on them all night, but the Old Man busted them anyway. "Bus" muttered in his beard for days afterward, said he didn't give a good goddam, and they could shove it up —. "Tevey" went through his unique string of Tennessee mountain epithets in that thin, high-pitched, quizzical voice and ended up with his byword expression — "Fong-gu. . . . And I *hope* they don't like it."

Our personnel had remained about the same to this point. George Thompson left us at Kilmer for a dependency discharge, and the loss of one was made up by the addition of Des Jardins. Berry Anderson had pneumonia on the boat but recorvered in time to stay with the company. E. J. Roberts got an ear infection on the way over and was taken to the hospital near the base. He returned as we left CP-2 and then left for good while we were at Strasbourg. Lieutenant Skilling was the one officer casualty on the trip. He came with us to CP-2 and went from there to the hospital, returning a month later at Königsbruck. Nearly all the privates in the company were made "privates first class," and some of the guys who had been

"acting gadgets" — Carey, Coslow, Nettleton and Morris — got their ratings as buck sergeants. Three with excess ratings were reduced. "Arkansas" John Gallegly made staff. Slucki, with the help of "Smart Money" Ebenau, wangled a spot on DS at Division headquarters, and three others — Brannan, Keown, and Lisenby — went to SD as battalion CP guards. Des Jardins was taken to the hospital the day before we left CP-2 and only about three weeks after joining.

* * * *

Long December evenings were spent around campfires at CP-2, and those gatherings were the best part of each day. We had coffee or chocolate to brew, but mostly it was a matter of getting warm and shooting the breeze and having a cigarette or a pipe. There was something about it that brought us closer together, and it was usually more than a desire to put off getting into a cold bed that made us reluctant to leave. We were suffering the first real pangs of homesickness in an alien France. We felt how irrevocably the broad Atlantic separated us from the shores of home and were beginning to gain some realization of how long we might be gone. Here was a first common bond to draw us together.

There was much talk of what lay ahead, of where we were to be sent next and what we'd be doing. Some had it that the next stop would be right behind the lines and that the division was due to be thrown in at some weak point to bolster a defensive position, but they were in the minority. The prevailing idea was that we would be sent to some spot well behind the lines for much-needed training, real honest-to-god training in modern infantry combat. The timid ones just sat and listened and hoped that just anything would happen to keep us back until it was all over. (But make no mistake about it, those same

timid and meek and mild guys showed most of us very soon thereafter what soldiers they were.)

The cream of those evenings was in the stories and songs of home. There were some real yarn-spinners who showed up with tales that, in spice and variety and dramatic interest, would have done credit to a Boccaccio or to the creators of the Arabian Nights. What had been ordinary week-end pass adventures in Tulsa and Muskogee were embellished and built up to Don Juan proportions. "Pollack" Kwiatkowski could unfold such a tale of fist fights and brawls that his audience would sit open-mouthed in avid appreciation. "Scrubby" Farrington, with his stories of service in the Canal Zone and of civilian days at Lake Placid and Saranac Lakes, was another. He, with his frequent "I'm a sonofabitch if that ain't right, so help me", and "By Jesus Christ, I shit you not." Then there were "B-J" Carey and "Cathouse" Dailey and "Humphrey Bogart" Snyder. Roebuck and Handzo and Clark weren't bad. Weapons Platoon boasted Kruszyinski and Ellis and Zeysing — the last for his barber shop dissertations on a young man's sex life. There were one or two master story tellers at every one of the dozen or more fires in the company area.

The songs, — well, Weapons had the edge there, and their campfires drew a sprinkling from the other platoons as the guys went by to and from the latrine. Szucs and Ellis and Forgiel, one of them on a guitar or harmonica, usually started things off and were good for an evening's harmonizing. Whenever things lagged, Kruszynski was always there with his cracked, unmusical voice to get them off again. He'd peck at mild little Szucs to quit "those goddammed sleepy Hungarian waltzes and get hot," and Szucs would come back at him that he couldn't appreciate good music anyway and what Pollack could? And they'd go round and round until Kruz would start stomping his feet and clapping his hands on his knees and screetching ludicrously some Polish folk dance that would make everyone laugh until their cheeks were wet with tears. Then Forgiel would get hold of the harmonica and give out with a West Virginia hill-billy song. So it would go on for hours until one by one we reluctantly crept off to bed and to sleepy thoughts of home.

We had our first "Bed-check Charlie" at CP-2. He flew an ME-109 or something similar to it stripped down as a photo-recon job with a few bombs loaded on for good measure. He came over one night about 2200 when the whole hillside was littered with fires, and there was one grand rush to douse the lights before he got directly over the place. Buckets of water were thrown on them, some were covered with dirt, and someone yelled "Piss on em! That'll do it." The next night and thereafter when he came the hill was blacked out. A time or two he dropped flares over the city near the harbor to get pictures, and the sky would be filled with tracer from the AA batteries to drive him off. He was apparently after information on incoming troops, though, for his trips were never followed by bombers, and he dropped his few small bombs more as calling cards than for any great damage they'd do.

It wasn't until the 12th of December that we had our first mail overseas. One bag came in late the night before when there was no light to sort it, and we "sweated out" the distribution until almost noon the next day. Then Kreuger gave it out, and we found that it was very old. It was stuff that should have reached us before we left Gruber and followed us all the way from there. But whatever mail you get, whether a circular from a mail-order house or a post card or that notice from the installment company, there's a lift that comes from hearing your name called that isn't entirely dispelled by the disappointment of getting the wrong letter. Anything is better

than drawing a blank. If those first letters we got were outdated and way behind the events that had crowded up on us, it didn't matter so much. They were from home. The handwriting of the ones we loved back there was what we wanted, and we could wait for them to catch up on the fact that we were now across the big pond.

IV

40 HOMMES - 8 CHEVEAUX

On Sunday afternoon, 15 December, word came from Regiment that we were to prepare to move, and we were routed out at 0400 Monday morning to strike tents and pack and police the area. After we had waited around until 0900, trucks came and we loaded on and were hauled from CP-2 to a railhead near Calas for entraining. It was the usual cold, dreary day with the usual sharp wind sweeping down the Rhone valley, and we were preoccupied with what had become our principal concern in France, trying to keep warm.

The railhead was a siding on the main line from Marseilles to Lyon and northern France. Our train was already made up and waiting only for us and for the engine to get a head of steam on. We fooled around for an hour trying to keep warm. Then chow was served, a hurriedly prepared and skimpy meal that only whetted our appetites. We had plenty of time to look over our train accommodations and to load our bags and equipment while the kitchen crew got its stuff together.

The last generation had a little experience with the French transport system in 1917 and 1918. Everyone has seen the American Legion and the VFW vehicles used in Fourth of July parades, and we have all heard of the 40-and-8 voitures that they named after the kind of transportation they had from Cherbourg and Brest and Le Havre to assembly areas back of the lines a few miles north and east of Paris. They had a ride of part of a day or of a full day at most and then they were through.

We were to have more than a nodding acquaintance with those same 40-and-8's, for our trip extended into two and

one-half days. The airline distance from Marseilles to the end of our ride is just under 400 miles, and the rail route can't be much more than 500 to 550 miles. Without counting out the stops for chow and for change of crews and for track clearance, our average speed for the trip was thus somewhat less than 10 miles per hour.

Volunteers helped load the kitchen onto a car set midway among those allotted to the company. Surprisingly there were plenty who wanted to help, and the job moved along rapidly. Only after the train had started, and provided one had had means of secretly looking into each car, could it have been apparent why the eagerness to help, for into each car had been smuggled loaves of bread, canned fruits, and corned beef. No one suffered from that scanty meal we had.

Forty men or eight horses — that meant standing room, not space for either man or beast to bed down for a long journey, and not space for both men and their equipment. Actually only 30 of us were assigned to the 40-man cars and a correspondingly smaller number in smaller cars. That made it so that, with packs and duffel bags and weapons hung from the walls and ceiling and piled along one side of the car, all 30 could lie down at the same time if they slept head to toe and if each man slept on his side. To change sides during the night, we'd have to get up, turn around, and then gradually work back down between a jumble of arms, legs and torsos.

The cars themselves were in the worst state of dilapidation. If they were not the identical cars the soldiers of the last generation travelled in, they were of the same vintage. Most of the doors wouldn't shut, whole sections of roof and walls were gone, and in some enough floorboards had been torn out so that what were left resembled more a slatted grillwork than a floor. All kinds of commodities had been carried in the cars, and they were littered with

the remains of those past shipments, — sawdust, dung, coal, cement, lime, straw, bolts, nails.

The train made a dozen false starts and there were endless thin pipings of the effeminate whistle before it finally took off. For a few miles we hung onto the seats of our breeches and held our breaths for fear the whole train would fall apart like the "wonderful one-horse shay," but eventually we grew accustomed to the constant grinding and clanking and twisting an swaying.

Our route followed the Rhone valley and the river itself for nearly 200 miles. We went through Arles, Avignon, Montelimar, Valence, Vienne, and Lyon, and then left the river to cross the mountains and enter Alsace-Lorraine, going through Macon, Chalons-sur-Saone, Dijon, Chaumont, Neufchateau, and Nancy. The usually beautiful Rhone valley seemed dull and drab. There had been a heavy overcast since we first landed in France, and it continued throughout the trip. The brilliant, sun-drenched colors that had inspired the best work of Van Gogh certainly were not there during the winter. The scenery was lifeless. Once neatly tended farms were bedraggled and run down, even aside from normal winter deadness. Only a few cattle and sheep and fowl strayed forlornly where there had once been many. The towns and villages varied widely. Some had been battlefields and were torn and gutted. Others were untouched save by poverty and the draining away of men into the army and into forced labor in Germany. The people looked as threadbare and down-at-the-heels as their land and their homes.

The trip was eventful to all of us, not in the matter of places and scenery, but in the newness of the routine and in the little things that kept coming up to prevent monotony. It was long after dark on the first day when a stop was made for supper. Love's kitchen had to serve two companies, and the mess line was set up in a narrow lane

along one side of the train. Getting in the line, rinsing mess gear, holding meat can and cover and cup overhead while food was sloshed in — all this by the light of a single battery lantern — and then eating in the dark and crowding back through the wash line, was a change from the usual mess arrangement. And after eating there was the matter of finding a "one-time" latrine along the tracks without stumbling into someone else's in the darkness. That first meal stop took nearly two hours.

All day long there were poker games in each car, and they were not so much for the fun of the game as for something to do to while away hours. We took turns looking out the doors at the countryside, and we took turns sleeping during the day. A few of our constant correspondents, like Paul Anderson and Bruce Brunner, batted out their daily batch of letters. We had bull sessions. Someone even cleaned his rifle.

Just trying to keep warm occupied us much of the time. Some of the cars were so air-conditioned that the wind blew full force through them. In the two or three better cars where the wind could have been kept out, it was necessary to have a door open during the day for light. In the station at Avignon we salvaged some stoves and improvised pipes and gathered wood, and from there on a cloud of smoke billowed from every car. The fires were good for morale and we could heat coffee on the stoves, but the heat they gave out didn't linger in the cars. We still needed one or two blankets to keep from freezing during the day, and we slept with all our clothes and all our bedding on.

The biggest problem was connected with the location and use of latrines. Naturally, there were none in the 40-and-8's, and the train, often as it stopped, couldn't halt every time someone had to "go." During the day a man had to hang over or sit on the two-by-four propped across

each door opening for safety. He could do that when the wind wasn't too strong in the wrong direction and when the train was not travelling through too heavily populated an area. At night a man would inevitably waken each man sleeping between his space and the doorway. Needless to say, sleeping space in front of the doors was not considered to be very choice. There was one case of GI's the first night, and that guy slept in the far end of the car. Next morning, by unanimous vote, he was moved to space midway in the car and easily accessible to either door. Thereafter, too, a Number 10 can was kept on hand to meet any sudden emergencies.

There were always plenty of Frenchies wherever the train made stops. They had come to know these army trains well enough to be on hand for their coming. They met us with the long round loaves of bread that were by now familiar to us, they brought their wicker baskets full of bottles of homemade wire, and they brought plenty of francs. Trade was brisker at night when our fear of being caught was less, but it went on quite freely at stops made during the day. A loaf of bread was offered for a pack of cigarettes, and some of the less shrewd of us made that bargain, not knowing that the cigarettes were worth at least 50 francs against five at most for the bread. A bottle of wine also cost a pack of fags, and that, too, was a poor trade. Most of the wine offered was of a very cheap grade. In one town much wine was bartered for, and only after the town was far behind was it found that it was wine turned to vinegar. Those of us who traded cigarettes for cash in francs got nearest to going prices. Chocolate and gum and miscellaneous other items had no established prices. The French wanted anything that we would sell, and they gave us a good first taste of their sharp bargaining and of their oportunism. We got our fill of those things before much more time passed in France.

When we left Marseilles, so we found weeks later, we were headed for Metz to be used to help in the reduction of an enemy pocket there, but the pocket was cut off and the force surrendered while we were still enroute, so our first stop, at Vergaville, was only an intermediate point where we awaited new orders.

V

FILTHY VERGAVILLE

The seemingly endless train ride from Marseilles finally did come to a conclusion late on the afternoon of 18 December at the town of Bensdorf, some 25 miles northeast of the City of Chateau-Salins in the department of Lorraine, where we were hustled onto open trucks and started off along a narrow road leading southward. The day was dreary, and we sat huddled against the cold wind. The rolling hills and the woods and the cultivated acreage held no appeal for us. We were too much concerned with our own discomfort. The fields looked bedraggled. Fences were down. Here and there a bloated carcass, horse or cow, lay on its side with legs pointed stienly at the sky. There were wrecked and burned out vehicles along the roadside, and deserted foxholes and shell craters marked the fields irregularly.

The battalion convoy pulled into the village of Vergaville. We alighted gratefully from the trucks and stood around stiffly waiting for the assignment of quarters that had been picked out by the advance party. We looked around distastefully at the raggedness of the town and of its inhabitants. We smelled the overpowering odor of the place, a mixture of barnyard smells along with those of latrine and sewer, and it was gagging to us.

Vergaville is strictly a farming town, the locale of the typical French peasant. Before the war its population had been not over two to three thousand persons, but only a fraction of that number were now present, barring us as new arrivals. Most of them had pulled out for the west and the south in 1940 ahead of the German blitz and had

not returned, while a few had gone east with the Boche at the time of our taking the territory back in late summer. Some of the present occupants of the houses were not local people at all but had sought haven there from Strasbourg or Hagenau or other cities of Alsace-Lorraine after aimless wandering over the whole of northeastern France.

The town itself is typical of rural France. The spire of the Catholic church rises from the center of the group of houses. Next to it are the fire station and the town hall and a "cinema palace" and a few small shops and stores. From that little town center, narrow streets and alleys meander aimlessly outward. Here and there is a wide street that seemed to have been made wide out of perverseness rather than to provide more room for a street and front yards. The houses are all built flush against the sidewalks or streets, and there is a monotonous similarity about their dead grey stucco walls and their red tile roofs. The town's water supply comes from wells that are in the street or back of the houses, shallow wells poorly covered and subject to seepage and drainage from the streets. Where there are no wells along the streets, there are piles of wood or tumble-down carts or heaps of manure. Most of the outdoor privies are off the streets in back of the houses.

The handling of barnyard fertilizer in the "continental way" is something amazing to boys from the modern farms of America. Usually there is a large tank — maybe of 300 to 400 gallons capacity—that is put just below the level of the ground, with a pipe leading from it up to a stone or cement floor that slopes in slightly so that all liquid drains into the tank. The floor may be 10 to 20 feet square, and all the manure is piled onto it when fresh so that the juices drain from it and the rain runs through, and the result is a concentrated liquid fertilizer. This is drawn into a sprinkling wagon and hauled to the land and

sprayed over it. Usually the fertilizer is sprayed in the spring, and the odor around farms and farm towns at fertilizing time is something terrific. It's hard to see, too, that all the moisture in the area of the tanks drains into them. Some of it must go the other way and end up in the wells, or so we figured after we had drunk some of the water.

We got off the streets and into the houses assigned to us. Most of us climbed dark, rickety stairways and stumpled along dark halls to get to our rooms. They were our first billets in France and were about as bed as any we were to have in the three months we wandered around the country. The houses looked old and dilapidated from the outside, but that was not enough to prepare us for the shock when we entered them.

There had been soldiers billeted there ahead of us, and before they came there were transient civilians who used those same rooms to camp in for a day or a week or longer. Beds were torn to pieces. The floors were covered with straw and trash and even animal and human excreta. What stoves there were had been beaten up until they would hardly stand on their legs, and most of them were without pipes. What pipe was in place led not to chimneys in the walls but were stuck precariously through windows. There were no mattresses on the beds. The last tenants had used straw and had just curled up in piles of it on the floors. "C" and "K" and "10-in-one" ration boxes and empty cans were scattered everywhere.

We looked for signs of indoor plumbing and there were none. We would have to dig our own slit trenches. And after seeing the source of the water supply, we needed no telling that we should use the Halazone tablets that had been issued to us in Marseilles.

For that first night we had only time to clear out the worst of the mess so that we could bed down. Then we

went in search of stove pipes and fuel for the stoves. We didn't think that we would want to stay in the village for long, and little as we liked to pitch tents and try to live in them during a cold winter, that didn't seem such a bad idea after our first look at this filthy little village.

We had supper after dars. That was good, we found the next morning, for the sight of the surroundings was even worse than the odor coming from them.

At breakfast we saw that the kitchen was partly in the fire house and partly in the town hall. To get to it we had to go through what we named "Dung Alley," and we had to keep alive and watch where each foot was planted. The chow line was set up in an open hallway through which we could look into the fire station. Besides its official use, that place had more recently seen service as a residence, a stable, and, finally, as a public privy.

The natives were around to watch us eat and to pick up any crumbs we might leave. They were a hungry, dirty looking lot. We were soon feeding half the town's children from our mess gear, and they followed us around to pick up butts — some to save them for parents and some to drag down on them like inveterate smokers.

* * * *

Vergaville was only a breathing stop on our journey. On the morning of our second day there moving orders came down, and the battalion was out in the streets of the town again waiting to load onto the trucks and then waiting for clearance of the convoy so that we could get under way. It was another cold day with a sharp north wind, and we sat freezing in the trucks. The natives came out in force to beg whatever they could — first only children, then wives and mothers and old men. At one truck there was the wholly incongruous sight of an old

farmer tossing some withered apples to the guys in it and actually asking for nothing in return.

Half the kitchen crew were pie-eyed long before the convoy started rolling. They had traded rations—coffee, sugar, bacon, and canned meat and vegetables — for schnapps and cognac on such a large scale that one of them alone boasted of having 10 quarts on hand. No one minded much that the cooks were having a good time; in fact, not a few of us were eager to join them for a chance at a few warming drinks; but the story of the bartered rations got around to the company within a few days, and it was one incident among many that served to build up resentment against at least some of the crew. At the moment those rations might have been and probably were excess. Yet, there would have been room to carry them, and no one could say how soon they might make the difference between enough to eat and short meals. Least of all in our minds was the point that rations belong to the Army and are not the property of any one man or group to dispose of at will and for his own benefit or advantage.

We pulled out finally at about 1000 and rode south and east all day long through the Vosges Mountains and the edge of the Hagenau forest. The route was a beautiful one. You ride along between stately rows of poplars wherever the land is cultivated. Where it is not, there are hills covered with tall pines. Nearly every main road in that part of France is paralleled by a canal or a river and railroad tracks. The towns and cities look much better when you just pass through them quickly than when you stop for a closer examination.

But that day was like the days we spent on the train in that few of us had eyes tuned to the beauties of the country, and for much the same reason. We were simply too damned cold. The trucks were open. Each of us had

had to roll a full pack, and not many had had enough foresight to hold out a blanket. The wind was fierce, and there was no sun to take the edge off it. It went through all our thick layers of clothing and chilled us to the bone, and we rode so closely packed that there was no chance of movement to work up circulation and create any warmth. We just had to sit and freeze. Three times during the day there were stops — once to eat and twice for relief. Each time we jumped off the trucks and hit the ground stiff-legged, too numbed to bend our knees. Long before reaching our destination we were so cold and stiff that we sat in a stupefied silence, simply unable to talk, and so deep in physical discomfort that we sat rigid and humped over. Back and leg muscle were aching and sore with the tenseness brought on by the cold.

The headquarters truck had its added discomfort with the presence of two of the cooks who were in their cups and who brought along enough cognac to fortify a whole platoon against the cold. At the beginning of the trip they were so newly drunk that they were full of the vitality and the droll humor that's always at least slightly humorous to onlookers. Then, too, a few of us near them were grateful recipients of warming shots of their firewater. But they had not the sense to drink slowly, those two, and within an hour they had changed from gay tipplers to querulous, quarrelsome, sodden drunks. They lurched frequently against those next to them. They spilled their liquor. They quarrelled noisily with each other, repeating the same monotonously filthy strings of oaths over and over again. They urinated frequently from the rear end of the truck and thought it hilariously funny when the convoy passed through a town while they were so engaged.

But worst of all they began fooling with their loaded rifles. They shot at random targets in the fields and waved their rifles past the rest of us in the truck getting them to

their shoulders. Rifles in hand, they scuffled with each other and had the whole truck expecting some dreadful accident. One of them had to relieve himself and shouted imperiously for the truck to stop. When it didn't, he got his rifle up again and leaned over the back end to shoot the tires. "I'll stop the goddammed thing, and I *hope* they don't like it." The other one, less blindly drunk, had sense enough left to stop him and take his rifle away from him. Then they argued and cursed each other endlessly. Late in the afternoon the less violent of the two shoved his buddy down on the bed of the truck and covered him with an overcoat. For the rest of the trip he sat hunched on knees and elbows muttering oaths that were only half muffled, but even that was welcome relief.

* * * *

We reached our destination in the outskirts of Strasbourg at about 2100, and the convoy pulled onto the parade ground of a French cavalry post that had been occupied more recently by the German garrison force for the Strasbourg area. We unloaded and moved into one large building that easily housed the entire battalion. Meantime, the trucks were dispersed under cover of sheds and other outbuildings.

The platoons and headquarters each occupied one large room on the ground floor, uniform rooms of at least 20 by 40 feet. The floors were of cement and the walls were lined with cabinet lockers. A single small cast-iron stove sat in the corner back of the door in each room. Except for two small benches, the rooms were otherwise bare. The hallways were also lined with lockers. There were latrines and wash rooms on each floor. Ours had 30 usable washbowls and 30 urinals, but only one commode was in working order. In the basement were huge stores of

German equipment, mostly uniforms and personal impedimenta other than arms.

Our first job was to find wood and coal and get a roaring fire in each of our five rooms, and then we just sat and soaked up heat and worked the numbness out of our muscles and our heads. Afterward, we were issued 10-in-one rations, the first and last of that kind we ever received, and cooked supper on the cast-iron stoves and our squad heaters. We were in our sacks by 2300, and not even the hard cement under us kept anyone awake. Ours was the sleep of exhaustion.

VI

ON LINE AT STRASBOURG

We awoke to an alert order and to an instruction to take essential clothing and equipment from our duffel bags, which, we were told, were to be left behind on the next move. No sooner were the bags collected and stored in a nearby building than the order came to fall out to march. We formed on the parade ground and pulled out on foot to the eastward, skirting the city and an air field and then halting about a mile from the cavalry barracks at a large building on the east edge of the airfield, a building that had been used as quarters for cadets of a Luftwaffe flying school.

The building was already occupied by Company "L" 141st Infantry, 36th Infantry Division, an outfit of Texas men that had seen action from the first landings in North Africa. We moved in with them for the night of the 23rd, crowding into the upper floors of the building where the windows were all out and there were no stoves. We finished the day with "K" rations. Most of us were furiously active boarding up windows and blacking out our rooms and improvising stoves and pipes. There was an abundance of fuel.

On 24 December the officers and most of the NCO's were busy going over the area with representatives of the other "Love" company, and Frieri and his wiremen were all over the place setting up the company wire net. At 2400 on 24 December the 242d officially relieved the 141st, and "Love" 242 was on line for the first time. Some high brass, steeped in the tradition of the World War I Rainbow, had planned the taking over to parallel the old outfit's entry

into the line on Christmas Eve of 1917, and that same brass was to have more to do subsequently with the disposition of the new half-Rainbow.

On line on the Rhine! Here was something entirely new and exciting to talk about and to liven the activity of every day. Just the realization that the vaunted Hitler supermen were only a few thousand yards away and that we were well within range of Jerry artillery were absorbing thoughts for a bunch of raw and untried infantrymen. "Will we come to grips with them?" "Will they attack?" "Will we?" "How will I fare and how will I react under fire?" What man didn't ask himself those questions?

The line was not on the river itself, so we did not actually face the Jerries across a few hundred feet of water. The First Platoon was on the left in our company sector, occupying positions in a shipyard and on a dike, while the Second was on the right occupying a low ridge paralleling the river. To the right of the company was a unit of the French First Army, and to the left was a company of the 232d. The Third Platoon was in reserve and had a line of positions guarding the airport to the rear of our CP.

The line positions were on high ground two or three hundred yards back from the river. There were railroad tracks paralleling the positions both in front of and behind the Second Platoon, and the open ground in front was mined and booby-trapped. Still farther forward were heavy woods, then an island formed by the Marine Napoleon on the west and a boat canal on the east. The canal was separated from the Rhine by a narrow dike. To the right front of the First Platoon was an old German-built PW stockade, and left of it and two hundred yards directly in front of the First Platoon were the large river shipyards. Here the island ended and the canal and the Marine

Napoleon came together into an estuary that joined the Rhine a short distance downstream.

Though the main positions were back from the river, there were outposts considerably forward. The Second Platoon had four outposts along the edge of the Marine Napoleon and one at the entrance to the PW stockade. The First Platoon had an observation post high up in the shipward building fronting on the estuary, and it occupied a pillbox on the dike at the downstream end. At least part of these posts could observe the enemy across the river and were subject to his scrutiny and to his mortar and artillery fire.

Fortunately this sector of the front had been and continued to be quiet. The Rhine was a formidable barrier for either side to cross, and the natural defenses of wooded hills and mountains back of the stream on either side made it an unlikely spot for any bridgehead operations on a large scale.

That was a good tactical situation for a green outfit, for there were itchy trigger fingers and most all of us were jumpy. Friendly troops shot at each other more than once. The units to the left, in fact, kept up sporadic fire nearly every night. The wiremen on the telephones in the company CP, themselves removed from the line by several hundred yards, had good opportunity to hear the jitteriness of the platoons and to feel it as reports came in. Friendly flares, friendly artillery and planes, single rifle shots, and even ordinary night sounds, were all reported. There was a steady stream of calls coming in at night, and the dope was sent on, in turn, to the battalion CP. Half a dozen Jerries could have created enough stir to have had the entire battalion alerted and ready for a general attack.

For a new outfit it was a hectic and tiring experience. The outposts and observation posts were kept constantly on the alert, and we were too inexperienced to know how

to relax on duty or to rest well when off. The guys at the pillboxes were relieved only under cover of darkness, and during the day they were penned up in those cold, dark cement rooms, too crowded to eat or sleep properly and unable to have fires to keep warm. The guys coming back after a 24-hour shift in them looked haggard and worn. At the shipyards OP duty was another nightmare. The wind howled through the open buildings making all kinds of hair-raising sounds. At night a man on his post there could easily imagine boatloads of Jerries crossing the Rhine and quickly overpowering all resistance. Not much less harrasing were the other OP's. Trails to and from them passed through the mined areas in front of the platoon positions and were under observation and occasionally were subjected to the fire of adjacent units. An old, battle-wise outfit, we thought, might have looked on that sector as being almost the same as a rest area, but it was only natural that a new group of men would make one Hell of a job out of just being there. We learned later that the 36th, in spite of all its previous combat experience, had just about as hectic a time at Strasbourg as we did.

The one bit of action that occurred during the company's ten days on the Rhine was so confused and uncertain that no one, not even among those who actually participated, was sure beyond doubt of what actually happened. It was late on the night of 27 December. It was black and cold. The wind was sharp. The men at the pillbox on the north end of the dike were completely miserable and unduly aware of how alone they were and how they were stuck out there between the opposing forces, with a rubber boat the only means of withdrawal should that be necessary. There was plenty of small arms fire all up and down the river — mostly between friendly units and patrols — and there was an occasional flare that lit up the sky like day

in an area within a hundred yards, with gradually less and less light farther away until near the limit of its range it made only distorting shadows.

Haimm's squad manned the pillbox at the point of the dike where the river and the estuary joined. Two men were outside it on guard. In the fading light of a flare they thought they saw boats approaching the dike from out in the river. Thought? At first they only thought so, but then they were sure and dashed into the box to give the dope to Haimm, who then saw the same objects from his spot in the top of the pillbox. He phoned in a report and asked for instructions. Were they to stand off a small attack, a patrol, or was their job to withdraw immediately after observing the approach of enemy forces? The rest of the guys in the box were routed out of their sacks. Haimm held hurried and urgent phone conversations with the company CP where the Skipper had jumped out of bed and had taken over from Anderson.

Lieutenant Rice was called, too, at the platoon CP, and he directed the opening of fire. Haimm passed the dope on, and Labhart opened up with his BAR on the opposite bank of the river, while Szucs fired several boxes of .30 calibre MG rounds at the objects in the river, with Dowling directing his fire. Someone said that he saw tracers coming from the middle of the river, and all agreed that there was firing from the other bank where Labhart and others were aiming their fire.

The Jerries began dropping mortar shells along the dike, and our mortar crews opened up in return as fast as they could get the rounds out. The riflemen in the bunch got to work, too, and there was plenty of emotional outlet the next few moments for the guys who had wanted to limber up their weapons and their trigger fingers.

Billie Rice hurried up from his CP to the shipyards, and he and Henry and Zarn tried without success to spot

objects on the river from there. They saw flashes on the opposite bank 400 to 500 yards from them, but that was all they could be sure of.

Then word came down from Battalion for a withdrawal to the MLR, so Haimm gathered his squad, moved some distance to the right along the dike, and then pulled back across the canal, the island, and the Marine Napoleon to the woods and the platoon positions. In the meantime the other platoons were alerted and the OP's of the Second Platoon were pulled back.

That night the 232d was to have relieved us, and they were present in the sector and were getting ready to move into the positions when word of the fracas at the pillbox came back. When the First and Second platoon OP's withdrew, the Third moved into the line between the two platoons already there. As the line was much extended and as Company "C" of the 232d was on hand, it was decided to put it into the line also. One Charlie platoon went between the Second and the Third and another between the First and Third. The Charlie Third Platoon went into position covering the airfield.

After the withdrawal there followed a long, tense wait while the guys froze at their positions and "sweated out" the anticipated shock of the enemy's first contact with the MLR. By 0400 that contact was still awaited, and the Skipper began to wonder if it were coming at all. He had "Tuck" organize and lead a patrol and take it across the water barriers from the extreme right and along the dike to the pillboxes. The patrol encountered no Jerries and no signs of any having been there. A loaded machine gun left by the weapons crew was still in position and had apparently not been touched. Lieutenant Rice led another group back to the abandoned OP at the shipyards with similar results. So all the OP's were manned again and everything was restored to normal.

Was there a Jerry landing party? If it did exist, was it stopped and put to flight on the banks of the river by the fire of the LMG, or did some of the party land and filter back through our lines to gather information or to harass our communications? No one knew. No one will ever know for sure. Some of those in the First Platoon will swear by all that's holy that there was such a patrol and that one or two — maybe even all four — of the boats were sunk by the machine gun fire. A few are uncertain and a little skeptical. Some affirm that the whole thing was entirely imaginary. (The writer was pounding his ear at the company CP and didn't learn of the "battle" until the next morning when the first story he heard was a lurid tale of 14 dead Jerries and two minor casualties in the First Platoon.) There was no sign discovered that night or subsequently of any Jerries having landed on the dike or at the shipyards. Some time during the night or early the next morning — on the patrol or while going out to re-man the OP's — Pellowitz got a slight wound in his hand that didn't even incapacitate him enough so that he could take a break, and Szucs got a slug in the heal of his boot. Both could have been the result of Jerry fire or the random fire of adjacent outfits.

For weeks afterward the incident was the source of heated debates, and it produced its share of anecdotes. When the first calls came in from the OP and the Old Man was awakened, he jumped out of bed and took over the direction of affairs. He informed Battalion of events and settled down to a cigarette and to mulling over the reports. Then Battalion called back to check further, and almost simultaneously there was a whistle over the sound power phone from the OP. He grabbed both phones and, with the "but" between his lips, tried to handle both phones at once. The cigarette got in the way of the mouthpiece and smoke got into his eyes at he shifted from one phone

to the other and then back again. After fumbling with the cigarette and trying to shift it as he talked, each hand already occupied with a phone and a butterfly switch, he finally gave up, set a phone down, and angrily heaved the cigarette in the general direction of the stove. Andy stood back taking it all in as an innocent bystander and chuckling to himself as the Skipper got more and more tangled with the phones and the cigarette.

One guy who started out with a patrol was one of those who always talk a good fight in garrison and then get cold feet when something like a little excitement comes along. The patrol was barely out of sight of the platoon CP when his back began to hurt and he had a pain in his belly and he whined about this and that until the officer finally sent him back when the patrol was only half way to its destination. Another one managed even better. He was stiff and sore and couldn't walk before the patrol even left the CP, so he was left behind. No one remembered hearing anything much from them before the order for the patrol came from the company CP, and both guys were in good shape the next morning.

* * * *

After that one night of excitement, things settled down to a routine, and some of the edge wore off our original jumpiness. The OP's were still miserable to occupy in the sharp cold, and night sounds still stirred up frightening pictures, but not so much. Reports of flares and of firing continued to come in to the Company CP each night; but friendly artillery, the "outgoing mail," was recognized for what it was, three or four rifle shots were reported as such rather than as a lot of small arms fire, and flares were mentioned as being probably ours.

Christmas and New Year's were both passed quite

uneventfully. The only difference about Christmas was turkey for supper and a half handful of hard candy for each of us. In Headquarters we had our evening bull sessions and our low ante poker game about as usual. A few in the platoons located small quantities of wine and schnapps, but there was nothing resembling a celebration anywhere in the company. Between Christmas and the end of the year the special ration of candy and beer came from regiment and was sold, and the officers each got a fifth of Bourbon in an "X" ration; but three beers per man and six-fifths of whiskey spread ower a whole company aren't enough spirits for celebration even though nearly all of it was saved and drunk New Year's Eve. The whole holiday season was a fluke as far as we were concerned. Our positions were too far from Strasbourg for any of us to get into the city, and it was out of bounds to us, anyway, as far as the Skipper was concerned.

On the 25th, and order came down transferring 19 men of the company to the 90th Infantry Division, and most of the men in that group left the company with reluctance. One of them openly broke down and cried when he went to his platoon leader and to the captain to try to get off the shipment so he could stay with his company and his buddies. Yes, here was tangible, concrete evidence of an esprit de corps, a real intimation that we were developing into a unit with interests in common to bind us together.

Mikkelson from Minnesota, who had spent most of his time at Gruber in the personnel office, was one who left; there was Kirkpatrick, who had been in the South Pacific; Coins and Tevepaugh left from the kitchen; Hall and Li Puma and Reed and Paul Roberts and Harlan Larsen and Jedele were the rest taken from Headquarters; Giffin and Rios and Torres-Reyes were taken from the First Platoon; Ballard and "Half-Pint" Burnett and Sam Palano left from the Second; Jose Barron and Butcher were out

of the Third; and Weapons lost Zajac. We "bitched" because a lot of good guys had to go instead of all "goof-off's."

"Smart Money" Ebenau, the company clerk, quit travelling with us from this point on and moved back with the rear echelon at Division. Slucki, who had been on DS since CP-2, went to the same spot. Roberts EJ, went on DS to Service Company. Webb and Max Larsen and Toon went to battalion as CP guards. "Bus" finally got his "bust" for the little AWOL job at CP-2.

VII

PILLAR TO POST

At Strasbourg we didn't get much news, and we had no idea at the time what the big military picture was on the western front, so we were unable to understand and to appreciate the events of the first part of January. We had had a few issues of Stars and Stripes at CP-2, but none since then, and the Beachhead News that the 36th left behind for us were not later than mid-December. We couldn't know that there was a general shift and realignment of forces from Holland to Switzerland during that time, so we assumed that what was happening to us was just the result of red tape and arm-chair strategy.

The first move from Strasbourg was made late one afternoon during the first week of January. We mounted onto trucks and rode to the town of Eschau, about 25 kilometers from the city in a southerly direction. A billeting party had gone ahead the day before, and quarters were ready for us on arrival. We were off the streets and into the houses in a hurry, and phone nets were set up and a perimeter guard around the town, since we were still not far from the line and within reach in the event of a general enemy attack.

Chow was served soon after we got settled. The kitchen had been set up in the barroom of a tavern, and everyone wanted to eat there and have some refreshments, but there wasn't room and the beer soon ran out. So most of us went back early to our billets.

At previous stops we had lived apart from civilians, but here we moved in with them on an invitational basis.

The people of the town had volunteered to take us in, and their cordiality was fully rewarded in chocolate and gum and cigarettes. Most of the people there had seen many American soldiers since the recent taking of Strasbourg, but there were plenty of us who hadn't talked to many Frenchmen, and we spent long hours that evening talking with them — trying out the little French or German most of us knew, for in Alsace-Lorraine nearly everyone spoke both languages equally well. Though most of us got less sleep than usual, it was the kind of change that is as good as a rest, and we entrucked for our trip the next morning in heightened spirits. Four of the boys in Headquarters were really "peed" off, though, after having looked the town over for girls and finding in the morning that there were three perfectly luscious gals and one just fair one who lived in the house where they stayed and, in fact, slept in the room next to them and had been twiddling their thumbs all evening for want of "Amerikanische Soldaten" for company.

We returned to Strasbourg and to the same spot in the line along the river that we had occupied the day before. It didn't make sense. Surely we hadn't been there long enough or had it rough enough to be entitled to a rest, and one day off, half of it spent in travelling, couldn't be called a rest anyway. What the Hell was the matter with the command element? Didn't the officers who made the decisions know their own minds, that they moved us out of positions and then right back into them? We were even further mystified when the second movement order came and we loaded onto "ducks" for another move. We didn't know but what a crossing of the Rhine was about to be attempted in the rough country north or south of Strasbourg, and the thought of such an effort didn't "listen good" to us.

This second move from Strasbourg was made to the

west, to the town of Ergolsheim (or some other village with a name ending in "heim" or "sheim," there being so many towns and villages in the area with that ending) some 25 kilometers west of Strasbourg. We left the assembly point just before dark and should have arrived within an hour or not much more than that, but the convoy leaders got lost and we wandered aimlessly and for at least 100 kilometers, stopping frequently, and finally arriving long after midnight. When we reached the village, there was more delay locating the billeting party and farming us out, two and four at a time, house by house.

No one learned what, if anything, the name of the town means, but to a large number of us it meant plentiful supplies of sour wine and schnapps and beer and other alcoholic beverages. There was a tavern still open when we arrived, some party or dance being held, and the place was soon jammed with GI's. We arrived and took over, and most of the civilians gave up and went home. Then the tavern keeper got ready to close up, but we didn't take his hints, and he left off with subleties and claimed to be out of everything. Some were convinced, and the crowd thinned out.

Farrington and Maness and Thomas (GG) stayed on and wangled more drinks. When the owner finally put his foot down, one of the three, probably "Harrington," fired into the floor, demanding more schnapps, and glasses were immediately and tremblingly brought forth by the scared Frogs. Then there was another clampdown and another attempt to get more refreshments. Tommy and Farrington went through a clownish, "by the numbers" routine with a hand grenade, a stunt that they had brought from basic and pulled ever since they had been in the company. One of them grabbed a grenade while the other yelled "pull pin." Then, "prepare to t'row!" and then "t'row!" Always in the past it had been without the grenade as a prop or

with a training grenade, a mock-serious carrying out of their little private joke, but this time Tommy had a real grenade and pulled the pin and threw back his arm for the throw. No one stayed for the "t'row," not even Farrington, and Tommy, well stewed, fiddled around with that live grenade for 15 minutes before he got the pin back in place.

The next morning Maness and Ruesch got up before breakfast and fuond a quart of schnapps that "Farringbone" and Tommy had brought in. They sampled it a few times and then took it to breakfast with them. By the time chow was through, they felt so good that they volunteered for KP and spent the rest of the morning in Johnny's way trying to keep up with Echols, drink for drink. At noon they wandered off to go visiting Frogs and to bargain for more schnapps. By mid-afternoon Maness was back at the tavern, and Ruesch was sitting on a curbing up the street, hanging onto three quarts of schnapps and trying to clear his mouth enough of schnapps and cotton to talk to a twittering, giggling circle of kids around him. Both were "out" long before sundown, Ruesch in bed and Maness sound asleep in the single-holer, outdoor latrine. There were plenty of others who drank themselves under the table that day but none quite so much as those two boys from Headquarters. Along about 2100 someone throught to look for them, since they had been missing for hours. Maness was found in the latrine, sitting there with his pants down, stupefied with cold, with a duck from the barnyard watching him, uncomfortable yet too cold to move.

When the company first got to town, the second squad of the Second Platoon had a case of beer saved from Strasbourg. It was set down with other equipment alongside the town fire station and left until morning. The man sent to pick it up then couldn't find it, and it never did show up. What happened to the beer is anyone's guess, but

at this late date — the war being over and the outfit deactivated — it's safe to drop some hints that have reached the writer. The house where part of Headquarters was located was directly across from the fire station. That bunch did a little drinking, and schnapps is, reputedly, more easily downed with a mild chaser. Of course, this is not conclusive evidence, for there were other GI's on the streets until almost daylight, and there was no civilian curfew. Anyway, a bunch of soldiers foolish enough to leave a full case of American beer practically in the middle of the street and unguarded, — well, they ought to lose it. N'est ce pas?

We moved from Ergolsheim less than 24 hours after arrival there. It was a move from rest back into the line, so we started well after dark. There was another long ride, this one ending at a farmhouse near a crossroads that was of some strategic importance and that we were to secure against any attack. We arrived there early in the morning, and the platoons were sent out directly to locate positions and dig in.

The CP pas set up in the farmhouse, what must have been the home of a prosperous and ardent Nazi, for it was a fine house and was crammed full of the Nazi trinkets and books and pictures which we later found to be so commom throughout Germany. The Headquarters looters and souvenir hunters had a field day going over the place from attic to basement. In the basement, also, we found a supply of onions and spuds and apples, and Farrington became "cookie" for a day, frying spuds and onions from the time he got up in the morning until 2100 that night. The kitchen, for the first time, had not accompanied the convoy and stayed several towns behind us, so what meals were served were brought up by jeep in marmite cans.

Not often, when we were at a place or when we moved from one spot to another, did we know what the strategic

situation was, and that held true here. We heard the wildest of rumors but nothing official came down through channels. The actual situation was that the entire Seventh Army line was being pulled back for ten or 15 miles into better defensive positions. We didn't know it, but our situation was precarious. Strasbourg was evacuated for two days, and thousands upon thousands of civilians flooded the highways in an attempt to get to the west behind our lines again.

The Third Battalion was the right end of the line and joined with a unit of the French First Army. King was to the left and Love was behind King and Item as battalion reserve. Ours was the only unit of the Rainbow in the line. To our left was a unit of the 79th Division.

As reserve our job was to guard a main road junction. We prepared our own positions and then sat back to watch engineers mining the roads in the event we had to withdraw again.

The platoons were just getting well established and were almost comfortable in their positions late in the afternoon when word came from Battalion that we were to move again that night, another tactical move in which not even our battalion commander, Colonel Lovsnes, knew the destination or the purpose. We assembled at an old chateau and took off in convoy some time after 2200 on a long, cold night ride in which the vehicles moved slowly and stopped frequently and we were numb with cold. The ride ended just before daylight at the little factory town of Brumath on the Zorn River. We unloaded from the trucks into an old warehouse on the river, and the kitchen, having caught up with us again, was set up on the main floor, while we bedded down upstairs on cold cement floors and slept until an 0900 breasfast. After that we had a free day to wander around the town looking for what could be purchased or bartered for — bread and cakes, schnapps

and wine, postcards, French and Jerry trinkets. We had fun fishing Jerry rifles and machine guns out of the river, and Dremann even found a serviceable M-1 there. In one room of the warehouse were cases of canned string beans and sauerkraut — German army issue — that the kitchen used after some hesitation and a little judicious sampling.

Night brought another alert and another truck move. We rode for hours through woods on poor mountain roads, pulling into the village of Koenigsbruck at about 0200, there to relieve another "L" Company — "L" of the 314th Infantry, 79th Infantry Division. As our convoy halted, someone in one of the trucks lit up a cigarette, and at that moment a soldier came out of the CP. He dashed up to the rear of the truck and really "reamed" the smoker. He told him that he'd stand a good chance of getting shot by showing a light outside after dark, and that the bullets could as easily be GI as Jerry. "There's nobody foolin' around here Joe. It's for keeps". That sobered all aof us who heard it, and the word was quickly passed on to the other trucks.

Within a period of seven days, we had moved six times, and we couldn't see sense in any of it. Twe whole deal looked like a waste of gasoline and an successful effort to keep us from having a night's sleep. We had heard rumors that our lines were thin and that this was jockeying being done by the Seventh Army in an attempt to confuse the Germans. If the enemy was as much confused as we were, we throught, it was a throroughly successful maneuver. We also heard at Ergolsheim that the Jerries had counterattacked around Strasbourg and had driven us back out of that city. Not until some days after we reached Koenigsbruck did we finally learn the truth of the whole situation: that von Rundstedt's offensive had created the Ardennes bulge and the Bastogne pocket and that there was a frantic effort to rush troops northward

to contain the threat and wipe out the pocket. Seasoned troops were pulled out of quiet spots and green ones thrown in. Lines were drawn perilously thin. Exposed salients were withdrawn and the whole line was straightened out to ease the job of holding it. This was a critical time when every resource had to be used to the utmost and every reserve had to be thrown in.

VIII

KOENIGSBRUCK

The 314th wasn't due to leave Koenigsbruck until the next afternoon, and it occupied every house in the town, so we marched back into the woods and bivouaced there for what was left of the night. There was a light rain, but the air had turned warmer, and sleeping in the woods wasn't as bad as we had expected. Most of us crawled into our sacks still fairly dry and slept soundly. The guys who had to have a last cigarette curled up in their sacks with the zipper drawn up and smoked and coughed and cried with the smoke in their eyes rather than take a chance of showing any light.

During the next day we moved into position as the men of the 314th moved out. It was a defensive position as at Strasbourg, but there the similarities between the two ended. The company was spread out over 1,000 yards of front. The Third Platoon was on the left with its left flank anchored on a pillbox. The Second occupied the center of our sector, while the First held the right and had OP's 200 to 300 yards in front. One section of Mike Company's heavy machine guns supported us. Our own LMG's were set up for grazing fire on a road leading from the town eastward, and the mortars were set up under cover of an old barn in the town. One platoon of AT guns from Anti-Tank Company was set up in the area of the Third and the AT platoon of Headquarters Company, Third Battalion, moved up behind the First and Second to cover possible tank approaches to our sector. Item Company tied in with us on the left and Charlie 232 on the right.

A few days after we arrived at Koenigsbruck, the 232d

on our right pulled out, and our whole line had to be extended to cover additional ground and to protect an exposed flank. There were no units left on our right closer than five miles, so the Third Platoon was pulled out and moved to the right, tying in at right angles with the Second, and the Second extended its front to occupy the positions the Third had left.

The line that we occupied was a new one. Weeks before, the 79th had driven a salient some 15 or 20 kilometers to the north and east, crossing into the thin section of Germany west of the Rhine there and taking a few towns and villages. With the trouble that had developed in Belgium during December and with the draining off of troops to help there, it had become necessary to shorten lines all along the southern part of the front. For that reason the 79th had withdrawn from Germany, but the new line running through Koenigsbruck still was a salient to a mild extent, and our sector was the point of it. The company positions were, as a matter of fact, the farthest east occupied by allied troops on the entire western front at that time. The positions all along the front were thinly held, and there were scarcely any reserves.

Koenigsbruck is on the eastern edge of the Haguenau forest, a distance of about 12 or 13 miles, as the crow flies, east by northeast of the city of Hagenau, and it is about 5 miles west of the Rhine. High ground in front of it overlooks Forstfeld, Kauffenheim and Lautenheim.

After going over the sector with the CO of "L" 314, Captain Cook made some changes to strengthen the positions, relocating some of the foxholes and OP's, deploying strength around rather than in the pillboxes, and setting out trip flares and booby traps. Then he went about arranging for contact with the adjacent units. The Second platoon was to make hourly contact by patrol with Item, and the Third was to contact "C" of 232 on the same basis.

A single machine gun squad from the 232d, located at a bridge on the road to Leutenheim, was to be contacted by a motor patrol under Farrington. Other motor patrols were planned to make trips to the towns of Leutenheim, Forstfeld, and Kaufenheim. This new line had only been formed two or three days prior to our arrival, and, contact not yet having been made with the advancing Jerries, the patrols to towns forward of the lines were to serve the purpose of OP's to discover the approach of the enemy. As such, they had dangerous possibilities and were carried out on a voluntary basis.

Inside the town, the CP was set up in the house of a lean, horse-faced widow, a small house providing sleeping quarters for the Skipper, the Exec, the Top and Frieri. The rest of us in Headquarters were billeted two houses down the single street of the town in a tavern. Weapons had the house between those two, plus a barn back of the tavern. The rifle platoons used pillboxes as their CP's, and each night a squad from one of the three came in to rest and clean up at the tavern. Also located there was the forward observer for Cannon Company with his crew of five men. Back at the other end of the town, a battalion S-2 section was set up for purposes of receiving and interrogating both PW's and civilians who came through our lines from Jerry territory. That accounted for all the houses of the village. The kitchen was set up at Nieder Betschdorf and brought one hot meal or sandwiches and coffee up to us each day to supplement "K" rations.

The town was so small that there wasn't much to do during off-duty hours. The tavern was the most immediate source of attraction, in fact, the only one. At first there was some beer there, but it soon ran out, and the proprietor had no transportation for securing more. Thereafter, there was an endless supply of the sour wine that is the national drink of rural France. It is homemade from

a common grape, and nearly every farmer has at least one barrel of it in his cellar. At Koenigsbruck it sold for 15 francs per litre, representing about a 98 per cent profit, one per cent for service, and another one per cent for ingredients, equipment and vintage. At first we paid freely for the stuff. Then we in Headquarters noted that the entrance to the cellar was in the barroom where we lived and that it was not always locked. We made sport of getting the proprietor out of the way for long enough intervals so that we could purloin a few litres at a time. Others soon learned the same, and thereafter the only wine sold was that served by the buxom 16-year old daughter, whose coyness and vulnerability to our low comedy more than paid the cost of the wine. Giving her "snow jobs" and watching her father and mother grow more and more harassed by day as they tried to keep her in sight and out of harm from us were our best entertainment. Their indefatigability suggested that they had reason to fear on the basis of past experience with soldiers, Jerry, GI or both. If, as seemed doubtful, the girl was a virgin when Love Company arrived, she most certainly still was when we left. The parents followed her so like bloodhounds that no one had a chance even to build up to making a pass at her.

Koenigsbruck was the only town we spent any length of time in where there was no feminine attraction. No one wanted to bother a mere child. "Horse Face," the CP landlady, was the only other female we saw under the age of 40. One of the boys of the 79th recommended her before leaving, in spite of her face and her age, and she looked an invitation at every soldier she saw. Six months might have made some of us look at her, but not two weeks.

* * * *

The first few days in our new positions were quiet and uneventful outside of incidents arising out of our own

clumbsiness and ineptness at this combat job. The Jerries hadn't yet advanced to take over the territory evacuated by the 79th in shortening and straightening out the line. The towns in front of us were in sort of a no-man's land between the two armies. We had to keep up our patrols constantly so that we would be aware of the approach of the Jerries and be ready for them. The patrols out to the three towns were at first more like schoolboy larks than recon patrols much as their dangerous potentialities were realized. The first time the patrol went out, it was led by the Skipper, and a Marine officer, Captain Rutherford, who was attached to the Office of Strategic Services and was working with the French, went along. He came just as the thing was being planned and asked to go both for his own purposes and to help serve our object. Both company jeeps were used, and they were loaded with 12 heavily armed men who had anticipation of a good time. No incident occurred. They bought bread and wine and schnapps in Forstfeld. They heard of the approach of the enemy still some distance away, but that was all.

The next day the Skipper went out with Farrington, G. G. Thomas, Maness, Dailey, Igaly, Howell and Nitsch. They looked through all three towns and searched out Leutenheim house by house, without results, after having heard that there were a few Jerries there. That day they made arrangements with two Frenchmen — deserters from forced service in the wehrmacht — to rush back to us on their bicycles when the Jerries began coming in force. Thereafter, the patrol was run twice each day but only into Leutenheim.

At night the patrol went by jeep to the bridge just before Leutenheim and from there on foot to make contact with the LMG squad guarding it. One time the squad would be there and on the alert, the next every man

would be asleep, and, finally, it pulled out without notice, thereby giving the patrol some rough moments. On about the fourth day of patrols, Farrington and his bunch went down the road but were stopped at the Third Platoon. One of the Frogs had just pedalled in with word that the Germans were in all three towns in force and were bringing up supplies and equipment. So the bridge was blown and that patrol was ended.

There was another patrol that was run twice each night through the woods in front of Item and Love positions, the two companies alternating in sending out their groups. We would send out a patrol in squad strength from the right end of our sector, and it would sweep the woods to the left until it crossed Item's territory, when it would return behind Item's and our lines. On return of our patrol, Item then sent one out on about the same route in reverse. Great precautions were taken to make sure that there would be no firing on either patrol by friendly troops through detailed notice to each CP and each platoon and each foxhole the patrols expected to pass, with time of departure and expected time of return and strenght and arms and uniform being given. In spite of that, Item shot a man of its own patrol on one occassion, and another time the whole patrol came desperately close to being annihilated when it returned to its own area 100 yards in front of our positions. Mike machine guns prepared to open fire on them, and withheld fire only because of some tiny bit of identification observed in the distance in very poor light. There were a few accidents elsewhere in the regiment during similar patrols, and it isn't unlikely that the same was true all along the tensely alerted lines of the whole Seventh Army.

After the Jerries moved up in front of us, they began sending out their own recon and combat patrols, and there was thereafter much more frequent fire along the sector

we occupied. Their probing seemed to be more to either side of us than directly at us, for there was much more firing there, and the other companies reported light casualties and some prisoners while we just stood by.

The waiting wasn't fun on that line. We knew we occupied a partly exposed point and that we were somewhat vulnerable in event of a concerted attack. We knew, also, that a successful attack against the companies on our flanks would cut off the only line of retreat or withdrawal open to us.

On about the sixth or seventh of January we had our first brush with the Jerries, a 10-man patrol sighted deep in the woods to the front and fired on and dispersed before it was near enough for us to know whether there were casualties inflicted upon it or not. On that date, too, they began throwing a little arillery fire toward our positions, but they had no direct observation and their patrols hadn't definitely located us, so none of it came very close. We weren't even able to tell for sure what kind of stuff it was.

The following day was quiet. We made our patrols. We heard shells going out from the 105 battery behind us, and some of Jerry's stuff came a little closer to us, but that was all. Jerry patrols approached our area but veered off to right or left before getting close enough for us to engage them. On the 10th the First and Third platoons jointly caught a four-man Jerry recon patrol in front of their positions and drew first blood (the first we knew of with any certainty, the little Strasbourg deal and previous patrols at Koenigsbruck being too uncertain to claim anything). Two of the patrol were killed, having been riddled by Dailey and Nance, one escaped wounded, and Boltz and Carey captured the fourth.

That first verified brush with the enemy was as highly dramatized as might have been expected. The First and

Third phoned in excited accounts of what occured, and the whole company knew of it within five minutes. The Skipper ordered the one prisoner held at the Third Platoon CP until he could get out there. Then he escorted the Jerry back to the town and to the company CP before turning him over to the S-2 section. Every one of us not on duty and the few civilians in the town were on hand to watch the Skipper bring the man in. It was an important "first" in the company that, as is so often the case, was made somewhat ludicrous by the fact that the Jerry was frightened almost into hysteria and that he was small, scrawny, and wore thick-lensed glasses. To fit the occasion he should have been a real superman in appearance and should have borne himself in a manner of belligerent defiance. The scene wasn't spoiled for us, though. We'd seen Jerry PW's before, but this was our first, and if we weren't impressed by him, we were when we went out into the field and saw his two comrades sprawled awkwardly in the snow.

The same day the Jerries zeroed in on us with mortars and 88's, the first real barrage we had taken, and it was probably the result of the skirmish with the patrol and the escape of the one member of it. Shells plopped all around our positions, and there were some that hit pretty close. One lit almost beside Stengel, and he was covered with a cloud of snow and smoke so that the guys around him watched in dread, expecting, when the smoke cleared, to see him stretched on the ground and torn to pieces. He did take a somersault and was thrown hard on the ground, but when he regained his breath, he got up and brushed himself off and looked around and said simply, "Well, I guess it just wasn't my time." About the same time Russ Kelley was ducking back and forth through the trees, caught in the open when the shelling started and trying to outguess the shells and doing some fancy footwork in

the process. No one got hurt, and it was one good bit of experience for every one there.

On our last day at Koenigsbruck, there was a little excitement with more shelling of our positions, and a patrol was sent out in platoon strength to try to intercept a Jerry patrol headed our way, but it veered off in another direction and concact was not made with it. The event of the day was our first sight of the air corps out in force. It was one of the few clear days — most of the time there was snow or a heavy overcast — and we could see for miles around. During the afternoon the air was filled with planes for a solid hour. Flight after flight came over us from the northwest and swung southward toward objectives on or near the Rhine. We counted several hundred of them in flights of from 12 to 25, mostly twin-engined medium bombers. The fighter cover, if there was one, was too high for us to see. Long before the planes themselves were visible, we could hear the sound of their approach, and even before the sound we could see the thin, silvery trails of vapor coming out of the horizon toward us. Their objectives were probably in the vicinity of Strasbourg, likely the tactical objectives of highways and railroads and convoys and assembly areas north of Strasbourg on both sides of the Rhine. We cold see bursts of AA fire when they had passed beyond us, and we could see the vapor trails shoot downward as the bombers dumped their cargoes and shot down below the ack-ack. At first we thought that downward lunge of the planes meant they were in trouble, and we were alarmed as plane after plane seemed to hurtle earthward. Then the reappearance of the planes as they climbed back to their flight level for the home trip made it clear, and the distant crump, crump of the bombs had a most reassuring sound.

Later the same day there were fighter planes in the area, and we had seats for distant dogfights. Three small,

fast planes came across they sky in a wide "V" formation with the point plane far in the lead. It looked like the usual flight formation for three planes, and not many of us gave them more than a casual glance at first. But then the lead plane made a wide circle starting counter- clockwise, and the trailing plane on the inside gained while the other lost ground, and the three then seemed to be circling in single file and playing a game of tag. The second and third planes gradually closed on the leading one, though, as all three moved to the east. As they reached the rim of vision the leading one seemed to dip toward the horizon even faster than to be expected by the optical illusion of increasing distance, and it left a heavier and darker trail than the two behind All of us who watched assumed that the two in pursuit had at least wounded their quarry, and we were quite certain that that quarry must have borne the black cross and swastika, though they were never close enough for us to discern even general contours. Those planes were probably all travelling in the neighborhood of 400 miles per hour, but they were so far distant that they seemed to be soaring and floating in lazy flight.

IX

HAGUENAU FOREST

Company G of our own regiment relieved us at Koenigsbruck on the night of 13 January, and we moved out of the town and into the woods. At first we followed a narrow road, then we went single file along a forest trail, and, finally, we just stumbled along through the trees and the brush. The guides who had been along the route during the day and had come back to lead us now weren't very sure themselves of which way to go, so we fell over logs in the dark and got tangled up in the thick underbrush. There was one stretch where we went through puddles of stagnant water and ice, and part of one platoon got well into a marsh before they found they had strayed from the rest of us. At last we came to road again, an icy, rutted woods road that we couldn't stand on, and from there we marched back off into the woods for a hundred yards to make a halt for the night.

The woods were a dark and heavy blackness that was given substance by shadowy patches of snow beneath the trees in sheltered spots. We were told to dig in for the night, so we grounded our equipment and got out entrenching tools. It was like working blindfolded, and we needed the sense of touch more than eyes to pry at the rocky, root-filled soil. We had to get down on our knees and dig with our hands when an entrenching tool wouldn't get hold of a root or a rock. No one dug more than 10 or 12 inches down. We made it a quick job, and then we crawled into bed sacks or between blankets fully dressed and cuddled together to keep out the sharp cold. The dugouts wouldn't have done much good as protection

against tree bursts, but they were worth while to us because they broke the force of the wind that rose and whined through the woods before dawn.

In the morning we awoke to the clean, fresh smell of a pine forest and of wood smoke from the fires of the early risers. While it was still early, we cooked our "K's" and the woods resounded to the sounds of chopping and sawing and digging. Our dub-outs had to be enlarged and deepened and smoothed off, and we wanted pine boughs to sleep on. We had to get logs and boughs for roofs and pile dirt over them to make a thick, solid protection against shrapnel. We were noisily busy the entire day, and though the weather was cold, we were warm with our activity, and the pleasure of clean, hard outdoors work made us happy.

The platoons enjoyed the change from Koenigsbruck to the woods more than the Headquarters gang. We had moved from a spot in the line to a spot behind the line as regimental reserve. The platoons moved from foxhole positions within range of small arms fire from the enemy to comparatively comfortable quarters in the dugouts hundreds of yards behind the lines. Headquarters had moved from billets to holes in the ground. There was some difference, and it was one of the few times the riflemen got any kind of a better break than Headquarters.

We remained in that spot for two days and with little to do after the first day but eat and sleep and keep warm. Guard duty was light, and there weren't any other details. "K" rations were supplemented by sandwiches and coffee and cake brought up in marmite cans from the kitchen. We got beaucoup mail and packages from home. It was cold, but we managed to keep warm building fires and cooking and cleaning equipment. The whole thing seemed somewhat more like a two-day bivouac back in the States than what it was.

The second morning there was a report from toward

Hatten that a Jerry patrol had filtered behind our lines and might be in the woods near Love's area, so the whole company and two platoons from Mike were assembled and formed as a long skirmish line to sweep the woods in a broad area behind the regimental front. Two men from Mike Company were wounded by artillery thrown in on us, as we could be observed from the Jerry positions in Hatten. Nothing was found in the morning-long hunt. In the afternoon we drew some shelling and had to stay put in our dug-outs for an hour or two. If there had been a patrol in our area, it had come close to locating our reserve positions but not close enough. The shelling had the effect of harassing fire, something to worry us but nothing to do us harm.

Goldy got sick the second night and woke up too late to get out of the dugout in time to save his buddies the nauseous odor of puke or to avoid dousing bedding and clothes and equipment, so the morning of the patrol he had a substantial laundry job. All the previous day he had said he had no appetite. He couldn't eat his "K's," that is, nothing but the caramels and chocolate and orangeade and sugar. Then in the afternoon he got a package in the mail, and he ate cookies and homemade candy and Hershey bars, with some cheese and olives to top the whole thing off. He recounted the story to us while he washed clothes and couldn't understand what had made him sick.

On the night of the 15th, we moved forward a few hundred yards closer to the line and to Hatten where the First Battalion had been having a rough time and had been nearly cut off. As we moved up behind Item and King, the situation was at its worst, and we were told to remain ready for movement into the line at any moment.

The new location in the woods was on lower ground. Our new duo-outs were flooded out within a few hours after we had dug them, and we had to change spots about

on a daily basis. Weapons and the Third Platoon couldn't even sleep in theirs and dug them only for use in case we got some incoming mail from the kraut batteries that had nearly found us two or three times before.

We set up defensive positions, established communications, and manned OP's. Then we sat back to wait. Our move had been made on a black night and seemed to us so quietly and effectively done that we were mildly surprised next morning when Jerry sent greetings pretty close in the form of mortar shells. Tree bursts threw shrapnel too close for comfort.

Some of us were a little "pee-d off" during the next day when we were ordered to build a deluxe dug-out for the big shots in Headquarters. The night before each had dug mere slit-trenches that looked like shallow graves. When we had improved our own dugouts, the officers looked with envy at them and dreamed up the idea that the flunkies in Headquarters and half of Weapons should make one suitable for three officers and the two top NCO's in Headquarters. That really burned us, for the five to profit by our labors sat by a fire and toasted their heels while we chopped trees and sawed logs and dug. We didn't mind so much when we got into the job, for we were warmed up and got the knots out of our muscles, and they just sat and piled up inertia and felt not too comfortable.

The day wasn't particularly eventful, but it was full of rumors. The Skipper spent a lot of time at the battalion CP, and he passed on to Casazz and Tuck just enough information to make them curious and to foster the growth of more rumor. We were still alerted, and the situation was still confused and precarious in and around Hatten. For a while it looked as if we were to be sent in to relieve or to support the First Battalion. Then we heard that the whole regiment had taken such a beating that we were making a general withdrawal in an attempt to save the

situation from becoming worse. Someone dreamed up the idea that the line was merely being shifted and that we were to be pulled out of the woods, taken to an assembly point, and then thrown into a general counteroffensive.

Later we heard the real story of the situation and of a tentative plan to restore the line. The First Battalion had lost nearly all of Hatten and had been surrounded and cut off in what positions it still held. The Second Battalion had been badly mauled in an unsuccessfull attack to recover the town. The same fate met a force made up of an armored regiment with one infantry battalion from the 79th Division. Then some armchair strategists back in Army Headquarters dreamed up a scheme whereby Company "L" would move through an extensive enemy mine field, parallel the enemy line for about 300 yards, then find a gap in the enemy line and get to the First Battalion in Hatten and help it drive the Jerries out of the town. No one knew how many men of the First Battalion were left in Hatten, as communication with them was out. We were to go in at night and would, they said, succeed because the Jerries wouldn't expect such an attempt. No sane man would, and we thanked God, when we heard of the plan, that someone with a little sense had been able to "scotch" it in time.

The effect of all these rumors on us was typical of that on any new outfit. The atmosphere in our area was electric. We made wild conjectures. We were willing to listen to any story and to give it at least some credence. We tried to rest. We wrote letters. There were a few testaments brought out and thumbed through by serious-faced guys. We started packing our bed rolls and sorting out things to keep and things to discard. One of the stories had included the provision that the move would be a long one on foot, and none of us wanted to carry any excess. Extra clothing was thrown out. There were little heaps made

from the remains of packages from home, after we had gorged ourselves all we could. Less desired cans of "C" rations — stew and meat and vegetables — were scattered around everywhere. We threw away cigarettes that we had hoarded for weeks. We had to keep our bedding, our ammunition, and all the food we could carry. Beyond that, it was a matter of sorting out what else each of us thought he could carry.

As the day wore on, we began wandering aimlessly around from fire to fire, trying to pick up new rumors. We were set for a quick move and we were getting impatient for information. New rumors flared up, but only rumors. The battalion phone was quiet.

Darkness came without any news, and we settled down to get rest we knew we would need before the night was over. Few sounds penetrated the early darkness. Even the Jerry artillery was silent. We lay on damp pine boughs in our dugnouts and kept on sweating it out.

* * * *

The word finally came at 1930, and we began moving out immediately. We pushed cumbrously and clumbsily through the woods, stumbling over unseen obstacles covered by snow and falling into holes that were filled with mud and slush. A few hundred yards brought us to a road, where we found that the whole battalion was forming. There were men everywhere up and down the road, and jeeps and weapons carriers were parked at intervals on both sides of it.

Again there was more waiting. Jeeps crawled up and down the road and messengers were running back and forth everywhere, but we were left completely in the dark, both literally and figuratively. Trucks came along and stopped on the road as if to prepare to load us, but

they were filled with equipment instead and went on. What had appeared to be a large convoy of them, proved to be only a few, not enough to carry more than a company. No more came after they left.

Snow began falling, and we became white, dim ghosts moving furtively in and out of the trees. The whole woods was eerie with the soundless fall of snow and the quiet movement of men and vehicles. Now and then the darkness was briefly and thinly punctured by the furtive lighting and glow of cigarettes.

At last Primy brought news that transportation was not available for either men or their personal equipment. We must walk and carry our bed rolls and our ammo bags and our weapons. The march was to be six miles through the woods. There wasn't any dope on the destination or the nature of our mission upon arrival.

It had been planned that Love would be the covering force for regiment in the withdrawal, but at the last minute that was changed, and one platoon each from Item and King were left behind. The Second Battalion was to withdraw on our right and was to follow the 232d, while the remainder of the First and special units of the regiment were to follow them. The Third Battalion was to bring up the rear and cover the entire front, fighting a delaying action if necessary.

We got started down the road in a ragged column. We had thought we'd at least get rid of our bed rolls, and most of us didn't have anything but a tent rope or a length of "130" wire to tie them with and sling them over our shoulders. We were adjusting them and our ammo bags and our gas masks and our weapons as we took off down the road. Some of us had our shoulders and backs completely loaded and our hands full besides. One guy gave up trying to juggle everything and threw all he had in the mattress cover wrapped over his blankets, dragging

the whole thing behind him with a swishing sound on the road.

The road was a narrow, one-lane affair that sloped from the center out to the edges and then dropped off into deep culverts. Heavy military traffic had made deep ruts before snow fell, and the snow had been packed and iced over and packed again. The soft snow that was falling as we started our march had just covered the ice, and there was no way to tell where was ice and where was sure footing without testing each step. At the point where we started, the woods were close against the road, and it wound through the trees and across tiny streams and up and down hills. It turned right and then left, and at times it seemed to swing back toward the place from which we started. Our whole world was that thin, narrow ribbon of white in the blackness.

Our rubber shoe-pacs were not made for soldiers on the march. You had to get them large, or they wouldn't keep your feet warm; and if they were large enough, they slid all over your feet. We slipped and slid all over the road, and there were guys falling and getting up along the line of march constantly. In the first two or three miles, "Pop" Brewer counted his own falls at 15, and the guys around him said that was an understatement. Each time he went down, the air was punctuated by his soft drawling voice, saying, "Well, God Damn! Ah just cain't stand up!" Others of us fell almost as often and frequent stops had to be made to give us a chance to rest and readjust our packs. Those home-made bed rolls slung over shoulders with rope or wire weren't made to be carried on a march, and they cut into arms and shoulders unmercifully. With all the other stuff we carried on our shoulders and around our necks, the weight bearing down was so great that it was an effort to stand, even, and after a rest we had to struggle mightily just to get to our feet again.

For some foolish reason, for there must have been a reason, the jeeps and trailers and weapons carriers went along with the marching column. They would travel a quarter of a mile and stop in the middle of the road, and we would have to make our way past them, trying not to slip down into the deep culverts. When we had passed, they would start up again and push once more through the column. The vehicles could better have either led or followed the troops, but no one did anything about it.

By the time we had gone about three miles, we began individually to re-evaluate the things we were carrying. Back in the bivouac area, we hadn't guessed how rough the going would be, but now we knew, and now we proceeded to the practical ecpedient of throwing away everything we could. The road began to be littered with discarded equipment. Here and there was a bed roll. Overcoats and raincoats were strewn about in great numbers. Ammo bags were emptied of the personal treasures that we had thought we couldn't spare. An entrenching tool, a bayonet or a gas mask could be seen being heaved into the brush or back into the trees out of sight. After a while even a few bandoliers of ammunition and some hand grenades were thrown away. There were half a dozen books and a few portfolios of stationery, and one guy threw away an as yet unopened package from home because he had no gloves and couldn't stand the coldness of carrying it in his hands. We were doing now what later on we were to see the Jerries do wherever we followed them across France and Germany.

We travelled in this fashion for six-and-a-half miles through those thick woods so close in upon us that we felt hemmed in like rats going through a maze. It seemed purposeless to us. We were just going on and on with an indefinite objective. We had to push and push and push, but where and why we didn't know. Then Colonel Lovsnes,

who, with nearly every other officer in the battalion, was marching with us, saw how we were faring, and ordered the vehicles to stop and pick up our bed rolls and anything else we could pile on. That was like a reprieve. We could breathe deeply again and we could walk straight and stand up better. The column moved off from that point at more than twice the original speed. We could take it his way. Our spirits were raised immeasurably. Then we came out of the deep woods, and that helped, too.

Soon we were marching through comparatively open country. There were fields on either side of the road, and we passed a few scattered houses. The hills were less steep. The snow ceased falling, also, and the sky began to clear. A slivver of moon broke through the lightening cloud masses so that we could see around us. In place of the thick stand of trees, there were small groups of them and single large pines with a tuft of branches at the top that made some of them stand out on the skyline like mayestic royal palms. Gur relief from the weight and the change in the night lent us a glorious exhilaration.

For a time we marched with a carefree, swinging gait. We looked around us. We began to talk a little in subdued whispers. What a grand night it was, after all! Now, wouldn't you really get a bang out of something like this when you were back in civilian life? It's fun, isn't it?

But the exhilaration couldn't last for very long without an added stimulus, for we were very tired. The night just flipped a taunt of clear weather at us for half an hour, and then it returned to its cloak of wind and snow. Another thing, too, began to bother us. Our leaders probably knew where we were going, but they didn't know what to expect on the way there. Lines were shifting back and forth, and our route was uncomfortably close to where they had been 24 hours earlier when they last knew the picture in this sector. Where were those lines now?

At one point, the lead element heard a shot along the road ahead. The column stopped while a scouting party was sent out ahead to investigate, and we marched on when nothing was found. Artillery began to speak in the night, and we couldn't be sure whose it was. There were flashes and rumblings up front in the direction the road was leading. Then we saw and heard the same on the right and on the left, and finally, to our complete consternation and bewilderment, great bursts of light and of sound came from our rear. Maybe it was all ours, maybe it was all the krauts, maybe it was batteries of each. We didn't know. Had we been able to know what was happening all along the front that night, our fears would not have lessened, but we didn't learn, many of us until weeks later, what the score was.

By the time we were well on our way that night, the Jerries had also begun withdrawals on a local scale. They pulled out of Hatten and set up defenses on the edge of that battered town, and they withdrew in some other small sectors. But they still were not far from us. Part of our route of march was less than 1,000 yards from their positions. Early in the night the artillery was nearly all ours, to cover the withdrawal, but then ours let up and the Jerries began to pour their own out, thinking we were about to attack.

Along about 0430, we began to march into the outskirts of what looked like it might be a fair-sized town. We made long halts in the outskirts while routes were chosen through the streets, and we seemed to march in an arc just inside the first thin line of houses until we had almost circled the whole city. Then we seemed to be leaving the city behind and to be going on. The realization seeped into our tired minds and stunned us. We couldn't go on! We had to stop or we'd fall in our tracks. God, we thought, doesn't the Army know when men have had enough?

We came to another group of houses gathered around the road, and there was a halt. We stood in the street for a moment waiting to see if the stop would be long enough for us to flop on the ground. It was, and we soon lay sprawled prone wherever we could find space enough per man. Our clothes were damp on the inside from the sweat of our marching, and we lay soaking wetness in them from the snow and ice. Most of us fell sound asleep and had to be wakened to move on a few minutes later. The same thing was repeated a second and third time before we finally pulled off the road, marched through an opening in a stone wall, and were ordered to fall out and get inside the buildings of what we found later were what were left of a large school.

It was 0530. We had been on the way all night. Our six-and-a-half mile march had lengthened into just over 18. We were at Haguenau, though we didn't yet know it, and we had completed the first step in what proved to be a successful maneuver.

X

THE MODER RIVER LINE

Most of that Sunday morning, 21 January, we slept on the bare floors of the schoolhouse, oblivious to cold and discomfort, drugged with fatigue after the long night march through the woods. There weren't many windows left in the building. We kept smudge-pot fires going in each of the rooms we used. Soldiers before us had made stoves from buckets and oil barrels cut in half and had set them on bricks or rock, but they hadn't found or made stove pipes, and we weren't in condition to go hunting for any when we arrived; so we just built our fires and curled up on the floors around them, with our heads low enough so that the smoke didn't bother us too much. Some of us stirred enough to remove shoes and wet clothing and to hang them near the fires to dry. A few were too hungry to sleep without eating, and they fussed and worried over cans of rations.

At about 0700 the Skipper was called to Battalion to get briefing on the "big picture" and instructions for the disposition of the company. While he was gone, we began stirring around. We ate. We saw to the drying of our clothes and to the cleaning of our weapons. We looked around the school yard for the vehicles that held our bed rolls and our ammo bags. We hunted for latrines and for water. The school grounds became a scene of aimless, antlike activity. There was a confusion of sound and movement out of which nothing seemed to be accomplished.

The Skipper returned about 0800, and he sent out word for all to eat and get ready to go to work. Then he called

the platoon leaders in to give them the dope. Love continued in regimental reserve, but that meant a different deal here. With the withdrawal of our lines all along the front, there were new defensive positions to be set up, and our job was to be out in front of those positions to form an outpost line as a means of getting advance notice of the approach of the enemy.

It was afternoon before the First and Third platoons and the attached weapons squads began the trek across the fields to the river and then up toward the hills to dig in on high ground. Everyone was still tired and stiff and sore, and the marching was laborious through the plowed fields deep in snow. Ditches and water-filled holes were disguised so that it was hard to avoid falling into them.

The positions were dug and manned during the afternoon. Each of the two platoons set up CP's — the Third in a comfortable house still partly occupied by civilians and the First in a lumber shack with dirt floors and wooden bunks — where the men slept and ate and wrote letters between reliefs. It looked like not too bad a set-up for them, though the Second Platoon was, comparatively, living in the lap of luxury in billets across the driver to the rear, near the company CP.

Most of us in Headquarters spent the afternoon in the schoolhouse. The Skipper was back and forth between Battalion and the OPLR most of the time, and Casazz took a couple of the boys along with him to look for a better CP. Mail came in on the kitchen truck along with sandwiches and coffee.

About 1630 Frieri came with poop on setting up the company phone net, and he took Maress and Ruesch with him to lay the wire out to the OPLR. They began from the schoolhouse and laid "130" wire from there to the river, then threw their wire spools across and went upstream to a deserted factory to cross and return on the

other side. From there, they laid another 400 yards and were out of wire with nearly half the distance left to the Third Platoon CP. So they marked the spot with an empty spool and proceeded to the Third Platoon CP, locating wire on the road it faced, a lesser thoroughfare leading into Haguenau. It was now after dark, and Maness and Ruesch strode hurriedly down the road toward the city to measure and cut 500 yards of unused artillery wire. Then they drug the line across the fields to tie onto the end there, but they were still short 200 yards and returned to the road for more. As the artillery wire leading away from the city would serve to tie in to the First Platoon, they were about to go toward the city again to get another length where they had cut their wire earlier, when they found another strip, on the road by the CP, that was just long enough. Later on they had reason to be thankful for that lucky find. The Third being hooked in, they went off toward the First. The CP was some distance off the road, and they had to hunt for more and more wire to finish the job. Not until 2300 were they back at the Third's CP, and then just in time to catch a ride with the Skipper, who had had "Windy" bring him over for a last check to see that all was in order.

At the river, Windy was all set to give the jeep the gun and "barrel-ass" across the bridge, when a GI came running and shouting and waving his arms for all he was worth. The jeep stopped on jammed brakes ten feet from the edge of the bridge. The soldier ran up to say that he was a guard placed there to stop all vehicles, for the bridge had just been mined! By the time he had finished his explanation, an engineer lieutenant came along and, after much palaver, agreed to guide the jeep across. It was a slow job, and breaths were held, to be released with an audible sigh when the rear wheels slid off the far edge the wooden bridge. Later that night the bridge was blown to

relieve the necessity of keeping it guarded, and on the assumption that a blown bridge is better than a mined one anyway.

* * * *

The phone man on shift from midnight until 0200 was startled out of his sleepiness by a report from the Third Platoon that Skirrow had been shot and was probably dead. Not until next morning was the report confirmed.

Tuberville and Skirrow, as runners attached to Headquarters, were sent with a message to the Third Platoon, leaving at about 2230 via the direct route across the fields. Like the wirmemen before them, they used the factory bridge and trudged through the deep snow in the ploughed fields, getting soaked to the knees. They reached the CP shortly after the Skipper left with the wiremen, so missing a ride back.

Skirrow had learned that the road in front of the CP led to the city and back to the company CP via highway number three. It was longer but a lot easier walking, so why not take it? They walked along the road Maness and Ruesch had followed earlier stepping off wire. Two hundred yards past the wire cut, the vicious chatter of two MG's suddenly broke the stillness of the night, and Skirrow dropped wounded on the road, while Tuberville hit for the culvert. Both of them yelled in attempts to identify themselves to the gunners, but the MG's opened up again, hitting and finishing Skirrow. Tuberville crawled back along the road until woods and a bend in the road covered him and then ran the rest of the way to the Third Platoon to deliver an hysterical report of what had happened.

The two runners had walked into a Jerry patrol and had drawn fire from machine or burp guns covering the road at that point. Thus Love Company had its first real casualty. For nearly a month we had been in the front

lines and had had no losses. Maybe this was to mark the beginning of a change in our luck.

There wasn't anything spectacular about the incident. It didn't happen in the heat of battle. Two men were walking down a road on a bright moonlit night. There were a few quick bursts of fire that broke the silence. There were a few shouts from Tuberville, for he couldn't help but think that maybe it was some of our own men firing by mistake. Then complete stillness again. But death is irrevocable no matter how or where or when it happens, and that was "30" for mild, cheerful, studious, conscientious Skirrow.

* * * *

Early on the afternoon of 22 January, our first contact was made with the enemy when a 60-man patrol hit the sector of the outpost line held by the Third Platoon. Part of this group came openly from the woods before the platoon positions while the rest remained under cover in the edge of the woods. The Third, with supporting LMG's and a mortar, opened fire immediately, concentrating the mortar and the MG's on the woods and small arms fire on the advance party, which immediately withdrew. There was no opportunity then or later to confirm the casualties thought to have been inflicted in the brief encounter. The Jerries withdrew, and the Third waited for them to come back again.

The second action of the day came at about 1830 when the Third Platoon was again hit. This time a squad of Jerries came out of the woods and approached our positions with an offer of surrender, the ruse being to draw our men out of their positions to make the capture, at which point the Jerries would hit the ground while their comrades back in the woods poured a withering fire at all of our men who were exposed. It was an old, old trick, and it didn't draw out any suckers. The Jerries were told to

advance with hands up, which they failed to do, whereupon the platoon opened fire, and there was an engagement opened that lasted for nearly two hours with alternately sharp and desultory firing. The results were 11 Jerry dead confirmed, four more thought to be dead, and a considerable number wounded. The Third Platoon suffered no casualties.

At one time during the late afternoon, after a quiet spell and just after the krauts had begun to fire again, some of them got pretty close to the Third Platoon CP. In fact, they were in the open space back of the house where the CP was located and not 50 yards from it. "Hutch" was answering nature's call at the time, in a little shack back of the house, and he was right in the middle of things when the firing opened up. A pretty cool boy, "Hutch." He jumped up, grabbed his carbine, and pushed out the door. He didn't stop to cinch up his trousers, in fact, they were draped around his ankles at the instant the door swung full open, and he stood face to face with three Jerries not more than 20 yards distant. Without a visible flicker, and with no thought of the lack of propriety in shooting while so improperly uniformed, he pumped sit shots into one Jerry and fired the rest of his clip at the other two, who were beating a hasty retreat. Then he put in a new magazine and, having no further targets, proceeded to dress himself.

Anderberg's mortar squad was attached to the Third Platoon that day. During the second action, fire from the woods where most of the fire was coming from. Then I while, and "Moose" called for some mortar fire. He told about it later that night at the company CP. "I yelled to Anderberg to throw a few rounds into the edge of the woods where most of the fire was coming from. Them I turned to the front again and — Wham! Wham! — there was the mortar fire. I didn't believe it could come so quick,

and the goddammed stuff was right smack on the target! It was uncanny, I tell you."

"Moose" went on to tell more about the afternoon. "Man! Oh, man! I was plenty relieved when we got back over the river and blew that bridge. The sonsabitches were all around us out there. The woods were full of them. And with no one on either flank to protect us, why, we could have been cut off as easy as nothing". Right, Moose. They could have flanked you. You were lucky. Yes, and you did a good job, too. Nobody could have gotten that bunch of men out of there and back across the river faster once the order to withdraw was given.

At the CP another little point to the story came out. The unit on one side of us pulled out as soon as an advance guard saw two or three Jerries in the distance, without waiting to find out whether they were members of a scouting party or part of a main force. On the other flank, the unit left without even that thin a contact with the enemy. Yelton and his platoon and Rice with his stayed to perform the job of an outpost line, contact with the enemy and discovery of the extent of his strength. They returned only when ordered to do so, in fact, only after the commanding general of the task force had given a direct order for a withdrawal.

The First Platoon had a quiet afternoon. From their positions, they heard what was going on to their left, but no Jerries approached.

When the Third Platoon got the order to pull back across the river, there was a special urgency about moving fast. By then it had become apparent that the Jerries were moving up in force and that they would envelope the platoon positions from the left flank if they couldn't manage a frontal assault. So they had to hurry. Moose assembled them and started them on the way without even taking time to stop and pick up bed rolls and equipment.

Fifteen minutes more might have meant the difference between a safe withdrawal and heavy casualties.

Back at a new CP across the river the guys in the platoon sat around for a while to soak in the realization that they had seen their first action that day and that they had come out of it unscathed. They were humble and sober about it, and yet they could be happy. And they were finally real buddies, comrades in arms. Berry Anderson went around the Second Platoon gathering extra blankets and brought them to the boys in the Third so they'd have something to sleep under. And they got food and whatever else they needed to replace what had been left behind.

Carey said the boys in his squad just sat in their new billet for half an hour after getting there, looking at each other and not saying anything. Then Osborn and Boltz slipped out to the civilian part of the house and appropriated some pie (pumpkin pie, at that) from the civilians and brought in enough for a bite for each man in the squad. Then they broke the spell of silence and laughed and talked about the day and the good fortune they had had.

* * * *

There was no action around Haguenau on 23 January. We spent the day working on new positions and improving our billets and locating food and beverages. It seemed like a good idea to have a little fun while we could. Weapons boys found a cellar full of champagne and distributed it to any who wanted bottles of it. We all found wine or cognac or something else as suitable. Spuds were plentiful. There were many vacated homes where people had left in such a hurry that they hadn't time to pack their preserves and canned fruits and vegetables, and we made free with what we wanted of everything.

During the afternoon, Captain DeReus, Battalion S-3,

came to the CP with a night assignment for the Second Platoon across the river. Battalion wanted the job done early in the evening, but company officers convinced them that it would be better after midnight when the Jerries wouldn't be so on the alert. The job was a patrol to go to Farm Kestler, a group of buildings several hundred yards east of the river where it was thought that the Jerries had moved in. The group was to make a reconnaissance to find in what strength they were there and was to drive them out and take prisoners if that looked feasible.

No one was very much hepped up about the job. Farm Kestler lies between the Moder and the road connecting the former outposts of the Third and First platoons, running parallel to the river. The route to be followed led across the river at the abandoned factory, through King's First Platoon there, across several hundred yards of open fields to the farm area, and then through the buildings and the surrounding woods. There was a fresh layer of snow on the ground, the night was clear, and the moon came up early and bright. It looked not much different from trying the same thing in broad daylight.

Lieutenant Tucker led the group of 15 men that pulled away from the Second Platoon at 0200: platoon guide McGinley, squad leaders Roebuck, Kanieski, and Nettleton, and Clements, G. G. Thomas, Walt Wright, John Stroud, Bohm, Jones, Swanson, Postlewait, and Wheeler. Every man in the group was loaded with all the ammo he could carry. Two 536's were taken along, and arrangements were made to relay messages to the company CP via King's platoon CP in the factory. Each man had two grenades, there were two BAR's, and the rest had M-1's or carbines. They were all heavily clothed, too, against the cold. We knew of the Jerries sending out patrols garbed in white, and everyone was wishing he had on a white snow suit.

There wasn't any cockiness or any sign of bravado as

they left, and they became quiet and tense as they crossed the bridge from the factory to the open fields. Hardly a word was spoken then. Progress across the fields was slow and cautious. No one needed to be told to move quietly and to hug the ground, for they were filled with ugly premonitions.

Half-way across the open fields, they ran into Constantine barbed wire that was the last obstacle in front of our lines. They hunted for a gap large enough for one man at a time to go through, and then they proceeded from a skirmish line formed to protect each man as he went. There was another long stretch of open fields after that, three or four hundred yards, to be negotiated carefully and in an extended formation. Part-way across this last open space, they ran into a small stream that hadn't been observed at the time reconnaissance of the route was made from the factory in the afternoon. Here again a skirmish line was formed while they went one at a time across a small foot bridge. Then they followed a fence that led toward the left end of a knoll behind which were the buildings of the farm. It was the last open ground and ended in a low hump or ridge that paralleled the knoll about 50 yards from its base.

As the skirmish line pulled up behind the hump, scouts were sent out — Mac and Charlie — and Mac spotted two Jerries back in the woods to the left at the base of the knoll. He ducked and came back to report, and there was quick conference on the situation. It was determined to move over the hump they were behind and up to a smaller one just a few yards to the front. The order was given, the men hesitated, thinking of how they would be 15 black shapes moving over a white mound in the bright moonlight, and the order was repeated. Then they inched forward through the snow, hugging it and plowing through it, every man realizing how like ducks in a shooting gallery

they were, and sweating against the ice-cold, snow packed ground. They made it to the next cover and lay in the snow wet with perspiration and panting for breath.

Scouts were sent forward again. Mac got half-way across the open ground between the rest of the guys and the woods and just slumped behind shallow cover when the first fire came from the woods. He slipped back as the fire continued, and then the patrol opened up with all it had. They raked the woods and the farm buildings with heavy fire, but they got almost as heavy fire in return.

Posty spent long minutes calling for mortar fire on the farm and the woods, but there seemed to be no result. Everyone said afterward that if the mortars fired, they went so far overhead that they hit way back in the woods. But they couldn't be sure. Someone had set off a mine, hand grenades were being thrown, and there was heavy automatic fire. Their senses were so absorbed with the noise in the immediate area that no one would swear whether they even heard mortars or not.

After a few moments, both sides ceased firing and began to wait each other out. "Tuck" re-formed his skirmish line to afford better flank protection, and then they just laid low. Tension had been so heavy during the crossing of the fields and after the first firing that most of them said they were soaked with sweat, but though the night was cold and they lay behind their high ground for what seemed an interminable period, no one complained of being cold. They lay there sweating out half a dozen tough possibilities. They didn't know the size of the Jerry force. Were they being outflanked as they lay waiting? The trip back across the open fields, if the coming of daylight should still find them there, wouldn't be any fun. The Jerries could be zeroing in mortars on them.

After while someone spotted movement at the nearest house. They waited and saw that the Jerries were coming

out in an attempt to slip away back into the woods. They'd been sweating out our patrol, too, and had decided to get the Hell out of there. Tuck ordered all to withhold firing as the Jerries came out one at a time and started along a path parallel to the skirmish line and leading back over the hill to the enemy rear. When it appeared that the last man was out of the house, and just before the first one had topped the hill, an order was given to open up. This time the Jerries hit the ground, but not without casualties, and now they were pinned down by our fire. Again there was a lull and another sweating out of the next move. Jerry got impatient. The firing flared again, Jerry attempting to cover another move. A burp gun stuttered. The patrol opened up and moved forward to counter the Jerry move. The one "536" left was hot with Tuck's urgent and repeated calls for mortar fire. The Jerries moved again, and they were now near the brow of the hill over which was safety for them. Another move began under covering fire, and just when it appeared that the enemy was reaching the cover and security of the hill, that long-awaited mortar fire came through. Six rounds landed on and around the hill, mostly back of it, and that was the last of the Jerries.

The patrol waited a few minutes, then its right flank of four men moved forward, wheeled to the left, and scoured the woods through which the Jerries had been withdrawing. Five dead were found and were quickly searched. Our four men rejoined the skirmish line at its left flank, and the patrol withdrew quickly behind the hump from which it had first entered the action. Briefly, a check was taken. All men present — no, wait a minute, Hays is gone. Someone had last seen him when the burp gun opened up and had seen him move forward toward it. Quickly, now, steps were retraced back to the point where the line had been, then forward of it, way forward. Yeah, there he is,

huddled down on the white ground not ten yards from the guy with the burp gun. Sure, they remembered now. That vicious German gun had quit firing about then, and only one of Hays' two hand grenades was left on him.

Sobered, cold now, and tired, they started back still with the job of getting across those fields and back to our lines. Four of them carried Jimmie and made it along the fence and back across the little stream while the rest covered them from the rear. Then another group took it that far, and another, until all formed across the stream. Then another skirmish line and a repeat job a few at a time until they were all back through the gap in the wire. Once more after that and they were at the factory and back through our line to safety and relaxation and thankful prayer and sorrow for Jimmy and sleep.

No one went right to sleep. They lay and went over and over the whole thing and remembered every move and every burst of fire and every minute of lying in the snow and waiting. Reaction set in. Some of them lay and quivvered and trembled in their sacks until exhauston finally brought sleep just at daylight.

Who was there didn't remember the brightness of the snow in the moonlight and the huge open fields that lay between them and their objective? Who didn't sweat out again in his sack the gap in the wire and the little bridge across the stream and the single file trek along the fence as they neared the farm? What about that first burst of fire leveled at them behind the hump and that move from the hump up to the better position? There was something. The order had been given to move up and over but not a single one of them moved. So Tuck stood up and yelled at them: "I said 'move' and I mean move." Then as one man the line was up on hands and knees and moving forward as fast as they could.

There was Posty with his "536." Some time during the

frantic calling for mortar fire he crept up to Tuck and said, "Lieutenant, my radio won't work. The aerial's gone." "Goddamit, Posty, you got to take better care of that radio. We need it. What the Hell happened to the aerial anyway?" "Oh, I didn't lose it," Posty replied. "Someone shot it off." All this from Posty in a calm and conversational tone when he had had the radio glued to his ear all the while and the base of the aerial was not three inches from the side of his head when it was shot off.

And Pfc. James Hays when he heard and saw that burp gun directly to his front and crawled out ahead of the line to get it. There wasn't any cover the way he had to go and only a little concealmeant part of the way in the shadow of a slender log. The 14 men who got back will swear that he knew what risks he was taking in the job he set for himself. He was our second casualty in Love Company, and he was the first to win an award, the silver star.

* * * *

Everyone was largely free to do as he pleased on the 24th. The reserve positions had been prepared and were not to be occupied until or unless a need became apparent. There was no daytime guard duty, and not much more than a company CP guard was required at night. The order of the day for all of us was foraging for food, getting located in our billets, finding wine and champagne, talking with the natives, exploring for souvenirs, writing letters.

"C" rations were supplemented with every conceivable kind of food. Onions were plentiful and nearly every one knew where there were potatoes and apples. Trades were made for the heavy, dark bread that we were beginning to find quite palatable. Someone found some jam in an apartment that had been vacated hurriedly by its tenant, and shortly thereafter everyone in the company had at least

one jar of some kind of jam or jelly or preserves. A big batch of mail had caught up with us, and there was a variety of cakes and cookies and nuts and dried fruits.

There were plenty of liquid refreshments, too. Half a dozen of the men got packages from home that contained well camouflaged bottles of good American whiskey. Wine was everywhere. There wasn't anyone who hadn't had a bottle given him by some Frenchman or who hadn't bartered for one or who hadn't at least found an unprotected wine cellar. The Third Platoon found a large cellar containing dozens of bottles of champagne. Those who found it began to sample, and the stuff must have been good. Within an hour or so the cellar was empty, and little J. R. Thomas was on the street giving a bottle to every soldier who passed. Headquarters did about as well. "Oncle Louie," the old man with the axhandle musachios and the white apron at the CP, who puffed and wheezed with every step, toock care of the Kapitan and several of the boys in return for cigarettes. Householders all along the way exchanged champagne for vigarettes and chocolate and chewing gum. To top it off, the officers got their monthly "X" ration of liquor.

Intermittent shelling of the area lasted throughout the day and the early evening, and the company CP was directly in the path of a good share of the "incoming mail." We rigged up an alternate CP in the basement where we spent most of the day after a couple of close ones had shattered the windows and scattered shrapnel upstairs, and after a big chunk had been taken out of the garage back of the house. In the basement it was strange to us the way the natives who were there just sat stolidly by when a shell dropped close enough to shake the house. They'd lived through enough shellings so that they knew the close ones from those that howled overhead and so, too, that they knew you couldn't dodge one after you heard

it. We didn't, and we'd hit the floor when we needn't have done.

Finally we gathered up our bed rolls and our equipment and moved down the street toward the city about 400 yards to a house on the highway across from the aid station. It had been the residence of an architect or designer, and a prosperous one. Moreover, the owner and his family had moved out in such a hurry that they had left behind nearly all their furnishings. It looked like a luxurious mansion to us after having lived in dug-outs and foxholes and bombed and burned out buildings.

A phone was installed, we moved in, someone got the furnace going. We all had beds with down quilts and comforters. There were extra rations and packages of food from home and food found in empty houses. To cap it all, there was a good kitchen stove, and one of the cooks, "Gilly," had come up from the kitchen to take care of Headquarters.

A feast was prepared for the evening. Cans of meat and beans were dumped into a pot with onions and garlic added for a change in flavor. We peeled and sliced half a bushel of spuds. We put on two or three large pots for coffee. We opened jars of jams and jellies, and someone brought out a small can of honey. We began our dinner with champagne and a toast, the latter now long forgotten. We ate from plates, real china plates, and we had knives and forks and spoons of a respectable size. We tried valiantly to handle the delicate teacups we found without too much crudeness. We made a great effort to eat slowly and with dignity.

After the meal the Skipper opened his quart of Bourbon, and it was passed around the table. Someone escorted Casazz to the piano, and he began to pound out some old favorites for us. We became full to our ears with mellowness. When the phone rang and the Skipper was called

to it, we held our breaths in sudden anticipation of something bad, but it was news to fit the occasion. Battalion called to give out a special bulletin: The Russians were within 45 miles of Berlin. We had a new super-speed plane that had gone into action and was outdoing the German jet-propulsion jobs. American forces had made a successful landing on Luzon in the Phillipines. SHAEF announced a new program of passes to England for members of combat outfits.

The dinner became a celebration, not drunken, but delirious with joy. We went to bed afterward with a feeling of well being and of the imminence of the war's end. What a beautiful world it was, and what sweet dreams lay ahead! We went to sleep wearing rose colored glasses.

XI

DEFENSE OF HAGUENAU

Official War Department records show that early on the morning of 25 January 1945 the Germans made a strong and determined attempt to encircle and take the Moder River city of Haguenau as the beginning of a general campaign to drive the Americans out of Alsace-Lorraine. Four attacks were made, two southeast of the city at Oberhoffen and between Kaltenhouse and the city, and two to the northwest at Schweighausen and along the city's outskirts. The Germans had four companies of the 22nd Panzer Grenadier Regiment, two or more companies of the 21st, and at least one company of the Tenth Armored Engineer Battalion, among the forces that opposed us. Some of these were considered to be crack units, though they did have a scattering of poor replacements among the regular troops. One or two of the companies or battalions were made up of men who had already played their part in the Ardennes offensive. Our own forces were composed of units of the 79th and of the 42nd Divisions organized into a task force under the command of General Linden. We had the support of the 242nd Field Artillery Battalion and of some Sixth Corps artillery.

Had the attacks, all or any one of them, been successful, the entire front of the American Seventh Army and of the French First would have been endangered, to say nothing of the possible effect upon the whole western front. The German high command had the same objective here that it had in Belgium when the Ardennes bulge was created: a substantial breakthrough followed by envelopment and liquidation of broken Allied forces. That it

failed was due to brilliant and courageous defense and counter-attack on the part of the units at each point attacked. Love Company's part was substantial since it was one of three companies meeting the attack between Kaltenhouse and the city from the southeast and was the single company used in a counter-attack made later to restore the original lines at that point.

* * * *

It must have been shortly after midnight when the first of us were awakened by terrific noise and concussion, for that was approximately the time the Jerries started a preparatory barrage. Soon we were all awake and lay fearfully listening. The sound of our own counter-battery fire quickly mingled with that of the Jerries. We could hear the bursts from our own guns and the whistle and scream of outgoing mail. We were able to recognize our own by now, and we knew even better the more fearful sounds of the incoming shells — the quick whine of the stuff that went overhead, the slow and increasing whirr and then the roar and concussion of the rounds that hit nearby. Some of this stuff was coming close enough so that pieces of shrapnel dug into the walls of the building we were in and shattered the windows. This wasn't just desultory harassing stuff. They had bracketed in on the higway and the buildings along the way where there were troops or equipment, and they were working the whole area over thoroughly.

Before long the Skipper ordered us to move the CP into the basement where there was the protection of a new air raid shelter the departed owner had been building when he took off, and he ordered us all out of bed and down there dressed and ready to move out. He sat with his ear glued to the phone, listening in to find out what the score was.

The enemy attacked simultaneously at the four points

about Haguenau at 0100 hours. In the Third Battalion sector, they attacked the factory held by King Company and surrounded King's first platoon. At the right of King and in front of the road farther out toward Kaltenhouse they penetrated the lines between King and Easy after having crossed the river on improvised pontoons, and they pushed on about 400 yards through the woods and the fields on our side of the river. They were moving fast and with determination.

At 0130 Love was ordered from reserve into position in the rear of King. Runners were immediately dispatched to the platoons and we assembled and moved up the road toward Kaltenhouse. There was a calm, quiet efficiency about the move, and a feeling of hushed expectancy. The artillery barrage had ceased in our area by the time we got out onto the road, but it was still raging fiercely in the direction we were headed, where we knew or felt that there was intense activity.

When we reached King's area, our new CP was set up alongside King's in the basement of a tavern about 200 yards south of Farm Huffel on the highway. By 0230 we were all set and waiting for the order that then came through for us to bridge the gap between King and Easy and to reduce the enemy salient that had been driven there. The Third Platoon was left in positions behind King as a slender battalion reserve, while the First and Second moved farther out the road toward Kaltenhouse. The Second took up positions left of the road and at right angles to it along a trail where the men dug in behind low mounds. The First moved farther down the road until it was met by heavy machine gun fire and forced to withdraw, whereupon it took up positions to the right of the road opposite the Second and slightly ahead of it in the wreckage of hangars at the airport.

During this time — from 0230 until about 0600 — it

was so dark and positions of other units were so uncertain that it was impossible to move about very much. Nothing could be accomplished under those conditions, so the men did little but dig and dodge artillery shells. There was constant pounding of the area the company occupied, so that everyone there dug and hit the dirt alternately for hours and had no more than shallow holes dug by daylight.

At 0600 the Second Platoon moved forward on the second half of the company's assignment, the cutting off of the enemy who had penetrated through the gap between King and Easy. At the same time the First Platoon moved into the positions from which the Second had moved forward in order to protect the latter's right flank while it was making contact with Easy Company. Then, within a few moments, the First moved forward at right angles to the Second, forming, with the other two companies, a box around the enemy salient. Shortly thereafter the Jerries were so effectively cut off that most of them surrendered — 40 to King, nearly twice that number to Easy, and 15 or 20 to Love.

The operation had been completed between 0730 and 0800, and the First Platoon moved back into the position it originally occupied while still in reserve at the beginning of the action at 0230; but that position was now a part of the MLR as the forward points occupied by King had been driven back to that extent, some 600 to 700 yards. The Second Platoon remained in the line between King and Easy until it was relieved by a platoon from the Second Battalion the next night. The sector returned to comparative quiet soon after daylight. Only light sniper fire and some harassing artillery fire, 88's and light mortars, kept up during the morning and early afternoon. Both sides used the daylight hours for reorganization, for bringing up supplies, for taking care of dead and wounded, and for assessing the situation to determine what most

favorable further action lay ahead. There was a lull in sound and movement along the front, but the areas behind the lines on both sides were anthills of activity.

Our own casualties had been light considering the volume of artillery and small arms fire put out by the advancing Jerry units, and they were all inflicted at about the same time, early in the morning when we first reached the new positions and before there had been more than time enough to scrape up the snow and peck a little at the hard ground. In the Third Platoon area an "88" shell burst a few feet to the rear of a machine gun position, and all of the crew were either killed or wounded. Mild, soft spoken Szucs was killed along with his buddy, Kruszynski. They were gunner and assistant gunner respectively, and they lay together sprawled on the edge of their hole after the smoke cleared away. Bridgeman, the third member of the crew, was seriously wounded, and Wills suffered from severe shock. Little J. R. Thomas, the Third Platoon messenger, was also evacuated with shell shock. After daylight the Second Platoon got most of the shelling. The positions it occupied were in the open, and the least bit of movement was under full observation. Wheeler and Holcomb were hit. Clark had one of those miraculous escapes that made so many of us believe in predestination. He crawled out of his hole and was no more than 20 feet from it when a mortar shell plopped squarely into it and enlarged the thing by four or five times the size he had dug it.

We had come out of the fight pretty easily compared with King and Easy and companies that had contained the attack at the three other points about the city, but even a few losses are hard to take, and it's dienicult to realize how rapid the transition from the quick to the dead. Those boys were with us the day before, having a big time in taking over Haguenau to our own uses. We could shut our eyes

and see them and hear their voices. Now several of them were wounded and two were dead. We all said a requiem for them and vowed to fight better and live better on their account. We didn't need to make any promises about carrying on memories of them, for that much each one of us knew he would do without prompting.

* * * *

On the afternoon of the 25th, quite unexpectedly and with only a few minutes for preparation, we got orders, passed on down to the Skipper by Colonel Lovsnes, to make an attack on the factory area close to the river on our side of it. The Jerries had taken that area from King Company. It was their only salient on our side of the river and had to be wiped out in order to fully restore the lines to the original status. The First and Third platoons were ordered to make the attack at 1600. Word did not reach us much before 1545. A preparatory barrage from two battalions of artillery was scheduled to start at 1555 and to last for five minutes. In direct support were to be one platoon of Mike's .81 mortars, two sections of .60's, one section of .30 calibre heavy machine guns and one of lights, and rifle fire from one platoon of King Company. Beside this, two M-6 tanks were to fire on the factory and the buildings around it from a "hull defilade" position behind the rifle support. It sounded like all that we might ask for to back us up in such an attack.

Notice got up to the platoons on the MLR so short a time before the artillery barrage began that there was scarely time for the men to sweat anything out. "H-hour" was on them before they knew it. The barrage came off on the tick at 1555 as scheduled, and it was an encouraging sight and sound for those about to push out across the open fields out in front. There was a steady whistle and sigh of shells going out over our heads, and we could see and hear the explosion of shells in the factory area. We

could see parts of roofs jumping above the buldings and walls spewing out, and there were the brown and white blossoms in the fields and along the edges of the woods where shells dropped in the open and threw up their loads of earth and snow.

At 1600 on the dot the shelling ended and the order was given to move out. There was a dirt road that led from the main highway down through the fields to the factory area, and the two platoons jumped off in open formations, the First to the right and the Third to the left of that road. The direct support came to bear then, the mortars and machine guns and rifles, so effectively that both platoons were able to move across the three to four hundred yards in full view of the factory area and of numerous Jerry OP's across the river without a single man being touched. It was miraculous to those of us looking on from back in the woods, for they seemed to crawl along at a snail's pace. Then came the buildings on both sides of the road and little patches of trees around them so that we could see only fleeting glimpses of further progress.

The First Platoon had some work to do along the way before reaching its objective. There were some machine gun emplacements that had to be cleaned out, but the artillery fire had been heavy enough and the supporting fire was so constant that they were easy obstacles. Back of those emplacements and between them and the river were the three houses the platoon had to take. The first house was easy, and the second one the same. The men proceeded smoothly to the job of cleaning them out. They had picked up eight prisoners from the machine gun nests, and they now added to that number 20 more from the two houses.

Between the platoon and the third house was a low ridge behind which one squad took positions to maintain

fire against that last house and a few positions in the trees around it. The were able to prevent any counter action while the bag of prisoners was being collected and a reorganization was being effected for the final little push. Up to this point there had not been very much resistance, and opposing fire had not caused a single casualty.

The Third Platoon followed the road from the LD half way across the fields, then skirted around the left of a dried up and fence-enclosed fish pond that was next to the road. A short distance from the river there was a road paralleling the river and running to the factory area, where it joined with the dirt road from the main highway. The platoon had to reach that road before fanning out into a patch of woods, the first cover since the point of the jump-off. The men took their positions in these woods facing the river and open ground beyond it and also facing along the road toward the factory and the two buildings to the left of it that were their particular objectives.

Part of the platoon under Sergeant Harrison harassed Jerries who were withdrawing from the factory to the east bank of the river after having been flushed out by the First Platoon. At the same time Lieutenant "Moose" Yelton led a group in an attempt to across the road diagonally to the right and to the first of the two buildings. They moved singly across the road in the open and into the face of fire coming from the second house. Stevenson was hit in the schoulder and Leff in the upper leg on the way to the house, and Blanchard and Croix were pinned down. "Moose" and Sergeant Morris made it to the house along with Hunter and Sullivan and Scoggins. Osborn stayed by the road on the edge of the woods covering them with AR fire, as did also McGrath and Boltz, with McDaniel feeding the three of them ammo. Behind the AR men were Sergeant Noland and Dew firing on the retreating Jerries across the river.

At the house "Moose" and his group found that they were in what had been an aid station. They picked up a wounded man from King Company, two wounded Jerries, and three Jerry aid men. Movement in the house was hampered by heavy fire coming from the house across the road, and "Moose" called for a bazooka to be brought up to work on it. Iwen attempted to bring it up and was hit in the leg and pinned down. So Croix, who had made his way with Blanchard from where they had been pinned down, voluntered to go get it, which he did very calmly and cooly while bullets sprayed all around him.

The bazooka wouldn't work, and no one could find out what was wrong with it. Some of the men tried to get upstairs, but the doors had been strongly barricaded, and there wasn't time to knock them out and get through them to a vantage point for working on the snipers who were causing all the trouble.

About this time a Jerry counterattack was launched, with infantry and tanks being brought up from the woods in the vicinity of Farm Kestler on the east side of the river. There were three tanks. One of them was knocked out by a direct hit from one of our tanks before it was even a hundred yards out in the open. The second one reached the protection of factory buildings on the Jerry side of the river. The third pulled in among trees along the river and to the left of the Third Platoon. Both of them thus gained positions from which they could work over both platoons, and particularly the First, with machine gun and artillery fire.

Back across the fields at the edge of the woods the Skipper watched the progress of the fight and saw the tanks come out. He was in contact with artillery via Battalion and called for fire on the tanks. Through him the one tank that had reached the factory buildings was

knocked out and fire was brought down as close as possible without danger to our own men.

The First Platoon was in a tough spot for meeting a counterattack. The fire from the third house was heavy enough to keep them down under the cover of the low ridge, and that ridge was at such an angle to the river that the Jerry troops and the tanks that moved up from the east side of the river could rake the whole platoon with enfilading fire. It made a serious dilemna for Lieutenant Rice. His orders were to take and hold the three houses. The third house was the strong point, and nothing could be held without taking it. In the face of fire from the counterattack, he ordered his men to move up on the house, and in moving forward they suffered their first casualties of the action. Dickens fell as he pushed beyond the ridge. Then there were others, and all the while fire from across the river was getting heavier. It was nearly dark, there was no communication with either the Third Platoon or the company command post, and every minute in the exposed position brought new casualties. There was no point in staying on any longer. It had to be admitted that the attack was a failure. Lieutenan Rice ordered an immediate withdrawal.

About the same time Lieutenant Yelton was faced with the same problem in the Third Platoon. Their objective had also not been accomplished. That second house was causing them a lot of trouble, and they didn't have the weapons to bring to bear on it that would knock out the snipers holed up there. (Both platoons had a house that held them up, a staunchly defended strong point, and the men didn't know until long afterwards — some of them never knew — that it was the same house that stopped both platoons.) With the bazooka out of commission and with no rifle grenades, they couldn't blast the snipers out. There was too much open ground between the house they

had taken and the strong point for them to storm it. Nor was there any hope of aid from outside the platoon. The counterattack hadn't bothered them much, but it was getting late, and they couldn't afford to be caught by darkness without their objective taken and secured. It looked like a good idea to get the Hell out of there, and Moose gave the order to do so, even though, as he said, he'd probably be made a buck private for pulling out on an unfinished job. Moose went out of the house and to the corner of the building to look around and call an order to Harrison over in the wood., After that he had no worries, for he fell in the snow with a bullet between his eyes.

Sergeant Carey, "B. J.," had made his way to the house some time earlier, and he took over on the withdrawal plan when Yelton fell. He carried out a reorganization and arranged for the handling of the prisoners and for the evacuation of the wounded and the dead, and then they began to move out, keeping the aid-station house between them and the other house.

Over in the woods, Harrison got ready to move out also. Moose had told him to get the men who had fallen out of the clearing between the house and the woods — Leff and Stevenson, and Iwen who had been hit later. Iwen had a hole in his leg, and he stuffed snow into it to keep it from bleeding too much and crawled back to the woods under his own power. Harrison handed his rifle to Blanchard and ran out to get Steve, but he was hit and killed almost immediately. Stevenson had been hit again as Harrison came for him and was finished. Noland thereupon made the hard decision to leave the wounded and dead behind, and they took off, leaving at the same time as Carey and his group.

After the protection of the house was gone, Carey's group began to draw fire, so he stopped long enough to get the Jerry prisoners to carry Moose. Then they lit out again,

and the Jerries got faint-hearted under their own fire and dropped Moose and started to run. No one in the group wanted to take time to stop and take care of them, but Burns, at his machine gun back across the fields, did that for them, disposing of two or all three of them.

Carey was last to reach the fish pond, and he was met there by Rice who was bringing up the rear of the First Platoon. The two returned together to the MLR where they went about reorganizing and getting ready for the night. They had two tired groups of men, two groups who were completely exhausted. They had been under terrific nervous strain for nearly four hours with the lust of battle, the fear of death, the excitement of making an attack, the physical exertion of twice crossing that wide field, the repellent nausea of seeing men wounded and mutilated and killed, all these things and others combined. They were worn out. They were confused and humble and sad. This was a day none of us in Love Company would ever forget.

It was a rough day for the entire company, least of all for Headquarters, of course, but even most of us dodged some shrapnel and small arms fire and sweat out our own safety and that of our buddies. We had lost one officer and eight men killed during the day — Szucs and Kruszynski from Weapons Platoon in the morning shelling. Yelton, Harrison and Stephenson from the Third Platoon in the attack, and Barry, Dickens, Labhart and Renard from the First. Our wounded were slightly more numerous. Beside those who were casualties in the early morning hours, there were Boltz, Iwen, Leff and McGrath from the Third Platoon, Holcomb and Wheeler in the Second, and four in the First — Samit, Spernick, Syslo and Smith. Nine dead we left behind on that little battlefield and eleven evacuated with visible wounds.

That day had its highlights that we would all remember.

Some of our buddies had been wounded or killed in the performance of a combat soldier's duty, pure and simple. Others had performed outstandingly. George Harrison tops the list of them all for the unselfish giving of his life in a fruitless attempt to bring back two of his wounded buddies. Dickens was another brave one, for he rose from the very spot where Renard had fallen to try to get the marksman who dropped Renard, and he was hit just as he drew a bead to fire. Iwen, who was hit and lay pinned down, stuffed snow into the hole in his leg and crawled to cover. Later, during the withdrawal, he walked and ran across that wide field rather than ask help from another. McGrath, when he was hit in the shoulder, said lightly, "Ouch, I'm hit." He, too, walked uncomplainingly back to where a jeep was ready to take casualties to the aid station.

Barry probably lost his life through pure unselfishness. His first wound was bad but not too serious, and he demanded to be allowed to stay with the platoon to fight on. When he was ordered to leave, he would take no help, and he plodded painfully back toward the MLR. On the way, he was hit a second time and still went on under his own power, losing his own blood and his own life with every step, but refusing to take someone out of the line who was needed there. Spernick, another of those boys who didn't look like a soldier but was, had gotten so angry during the fight that he stood up in clear sight of the Jerries to hurl curses at them in German, and shortly afterward, he, too, was wounded and taken to the rear. One of the youngest in his platoon, Samit had become its best sharpshooter by the time he had a thumb blown off.

Holtz was about as intent on his job as a man could be. He fired at retreating Jerries on the other side of the river until there were no more targets. Then he moved to the right to fire at men leaving the second house. He completely forgot about staying behind cover and stood up in

plain view with one arm wrapped around a tree and fired until he was almost out of ammo and until splinters from a bullet that hit the tree he was leaning against temporarily blinded him and knocked him flat. Earlier, when Boltz saw his first Jerry, he yelled at the guys around him, "He's mine, boys. I want to get myself a watch." He had seen the Jerry checking the time, and he had been needing a watch for a long time. He got it, too.

Back in the Jerry aid station that the Third Platoon took over, Hunter swore like a mad man when he tried to open a door and the door knob was shot out of his hand. On the withdrawal, Osborn tripped and fell when a bullet clipped one of his shoe laces and he got tangled up in it. One of the guys, it wouldn't do to give his name, saw a Jerry running to surrender just as they were high-tailing it back to the MLR. He stopped short while bullets clipped into the snow at his feet. "Hell, we haven't got time to fool with prisoners." He raised his M-1, fired two snap shots, and spurted to catch up with the rest.

Croix volunteered to go out from the Jerry aid station to where Iwen was wounded and pinned down with the bazooka. Carey demurred. He'd get killed. It wasn't worth it. But Croix insisted with quiet firmness. He crawled for 15 yards out into the open, stopped to talk to Iwen and to tell him to hang on until they could come for him, and then crawled calmly back with the bazooka. Fifty slugs must have pounded into the snow all around him, but he kept his nerve like one who has positive knowledge that he's going to get out there and back again safely.

The Medics at the forward aid station sang the praises of all our wounded. None of them, they reported, whimpered or cried or made any complaint at all. Most of them belittled their own wounds and insisted that others be taken care of first.

In the First Platoon things had gone so smoothly the

first part of the attack that everyone felt almost that they were on a problem rather than in actual combat. When "Dick" fell, Billie Rice, who felt as much as an officer could the responsibility he had for the lives of his men, stopped short and cried out, "Oh, my God! Someone's hit." That was the dividing line between make-believe and reality. Haimm and Dailey and Coslow stuck their necks out constantly, with complete disregard for their own safety. Samit, the esthete of the bunch, worked methodically to get at a particularly effective sniper. He couldn't reach the Jerry with a carbine, so he picked up a discarded AR, and when that wouldn't do the trick, he finally got hold of an M-1, and succeeded.

Smith was one of those guys you might think would steer clear of combat. He had gone into the supply room as assistant to Bowman just before we left Gruber, then he was "demoted" back to his platoon at CP-2. When he was hit, he kept on firing, and when Byrer tried to give him a hand on the way back for aid, he pushed Byrer on ahead of him and went along under his own power. He had been hit in the thigh and the calf of his left leg. He ran all the way across the field cussing the "sonsabitch'n krauts", and he was in such pain that the tears streamed down his face.

Beltrame brought one prisoner back, one who had probably been in on the taking of the Third Platoon outpost several days earlier, for he had several articles of American clothing and a pack of our cigarettes. Beltrame booted him in the ass all the way across the field. "A GI Joe, you sonofabitch, huh? Wearin' GI gloves and smokin' Chesterfields."

Back a few hundred yards from the MLR, the ammo bearers and the drivers and the men on the phones and everyone else did their jobs. All afternoon there were tree bursts from mortars and 88's that combed the whole

area around the CP. Leaves and branches and dirt were blown about so much that the snow was covered. It was almost miraculous that not a single shell hit the tavern where the CP was located, for nearly every other building in the area got at least one hit. We were most scared late in the afternoon when a TD slipped alongside the building without warning and began firing as fast as it could. We thought all Hell had broken loose.

Some of the wiremen went into the woods on repair jobs and to lay new wire, sometimes without knowing where the line was, and again dodging tree bursts every few feet of progress along a line. Goldy and Andy and Frieri and Maness and others with the Skipper had their hours of sweat, too. One "88" shell lit so close that in knocked them all flat. They were as covered with mud and as soaking wet as the guys who made the attack.

One of the Weapons boys came in with a vivid 'eye-witness' account of Captain Cook and Lieutenant Skilling and the whole group with them being surrounded by Jerries and surrendering en masse. He had seen it. He knew it was true. They were all on their way back to a Jerry PW stockade by now. When the Skipper and Skill and the rest came into the CP a few minutes later, tired and bedraggled, but whole and safe, those of us who had heard the story let our mouths drop open a foot and almost popped our eyes out from staring.

It was a rough day, a Hell of a rough one, the kind you wouldn't want to see repeated if you could live until the end of time. The guys from the platoons, as they came in by shifts during the night for a chance to eat and sleep for a few hours under cover, were stupid with fatigue. They couldn't talk about the day or about how tired and sick of it they were. They'd wander about mechanically like zombies getting something to eat and bedding down for a little while. But they wouldn't really sleep. They'd lie

there and roll and toss and groan until it was time for them to go back out to their foxhole posts, and they'd seem glad that their time was up so that they could go out and relieve some of the rest.

Billie Rice took the full weight of the losses in his platoon on his own shoulders. He had done a superlative job, but he couldn't see beyond the fact that there were dead and wounded among his boys and that someway it might have been otherwise. Nor was he the only tender-hearted one among us. There were dozens of those rugged, hearty riflemen who broke down in tears. No one was ashamed of his tears and no one felt superior for keeping dry-eyed.

* * * *

The rest of our time at Haguenau was anti-climax. The Jerries had been so thoroughly mauled on the 25th that they were content to draw back and stay on the east side of the river. A patrol sent into the factory area the following night found it entirely deserted except for a few Jerry stragglers who had holed up in a basement and some wounded of both sides that it had been impossible to evacuate on the afternoon of the 25th. King Company reestablished its outpost at the factory, thus restoring the original line completely.

After having failed in our attack mission, or having felt that we had failed, success was realized. A combination of circumstances made the Germans pull back across the river to their positions before the attack. They must not have known that we had withdrawn from the factory area and must have expected further attacks on the limited positions they still held there. Their supply problem was a huge one for maintaining such a small position. The artillery had been rough on them, and they must have felt that they could expect no cessation in it. Their casualties in dead, wounded and captured for the 24-hour period of 25 January were very high.

We felt better when we found that the Germans had pulled out of the factory area. We had tried hard, but we had bungled. The armchair generals hadn't allowed us enough time to prepare the attack, but we couldn't rest alone on that excuse, for it had been a situation where an attack had to be made without delay to do any good. We were at fault for not having radios along. We came away from reserve positions on short notice but not so short that we couldn't have brought them along. We would know better on that score the next time. Two little "536" radios or two operating bazookas would have made the necessary difference to bring success. So would half an hour more of time for planning. Probably the biggest thing we learned was that you can't have things the way you want when you fight a war. You have to take what you've got at the moment in equipment and men and circumstances and make the best of them.

Under cover of darkness on the night of 27 January the dead were brought in from where they had fallen. The bodies of Lieutenant Yelton, Harrison, Stevenson, Dickens, Renard, and Labhart were undisturbed except for removal of identification and weapons and watches and the like. The jeeps went down the factory road, and a detail of four men carried each of the bodies out through the deep new snow that had fallen during the two days since the action. They sweated at their work and were sickened and saddened at having to grasp clothing and the cold flesh of their comrades. It was a job that no one would have volunteered to do.

On one trip the detail went out into the open fields to investigate movement that had been observed during the afternoon. They found a Jerry paratrooper who had lain wounded in the snow for two full days and well into the

third night. He was nearly frozen to death, and it took all West's efforts to keep him from falling into that last deep sleep on the way to Battalion Aid. West stayed on there to help with him. Later, he told us that the Jerry was a boy of 19 or 20, a huge fellow and a perfect physical specimen. As he regained consciousness, his spirit aroused, and he was belligerent with a strength that would not acknowledge defeat. He seemed to recognize in West one who had saved his life and had a smile for him, but to the rest he showed a sneering, proud face. Our "Doc" (then Lieutenant) Zell marvelled at how any man wounded as he was — there were seventeen bullet holes in his body and arms and legs — could possibly have survived that length of exposure in the bitter cold. Much as we hated him and his kind, we admired him, too.

Nothing more happened while we were at Haguenau. We just manned the positions and waited, for word came down on the 26th that we were soon to be relieved.

XII

REST AT LAGARDE

Late on the afternoon of 28 January, Task Force Linden was relieved, being replaced in the line by the 314th Infantry, 79th Division, and the various units that composed the force left the Haguenau sector for rear areas to rest and reorganize. The Third Battalion of the 242d, worn and badly mauled, entrucked outside Haguenau and rode back through the city and on to the little town of Niederschaeffolsheim where billets were taken and we bedded down for the first full night's sleep any of us had had since getting to Haguenau. There was no formality or fanfare about the move and no shouting or horseplay or looking at the girls on arrival. Everyone just ate his "C" unit and hit the sack.

The trucks were reloaded on the morning of the 29th, and the long convoy started for the rear over the rutted and icy roads of Alsace. It was a weary procession in spite of a night's sleep. What talk there was in the trucks was subdued. Someone would start talking about events of the previous weeks, and there would be a few words here and there, and then there would be a long silence. We were still so tired and stupefied from the shock of that first real contact with the death and destruction and abject horror of war that everyone's thoughts kept going back to the things about it that were graven in our hearts and minds — back to our moments of fear, to our hours of waiting, to our first realization that death had struck among us and left its mark on our minds like the pall of smoke and the rubble and the broken bodies and the smell of cordite and of death that mark the scene of a battle.

By 1700, the convoy had travelled the 100-odd kilometers west to Lagarde, we had detrucked, and we were inside our billets. Another hour saw the supper of "C's" over and most of us in bed or relaxed around the warm fires of a score of little French stoves. We were back away from the front, away from bomb and shell and bullet. We were in a quiet little farming town so far from Haguenau and Hatten and places like them that we could rest and sleep without fear of alarms and without fear of having to move up in the morning or the day after or the day after that. God, but it was good!

Next morning we got up to a breakfast served to us at 0900. The kitchen had arrived and been set up in the building that had been a combination town hall, fire station and school house, and it was pretty damned good to see that kitchen crew set up right where we were located and to contemplate hot meals again three times a day. It was fun to wander around that little town, even though it was another filthy Vergaville, for the snow was deep enough to cover the reality of the town, and everything looked bright and clean. There were threadbare children playing happily in the streets and there were the girls and the housewives and the old men pattering about cheerfully and busily on their wooden-soled shoes, apparently giving the lie to our general observation that they represented a nation of lazy opportunists who cared more about the conquests of the moment in love and in life as a whole than they did about things solid and enduring.

It was at Lagarde that the idea of writing an account of the company's activities was first given voice. On one of the idle days at the CP, it grew out of a bull session on the Haguenau experiences during which someone ventured the offhand opinion that it was just possible we might do and see enough overseas to make an interesting account

for post war reading on lazy winter evenings before a fireplace. The idea took hold. The Skipper warmed to the thought of setting forth very careful and complete tactical narratiyes; someone else thought that it would be fun to read about some of the funny things that had happened; others thought that there was some good material already for Ernie Pyle's type of composition; and there were those who wanted something that they could take back with them when we finally returned to the States. It took hold completely of our imaginations, and there was a rush of ideas and of reminiscences. Now here's something you don't want to miss . . . Do you remember that deal at CP-2 when some of the boys . . .? You know, this is something that could easily hit the bookstands after the war . . . Hell, let's get busy on it and make some money out of it. And then the talk went on to means of printing and distributing and of meeting costs, the usual cart before the horse.

There was so much free time at Lagarde that much was accomplished in gathering notes and getting a chronological itinerary for the making of a tentative outline covering the period thus far. It was decided to begin with our departure from Camp Gruber, as many of us were new to the company there, and there hadn't actually been an existence as such for the company prior to leaving the camp. At first it seemed to be desirable for the account to be written in the third person. But later it appeared that there was something of coldness about third person, a certain detachment, whereas an account in the first person plural would make it seem more an outgrowth of the company, a part of it, without the obnoxious "I" of a single writer. One man might do it up to a point, and someone else could take over without too much rewriting to be done if the starter were transferred or became a casualty.

So the thing began, the initial writer (who just happened to stay around long enough to do the whole job) using his

composition as a combination of creative writing and practice exercises on the keyboard of a French typewriter. It went quickly for a time until the writing became work and interest disappeared among those not actively engaged in helping. It was a job to get straight the action there had been, and the writer soon found that he had to play the part of judge, moderator and editor. Already there were widely divergent accounts of the events that had occurred. The morning reports were good enough for keeping things in chronological order, but even the most detailed record of events could not have been enough to tell the exact details of something like the attack at Haguenau on the afternoon of 25 January, and there were such divergent accounts of something like the supposed Jerry boat landings at Strasbourg that the writer is least sure of all as to whether or not there were Jerries on the dike and around the pillbox that night. Sometimes the writer had to determine to follow rules of verisimilitude, using his own judgment, though that may not have been the proper course, for anything can happen in war. Again, he merely attempted to give all views and let the reader reach his own conclusions. Some things were debatable as to the propriety of including them in unvarnished truth. Should it be told that Joe was killed by bullets fired by his buddies in a confused situation, or should it merely be said that he was killed in action at a specified place and time, or should the other extreme of a purely ficticious story be resorted to in order to save the feelings of any survivors who might happen onto the story, and even build Joe up as an heroic sacrifice in a great cause. It was decided to let the chips fall pretty much as they might and risk any untoward results. The writer made up his own mind early in his labors that he would take cracks at anyone who deserved censure if his barbs reflected the spirit of the company as he interpreted it.

After Lagarde what writing was done was spasmodic until V-E day. Then, in Austria, amid the beautiful surroundings of the Tyrol, the next effort was made that brought the story up to date.

* * * *

For the first day or two at Lagarde the weather remained cold and there was much snow on the ground. Then a thaw set in, accompanied by a warm wind, and the snow soon disappeared to be replaced by a thick and deep gumbo mud. The town that had at first looked rather quaint and attractive in it's white covering revealed itself to be a typically dirty, run down French farming town. The streets were not improved and soon became quagmires. The piles of manure, faintly camouflaged with a light covering of straw, drained into the streets and filled the air with pungent barnyard odors. The few wells in the town, like those in Vergaville, were so closely besieged by piles of manure that it was impossible to believe that they did not receive at least some of the drainage from them. All the houses were untidy, tumbled-down shacks, and not as a result of war damage, for the battles in that section had surged around the town and only a few small bombs had hit it.

There had been other troops in the town before we and other companies of the Third Battalion arrived there, and they had left without doing any policing of their billets. Wherever they had lived, there were rooms full of garbage they had accumulated. Even their slit-trenches had not been properly closed and marked, and they had made greater use of unoccupied buildings as latrines than they had of those they prepared.

As in Vergaville, the people in this town were not its original inhabitants. Mostly they were evacuees and refuges from the cities and towns farther east. These people had moved into unoccupied houses and had been, for the

most part, content to live with the piled up filth they found there rather than try to do anything about it. The fact that they were ragged could be understood because of their enforced nomadic life, but not so their filth and their lazy resignation to conditions as they found them.

The town is a stopover on the Rhine-Marne canal and might be expected to wrap itself with the dignity and self-importance of a small link in a great water transport chain. In the States that was the kind of town that would cater to tourists and travelling men and would dress itself up to catch at least part of the trade going through, but not Lagarde.

The children of the town were avid little beggars, something not their own fault but the fault of the war, and they did right well sponging on Company "L" and on Headquarters and "M," all of which were there. Their most common approach was the routine that goes —

"Cigarette pour pa-pa,
Chocolat pour ma-ma,
Chew'n' gum pour mwa,
Et zig-zig pour you.
Oui, oui?"

At Lagarde we all had two or three showers in the 19 days there. We went by truck to the town of *Dieuze* where Service Company was located and took our turn with the rest of the regiment. We had not been overly clean since our arrival in France, and this was one real chance to scrape the dirt off. There were portable units at CP-2, where we were allowed two showers each. There wasn't anything even faintly resembling a shower or a bath at Vergaville. At Strasbourg, the plumbing wasn't working, but some of us did manage to get a shower at the power plant adjacent to the First Platoon CP. We had no opportunity to bathe or shower in the woods, and there were neither facilities available nor time at Haguenau. Some of

us got clean from head to foot for the first time in four weeks, but for most of the company it was the first time in 55 days.

Movies were brought in occasionally by Special Service, and the Red Cross sent a clubmobile unit once with coffee and doughnuts served by American girls. We had one party in the company, a rip-roaring one, with sandwiches from the kitchen and French beer provided by the Skipper.

By the end of the first week, everyone seemed to be thoroughly rested and to have shaken off the gloom that followed Haguenau. The last outward evidence of after-effects came from the Skipper sometime on the night of the 7th of February when, in his sleep, he sat up in bed and told Farrington to get out the runners and have the company alerted, that a Jerry attack was expected momentarily.

Task Force Linden ended its brief existence and the 42d Division resumed its separate identity as of 0001, 6 February 1945. Attached artillery and other special troops began joining the infantry regiments at that time. Reorganization got under way, and the division prepared to operate thenceforth as a unit rather than as part of a task force. We found later that we weren't to get much credit for our part in the defense of Haguenau and Hatten because we did not fight as a division, but we found, too, that we were to get, if anything, more than our share of glory in the newspapers from this point on, for we had a public relations office at division that tried to tell the world that the war couldn't even proceed, much less be won, without the new Rainbow.

On the 8th, Regiment broke down on restrictions and started passes to Nancy, 12-hour affairs that gave about five hours in the city after time deducted for travelling there and back and waiting for transportation at both ends. Twenty-five EM and one officer went every second

day, each taking one meal of "K" rations. The trucks pulled into a parking lot in the center of the city, and in most cases the officer then turned the men loose with the simple admonition to be back in time to make the convoy leaving at 2000.

Nancy happens to be one French city that was little hurt by the war. Its central district was not touched, and there was only a little damage in the vicinity of the rail yards. The starting point for the day was Stanislaus Square, where the gilded grill fences that connect the buildings facing on the square and the statuary in the center of the square itself are the one really impressive sight in the city. In one direction from it lie the business district and the movies and the Red Cross Canteen, and in the other are the beer joints, the honky-tonks, the brothels — the Tenderloin. It would have been an interesting statistical study to check incoming trucks and keep a tabulation of the relative strength of the groups as they split at the square and took off to whichever district was the immediate destination, and it was amusing to note with what unerring instinct each group, without previous knowledge of the city, found its way without even asking directions of an MP.

Everyone went on pass with an ammo bag or a musette bag or some other carrier full of cigarettes and chocolate, and even the most extravagant returned with more money than on leaving but with that bag empty. Getting food in the city was a problem. The Red Cross doughnuts and coffee were always available, except for the effort of sweating out a long line to get them. Food otherwise was hard to get. Four or five of the men in that first pass group tried a civilian cafe and had a disgusted report to make of having eaten a piece of horse or bull meat with soggy potatoes and a greasy salad and black bread at the price of 300 francs, 6 dollars, per plate.

From the Nancy passes first came the stories of colored soldiers getting preference in the favor of both common street women and even some of the more respectable French. Several of the men reported actually seeing the "Jigaboos" breeze through such lines, stepping before other soldiers. On the streets and in cafes and beer joints and other places of recreation, the women of France mingled freely with the colored boys and seemed to make no distinction between them and the rest of us. Most of our company were resentful of the absence of a color line, and those from the south and from industrial areas where there were large Negro sections ridiculed the French and threatened dire means of showing the colored GI's on their return to the States that they had no such preferred position there and would have to re-learn their place in American society. A sad commentary on an army from the land of freedom fighting to end the threat of a world tyranny! The few who could look on those sights of racial equality with impartiality and disinterestedness could scarcely ignore the social implications for America after the war.

The first group to go to Nancy provided the most news and the most excitement for the rest of the company, for "Long John" Stroud and "Doc" West, who were part of the group, failed to return with the rest, and the story on them was a serious one. They had stopped in at a tavern early in the evening to bolster a good head of steam they had acquired during the afternoon. At this place they tried a few drinks of mirabella, and it was from a poison batch. They were rushed to a hospital, the 240th General, and doctors and nurses worked over them all night with stomach pumps and special antidotes. Both had close calls and came back to Lagarde a week later pale and thin and weak from their experience. The one good part of it was that through them military authorities in Nancy were

able to locate some of the distributing points for the stuff and, its source. Not, however, before nearly a score of American soldiers had died.

The truck rides on the return trip from passes were often more fun than the time spent on pass. There were wild and lurid tales to be told, stories ranging from the ludicrous to the sublime, and when most every one was talked out and the miles began to drag along, there were the song fests, always one of the most spontaneous of group expressions in the army. There were the old favorites that we all sang and the newer ones that only a few were able to more than hum. There were unofficial army songs that have always been the property of service men and of which someone ought to make an anthology. And there were the numerous parodies that make ribald many popular melodies. A new version of Hinky, Dinky, Parles Voux, the Sweetheart of Sigma Chi done army style, a variation of Old McDonald Had a Farm, new and endless verses to the one about Abdul and the pride of the shah . . . the repertoire of any particular group was limited only by the mood of its members. Whatever the occasion or the time or place, though, there was always at least one who'd contribute those two tag lines that fit the end of every soldiers' song —

"Roll over, Mabel,
It's better on the other side".

A man could be down and those sessions would give him a lift. He could be lonesome and feel friendless and they'd mellow his feelings and give him a sense of kinship with everyone around.

Szucs had always been one whose mild spirit and soft voice and sweet songs would set you to thinking of home with a nostalgia that would almost carry you away. Farrington was another, but of a different type altogether, with his lonesome cowboy voice and his swashbuckling air

and his off-color songs. So was Mac. He'd have his platoon singing en masse on a truck march across country. When the trucks rolled through a town and he spotted some rear echelon service trooper, you could hear him yell, "Hey, buddie, where was you on D-Day?" His infectious manner and his blithe voice took away any sting the words might have had.

The only really unpleasant happening at Lagarde was the accidental shooting of Anderberg. A group in one of the Weapons billets had been scuffling and fooling around one morning as Bernhardt took out his pistol to field strip and clean it. Quite by accident he pulled the trigger on what he thought was an empty chamber — he always carried it thus, and only someone handling it unknown to him could have loaded it — and a shot struck Anderberg in his left arm and went through his left leg. They were only flesh wounds and not serious, but the event caused much excitement for a little while. It was soon forgotten by all except Bernhardt who, too mild to hurt an ant intentionally, took a long time to get it out of his mind. Weeks later we got a laugh out of receiving a request from the hospital for an investigation to determine whether or not the gunshot wounds were self-inflicted. We couldn't imagine a combat soldier less apt to shoot himself to get out of the war than Anderberg.

On 9 February 33 replacements joined the company from a "Reppl Depl" in England, and they were much like the last bunch that joined just before we left Camp Gruber. Some were old-timers in the army, like Schneider, Revia, Prosio and Ridnouer; but for the most part they were AGF replacements who had barely finished basic in the States when they were whisked overseas on the Queen Mary and other fast transports used just then to get infantrymen to combat zones with the least possible delay. They were raw recruits to us, and the old men in the

company saw themselves as seasoned battle veterans in the eyes of these new rookies. For a while, we used them to pass on some fanciful tales of individual exploits in combat.

Before long, evidences of garrison life began to appear at Lagarde. Poop was passed down from Division directing a return to the observance of rules of military courtesy and discipline as at Gruber (for we had forgotten such folderol during combat). We began to have frequent inspections, first of billets and kitchen and later of men and equipment. A surprise one was pulled by 7th Army officers because a general had seen a cook somewhere in the division area return to the kitchen from defecating and begin to handle food without first washing his hands. Love got a clean bill of health on that one.

Soon, too, we began to receive training schedules, and the streets of the village resounded to drill commands. There were also company and battalion problems. One tiny village nearby that had been almost obliterated in fierce fighting a few months before was used for several problems, and we reduced it finally to shapeless rubble with tank and bazooka shells.

We had our first full day of sunshine in two and a half months in France on 14 February. That was also the date that the first small group to go on pass to Paris returned to the company area and entertained the rest of us with their vivid stories of that most fabulous of European cities. Gay Paree, the city of light and of beautiful women, the one city of France completely untouched by the ravages of war. That day the Rainbow Reveille made its debut in the ETO. And that day, also, we were alerted for movement eastward.

The order to prepare to move came late in the afternoon, and we got little sleep until late that night, when

the alert was called off until morning. The 15th and the 16th were both spent in fruitless waiting, and not until the morning of the 17th did final word come, followed shortly by the trucks. The whole battalion got under way in convoy by 0930 after having bid farewell to Lagarde and all it represented in rest and recuperation. "Dirty knees," a 17-year old "strassen madchen," was around with her begging smile to offer farewell. The hausfrau of the officers' quarters lounged in a doorway with that air of Parisian sophistication that she affected. At one time or other the whole French population was out for a last look at this particular bunch of Yankees. Dailey and Coslow hurriedly climbed on their truck just at leaving time after having stayed overlong at some farmer's barn helping him pelhis cow give birth to a calf that insisted on greeting this war-torn world butt-end first contrary to normal bovine SOP's.

The convoy was on the road an interminable eight-and-a-half hours before reaching its destination at the small rail and highway point of Wimmenau on the banks of the Moder River, some 30-odd kilos north and west of Haguenau.

XIII

WIMMENAU

The convoy crossed the bridge in the center of town and pulled up along the east bank of the river. It was about 1830 when we scrambled off the trucks and marched up the hill in a ragged formation to the edge of the town near the railroad station. We moved into the new CP just as the company we were relieving — a company of the 44th Division — moved out. It was after dark, and we were confused, so it took us a long time to find our locations and get settled down. The Second Platoon was billeted in a barn across the street from the CP, and one of the men, Crider, fell through a hole in the floor of the loft where he was to sleep, breaking his leg. The company was scattered in billets from the railroad station to the center of the town.

Next morning our first visitor at the CP was the woman who owned the house. She came in a towering rage because the CO of the other company had promised her that she could have her house back, and we had taken over the entire house. Probably she thought she could embarass or frighten us into moving out, and when that didn't work, she resorted to tears and wailing. Goldy did the talking for the Skipper, and he wasn't very convincing. She backed him into a corner with her arms waving and her voice at a high pitch. Then she turned on Tuck and from him to Frieri and on until she had worked over each of us. Then she left to go see the burgomeister and military government. Not successful at either place, she returned to try again to beat us down, and the Skipper told Farrington to keep her out of the house and to shoot

her or at her if she kept comnig back. That was an assignment to Scrubby's liking, and half an hour later he had a chance to work at it. She came with a new angle and tried to barge past Farrington. He blocked the doorway, and she began storming at him, so he bided his time until she reached a crescendo in her ranting, and then he casually fired a shot that just dusted her shoes. The effect was electric. She stopped talking and stood with her arms raised and her mouth open and her eyes wide. For a moment she stood so, then she let out a terrified shriek and ran down the street. That was the last we had to be bothered by that particular hausfrau.

* * * *

Nineteen February was the day of our great gin fiasco. The evening before, the Skipper was at battalion headquarters getting the big picture from the colonel and, with the other company commanders, making plans for occupation of the time and energies of the men. Among the incidental items brought up was the fact that the liquor ration for the officers would be along in a few days and that there would be certain quantities of gin, whiskey, champagne, and cognac available. Orders and the cash were to be turned in by 1200 on the 19th. Apparently it was said that there would be one bottle of gin for each two men — meaning officers, since all present were officers.

The Skipper came back to the CP and called in the platoon leaders to pass on the big picture to them. Reserved as a last and pleasing tid-bit was the item about the liquor. Each officer would get a bottle of whiskey, one of champagne, and a half of cognac, and . . . each two men, *both* officers and EM, were to get a fifth of gin. Cash was to be at the CP at 1000 in the morning so that there would be ample time to get it to battalion by 1200.

Out went the platoon leaders, and the news of the gin

almost preceded them. What was happening, we all thought, that the army suddenly had broken down and decided to be generous with the GI's? There sure as Hell must be a flood of gin in the States for that much to reach us over here. Each platoon collected money from its members, and it was all turned in a least 17 or 18 hours ahead of time. Then most everyone talked about how the stuff would be prepared in mixed drinks and of the sweet binges it would provide. Next day Ruesch took the cash down to S-1 to turn it over to the battalion sergeant major, Filipkowski, and he was given the sad news that it was all a mistake. No one, said Fil, had said anything about gin for the endlisted men. This deal was nothing but the periodic ration for officers!

Back at the company CP we all felt like hiding long enough for the storm to blow over. The platoon sergeants were called in and told the brief story and given back the money for the men. The Skipper hastily assured them that each man would share with the officers on what they received (which usually was the case anyway with our officers). Those of us who ventured out from headquarters during the afternoon expected to hear storms of complaint, but there was not much said. After all, most of us thought, when did 'they' ever do anything for the enlisted men? Some of the quietness was undoubtedly due to the fact that each one half realized that we shouldn't have been so ready to believe that there could be such a windfall. What business, anyway, would the army have issuing out large quantities of liquor to men at and near the front lines? It just didn't make sense.

This same date "Polak" Kwiatkowski became a stanch and everlasting "friend and champion" of the Red Cross. He had become a father on 19 January. Ten days later he received notice of the blessed event from home via airmail, and there followed in another week or so pictures of

the baby and more letters. Now the Red Cross — thirty days after the event and three weeks after he knew about it by mail — sent a "rush" messenger up with a telegram that gave him the glad tidings.

* * * *

From the 19th through the 24th we had a mild training schedule. There was some range firing, squad problems were run, we worked with tanks, and there were instructions given in artillery observation. During the week a schedule of combat patrols was sent down from battalion. Lieutenant Snyder and the Second Platoon drew the first one. Thursday "Humphrey" and Mac and Morris went up to the line to be briefed on the situation there and to learn the mission of the patrol. All was set and the lieutenant and eight men moved out on Friday afternoon, The patrol route was through a deeply wooded area, and they had uncertain information via reconnaissance of the extent of mine fields and of enemy strength along that sector of the line. The mission was combined recon and combat. Harass the enemy and take prisoners. They ran into heavy automatic fire and other small arms and had a sustained fire fight for some time, and they pulled out without any casualties after inflicting some damage on the enemy. They pulled back quickly and called in an artillery barrage that they thought must have blasted everything out of the part of the woods they were in.

Friday and Saturday Lieutenant Benson got dope on his patrol that was to go out Saturday night. Friday we all got hot showers at a mobile unit set up on the river in the center got town, and during the afternoon we saw a movie put on of Special Service in the Second Platoon's barn loft.

We saw our first town crier in Wimmenau. He came around nearly every day to the intersection in front of the CP, rang his hand bell, and then chanted the news in a

sing-song voice. A few people gathered around him, but most of them just opened a window and stuck their heads out to hear his announcements.

* * * *

Sunday, 25 February. No training schedule in the forenoon. We policed our billets and area, had an 0800 breakfast, then went to church. Services were at 0930, 1000, and 1600. Both Catholic and Protestant groups met in the local church.

In the afternoon we had instruction on the use of grenades and other implements in the destruction of enemy weapons and equipment, and a demonstration at a safe distance. General Collins made an inspection of the regimental area during the afternoon. He hit Love late, on his way from the line to the Third Battalion CP, and he caught two or three boys without gas masks. At Battalion he found the colonel out of uniform, in fact, everyone seemed to have been caught with their pants down. We expected to receive some of those curt memos from Division calling for reply by endorsement, unless something of importance happened soon to take the General's mind off the "chicken."

After a breakfast of dehydrated eggs, a dinner of plain, unadulterated spam, we had a supper of creamed chicken. The creaming spoiled what might have been good chicken, and the whole mess was well sprinkled with pin feathers.

On 26 February one platoon was put on a 24-hour alert, and the men in it slept with their clothes on and had their packs rolled and their equipment ready for a quick call.

There was something foreboding about the appearance of General Collins in the area. Back in garrison his approach always meant highball salutes and everything strictly GI. A loose button, a helmet without a net, soiled

shoes, and the like, invariably meant a reply by endorsement to a memo outlining the deficiency.

When division headquarters had caught up with the outfit — we were at Lagarde — things remained quiet for a few days, and then a flood of poop came pouring in to the companies: the wearing of the gas mask, daily training, trenchfoot prevention, uniform requirements, courtesy and discipline, articles of war, VD lectures — all these garrison subjects were brought out for an airing. In the CP, there was a flood of correspondence to be answered and all kinds of reports to be made. Delinquency reports began to come in on men who had been on pass to Paris and Brussels and Nancy.

The climax of the "chicken" came this date. It was dished out to the companies at a meeting of exec officers called during the evening. Inspections had been made of the condition of the billets the companies had left behind in the rest area, and the hotshots fresh from the States who made them were perturbed at what they found. The rooms of our billets in Lagarde — like those of all other companies — were dirty, the areas were poorly policed, and latrines were not properly closed. This was not the way good soldiers left things, they said. Of course, they didn't check back to find the filthy conditions we had run into on moving into the rest area. We had left things in a mess and that was enough. It was ordered that one officer and 20 men from each company would go back to Lagarde the next day and clean up the whole town. The 242d was in reserve. The 222d and 232d were on line. Regardless of that, each would have their respective companies send out cleaning details to the towns they had lived in. This was, after all, to be a boy scout war.

In Wimmenau the farmers were beginning their spring work, and it was something new to even those of us who

were farmers in civilian life. Old, high-wheeled, narrow wagons are drawn by teams of oxen that look like pictures of raw-boned Texas longhorns. The first job of the spring is spreading fertilizer, and the manner of doing that job is radically different from the experience of any of us. A huge barrel is loaded onto the wagon and is driven up to a manure pile. The manure pile is a strange affair. Underneath each one is a tank and the offal is piled onto a cement floor that drains the juices from it into the tank. Pipe runs up from the tank, and the liquid is pumped from it into the barrel on the wagon, which is then hauled to the fields and sprayed as fertilizer. Whether the solids left in the manure heaps are later spread over the fields like natural fertilizer at home, we didn't learn. We did agree that the liquid type gives off the most pungent odor imaginable and that it flavors the air of the country for miles around when it is sprayed on the fields.

To outward appearances the activities of the company consisted entirely of the light training schedules sent down from Battalion each day — a short problem now and again, lectures, scouting and patrolling, range firing, and other items typical of garrison. But closer observation would reveal more than met the eye at the first casual glance. The absence of a full squad at mealtime usually meant that 12 or 13 men were out on a daylight combat patrol. Similarly, the appearance of blackfaced men for breakfast or of men with mud on their clothing and equipment or of remains of camouflage sticking out of helmet nets indicated that a group had been out probing enemy lines during the night. There were at least two or three patrols during the week. The first time for each platoon, the platoon leader went along, but thereafter a patrol leader was designated from among the NCO's.

The first patrol out — Snyder's group from the Second

— ran into a fire fight. It was a daylight affair, and they were fortunate to get back with no one hurt. For the next few times out, they were unable even to contact the enemy. The night patrols, and most of them went out at night, went forward 2,000 to 3,000 yards without finding any sign of enemy occupation or activity.

Late on the 27th, the group returning from the Lagarde boy scout detail reported having done a job they were glad was ended. The French soldiers had pulled out of Lagarde, and they had the debris and offal of our own and the Frogs and previous GI's to police. Shit flew fast and furiously for the five hours they were there. The natives welcomed them and wanted to known if they weren't coming back. One of the boys worried the life out of Bella, the Parisienne, threatening to shoot her one and only banty rooster.

* * * *

A beautiful day, 28 February, warm and balmy, with clear skies and springlike atmosphere. We took turns on the volleyball court all afternoon. We ate spam for about the sixth day in a row. There was a movie before and after supper, the best we'd seen so far — Up in Mabel's Room. Supper brought a change in diet to steak, with asparagus, rice, bread and apple butter, chocolate sauce, and coffee. The first real meal in over a week.

The night was more beautiful than the day had been. Not a single patch of cloud marked the sky, and there was no breath of wind. All the stars in the heavens were clear and bright.

An hour after dark, the town and the army billets were in darkness and silence. A single light leaked from the barn where the third or fourth showing of the movie was under way, and occasional crashes of sound came from the loudspeaker. Of a sudden the comparative stillnes was broken

by the roar of a 105 sending mail out to the Jerries from the field behind the Second Platoon barn.

Rumor during the day had it that the 12th TAC and our artillery had been bombarding the enemy front intermittently with propaganda leaflets instructing German soldiers to surrender and telling them of tough going ahead for those who failed to do so. That single 105 that fired at 1900 may have heralded the end of the period of grace, if there was truth in the rumor. For a moment after the waves of sound and concussion from it had died, there was complete silence. Then there was the loud crash of the piano in the movie as someone banged out the opening bars of a noisy Tschaikovsky. Then silence again for a fraction of a second. Then a tremendous, crashing roar as five batteries of artillery in and around the town fired in volley. The concussion, wave after wave, rattled the windows and shook the walls of every building in the town. Our ears were tortured with the terrific volume of sound. And before anyone had had time to assimilate the effect of the single volley, the guns took up a steady firing in salvo and volley that lasted for fully 15 minutes. If a surrender offer and a threat of punishment for failure to accept had been broadcast, there had been no bluff about the volume of artillery fire that could be concentrated in that area.

Soldiers on guard duty saw the green pinpoints from direction sticks set up by the artillery crews and saw the heavens flash in every direction as battery after battery opened up. Distant flashes could be seen against the sky even though the guns firing were beyond the highest hills, for this barrage was not local. It went on all up and down the 7th Army front.

* * * *

On 3 March the feeling of safety and remoteness from the war that we had had ever since arrival at Wimmenau

was suddenly dispelled. The first raiding party (they were successors to the earlier patrols) that was sent out in the early hours returned to the company area at about 1100 after stopping at the aid station to leave six casualties. The First Platoon had gone out and had failed to contact the enemy but had stumbled into a mine field about 400 yards in front of the MLR. Ease and freedom from worry were now gone for all of us, and in our minds we were back at Haguenau and back in the war again.

Since the first patrol ran into a fire fight, succeeding patrols and raiding parties had gone out as far as 3,000 yards in front without stirring a single Jerry. Even the raiding parties, which were sent out in full platoon strength, were able to stir up nothing.

The Skipper and Lieutenant Kelley went with the platoon, along with Frieri, Maness and Anderson to handle communications. The Skipper remained at the MLR to direct fire and smoke and to maintain communications from that point. The 44 men under "Russ" Kelley took off at 0430 heading east across a tiny valley and up what was designated as Hill 415. They got 400 to 500 yards up the heavily wooded hill and were coming out into a clearing when Sica, the second scout of the third squad and one of the new men in the company, hit a Schuh mine. His right foot was blown off, and he lay out of sight in some brush calling for help. The aid man with the platoon, a Private Dumm who was filling in while Abma was on pass, stopped men who started up to bring him back, saying that he had better get first aid to Sica where he lay rather than risk loss of blood bringing him back down the hill. He crept cautiously to Sica, bandaged his leg and applied a tourniquet, and moved back a step to return his equipment to his aid kit. That step cost him his own right foot, for he set off another mine, and this second one hit Sica in his left leg and Vitale in and below his right

eye. Leftwich, another new man, set off two mines simultaneously as he tried to get forward to help Sica, and he, too, lost a foot. That explosion also blew St. John's rifle out of his hands, the shrapnel ripping open two fingers of his right hand and piercing his right leg above the knee. At the same time, Dailey was hit in the left leg with several small bits of shrapnel and had his right leg badly scraped. He was out on his feet.

No attempt was made to proceed farther. It was essential that Sica and Dumm and Leftwich and St. John be helped to the aid station for immediate treatment, and there was no particular sense in trying to negotiate a mine field whose extent and density were not known.

When the platoon got back to the company area, the men were stunned with the mental shock of the injuries sustained by their buddies and burning with a sullen anger at what appeared to them the stupidity of the higher headquarters that had sent them out without adequate preparation for what they met. At the same time they had glowing praise for those who had been hit, telling of how admirably each one conducted himself. The whole story spread like fire, and soon we were all talking bitterly of the damned fools "up there."

The route of the patrol had been through the sector of Company "L" 232. The platoon had gone up to the CP of the 3d Battalion 232 ahead of time to report in and get last minute poop on the situation. They had found no one on guard and had had to waken men to find officers to report to. They got word sent out to the artillery as to the area they would be in, and they were given last minute assurances that there were no mine fields on Hill 415, that word coming directly from the battalion CO. So they felt that they had reason for that bitter and damning anger. They had been told, too, that they were to go ahead and take the hill if they could, but prisoners were what

was wanted particularly, not the hill or any positions on it. "Give us prisoners if you have to go all the way to the Rhine for them." Sure, give them prisoners. Take out a bunch of good American boys and get them all smashed up just because someone has a yen for some prisoners!

At that time the whole war seemed to be drawing toward an end, and general efforts were made all along the line to propagandize enemy troops and talk them into surrendering. Every unit on line developed a lust for prisoners. In our sector the terrain wasn't the kind for a big push, or so we felt. All the big pushes were getting under way well to the north of us where there was open country suitable to tanks and armored units and close air support. There seemed nothing to be gained from pushing here. Already thousands had been taken prisoner, and it seemed to us that they would continue to come in fast enough if we just sat back and waited for them. Yet, we were ordered to go out and try to breech mine fields that we didn't know the location of and that we weren't prepared to cope with. What was the sense in it?

God, give us understanding and faith and courage. Let us not think that our lives are going forfeit to satisfy some leader's whim. Let us be secure in the knowledge that what we're required to do is toward some real purpose, that we're a part of the big picture and not just a meaningless sideshow.

Those of us in the company who considered ourselves to be oldtimers had wondered about the calibre of the new men, men who had come direct from long non combat service in England or who had come direct from the States after only a brief period in basic training. Not so after this patrol. There was not a whimper from those who were wounded and no green display of shock or terror. Sica called for help when he was first hit. After he had been cared for and then was hit severely a second time, he

thought that he was done for and begged his comrades to leave him behind. Big, hefty. Leftwich, on the return to the MLR, negotiated two little streams in the tiny valley at the foot of the hill with only the aid of Haimm holding one hand. No small feat, that, hopping over a stream four feet wide just a few minutes after having a leg shot off bellow the knee, Each one belittled his own injuries and his own need for help and would accept assistance only after assurances that every one else had been or was being taken care of.

Most gallant all was the new medic, a man whom none of us knew more than slightly. After exposing himself to take care of Sica, he took care of his own wound and Sica's new one. Even then he disdained help and told the other men to take Sica out and the rest, and he wouldn't let them move him until that had been done. Not until afterward did we learn through the Medics that he had three brothers who had been killed in action elsewhere and that he had the week before refused a dependency discharge.

Some difference of opinion exists as to the sense, military speaking, of sending out raiding parties or patrols for the purpose of obtaining prisoners and confusing the enemy. Prisoners are valuable, and enemy troops taken prisoner in raids are likely to be better soldiers and better sources of information than the kind of prisoners so frequently encountered at this time who went through their own lines to ours to give themselves up. The latter were men of low morale who had actually deserted out of craven fear or utter selfishness. They had little or no coherence in the stories they gave. They were poorly trained and had little knowledge of the army and of the units they served with. Those taken in raids were more often the first rate German troops the world had heard so much about. They were well trained, disciplined and high in morale. A smart interrogator could rely much more on

information obtained from such prisoners than from that obtained from the deserters.

It is essentially true that raiding parties do much to put great strain on troops in the enemy line. If raids come unexpectedly, they do result in confusion, and the enemy never knows whether it's a raid or a full-scale attack. On the other hand, raids on a regular daily or nightly basis come to be expected and watched for, their confusing effect is lost, and the reception they get is much warmer.

Probably the correct conclusion is that raids are of value when carried out irregularly and on a surprise basis, but that it is unwise to risk whole platoons regularly for the sake of a few prisoners. We thought then that the latter was the case here. Battalion was called on to furnish a platoon every third day. Casualties on these raids were often unreasonably high for the reason that the enemy was prepared for them. Or he was able to evade them entirely and set mines and booby traps for them. The night before the first raiding party from Love a recon patrol had gone out and come back by the same route the First Platoon later used, returning through the lines at about 2000. At that time there were either no mines in the woods where our men later ran into them or the recon patrol was exceptionately fortunate in missing them. It is not at all improbable that the mines were laid during the night and covered with leaves. Frost on the leaves during the night would have eradicated any sign of their recent disturbance.

Through some incongruous coincidence, the Skipper/s personal radio, which had been back at Lieutenant Green's company for repair, was brought back the morning the raiding party went out, and when the men came in, it was blaring music gaily. It seemed unjust that the event for which we had waited so long — the return of that radio — should occur at such an unhappy time. But most of us

realized that the best antidote for low and dejected spirits was that selfsame radio.

* * * *

Five March was another of those quiet, easy days with a little training and a lot of fooling around doing nothing. It was the kind of day when we sat around in the CP chewing the fat. It was the kind of day when men get restless from inactivity and plain boredom, when tempers and nerves wear thin; the kind of day when you'd like to throttle the shavetail who sat and cracked his gum all day long. You wished to Hell he had something to do so that he'd get out or toss the gum in the stove for a while. It was the kind of day when you wanted to write home but couldn't find a confounded thing to write about.

The next day and the next were the same. Training was light. Big schedules were sent down from Battalion, but they were disregarded to a large degree and not without the implied consent of the S-3. One day there were movies. We saw and hooted at the slapstick antics of Abbott and Costello in "In Society". Rain and wind and cold continued as blustery March slowly wore away. Food was good. The shortage of rations that had put the crimp on the kitchen was relieved to the extent that there was almost an over-abundance of food. We had hotcakes or French toast for breakfast (both of which our cooks could make better than any other kitchen in the division), a noon meal of 10-in-one stew or hash, and fresh pork or beef or chicken for supper. There were plenty of desserts and sweets, even sugar in our coffee.

The Third Platoon began to show up with measles. Revia, Reasoner, Boltz, Vlasaty, J. R. Thomas, Stemple, were all sent to the hospital, though part of them returned almost immediately. The rest of the platoon were isolated. They couldn't eat with the company, and they missed the

movies. Zarn, from the First Platoon, went to the rear as the first of several cases of yellow jaundice.

Maybe part of the reason chow was so good for a few days was that Johnnie got word from home that he was the father of a baby girl born on 2 March.

One day early in March two officers from a QM outfit at Rhiems stopped by to inquire about Barry, to see him and take word back to his brother, a first lieutenant in their outfit. They were shocked at the news of his death and saddened at the prospect of having to carry back the word. Later, Lieutenant Barry came by to talk to the men who knew Don and to see the Skipper about him. Everyone rose gallantly to the occasion and gave the lieutenant a good account of his kid brother — not laying it on thick but being interested and helpful and honest.

The Skipper and Tuck got word on 8 March to report to Battalion headquarters to go on a recon mission, and there was silent understanding of the fact that this meant we were nearly at the end of our reserve assignment. Also, an officer from "L" 222 came to inspect our billets, and the word was out that we were to relieve them and they were to take our billets. On the same date we started packing — the process now of throwing away enough things to make the remainder fit into a bedroll of carriable proportions. As usual, packages started to come in and there was an excess of letters to be censored. We started to talk about what might be ahead, whether we would occupy a quiet sector or if there was to be a big push through the forbidding wooded hills and mountains stretching eastward.

Back from the recon mission, the Skipper calmly asked Primy if he would like to be an officer. Primy was caught flatfooted, not knowing whether to take the question seriously or to take it as part of the frequent ribbing the captain gave him. He stood for a moment wide-eyed and

open-mouthed in frank wonder. Finally, he got out a weak, "Well, God damn it, Captain. I don/t know". Then the Skipper told him that his name had been turned in and that the wheels had already been set in motion. He had to act only if he wanted to turn it down. Tuck started in on some fancy "sirring" the minute Primy made known his acceptance, and in an aside to Ruesch he brushed away carefully at some imaginary stripes, and Ruesch flushed with a look that said plain as all Hell that he wanted the stripes every bit as much as Primy could want the bars, if not more.

About 2200 a poker game in the CP was broken up on word from Battalion that there was a house on fire in the town and that the whole company was to round up buckets and help put it out. Earlier in the evening there had been some shelling of the town, and once some of the stuff got close enough so that we headed for the cellar, only to return when the shelling stopped before we were able to break down the cellar door.

We all thought the house down by the river had been set afire by the shelling, and we weren't too anxious to go to it. The artillery FO, Lieutenant Green, increased our reluctance when he gave us a long-winded account of what a fire meant to artillerymen. Any time he observed a fire, he directed his battery to work on it. The thing might be an ammo dump or oil stores, and more conflagration could be stirred up with more shells aimed in the vicinity. "Then," he said, "we figure they's always a bunch of curious guys around, and they's guys fightin' the fire. Shit, you can always figger on gettin' half a dozen of 'em. That's enough to make it worth while to throw in a few rounds."

As Green said, there were three times as many GI's on the scene as were neccesary to put out the blaze, though one house had already been gutted and the next was well aflame. Fortunately, the Jerries either had no artillery OP's within ten miles or were painfully short on ammo.

One or two well-placed rounds from a 105 or something similar would have decimated the battalion.

On the way back to the CP, Farrington was enough in his cups to tell Lieutenant Green and Ruesch about the time at Haguenau when he and Maness and G. G. Thomas (the Three Musketeers of the company) got beaucoup champagne from "Onkle Louie" — who had told the rest of us there was none left — by the simple expedient of tickling his chin with the muzzle of a carbine.

XIV

THE "JUMP-OFF" - 15 MARCH

We stayed at Wimmenau longer than at any place thus far since our arrival in France, 22 days in all, and no one was very anxious to leave when the orders came through. We had been hearing rumors of a big push, and we had read of the general advances made by the Third Army farther to the north, but all of us hoped that the 42d would not be involved, not from any abiding fear of further action but because the Hardt Mountains loomed ahead as a most forbidding obstacle, containing the Maginot Line and the Westwall and country generally favorable to the defenders even without the advantage of any fixed fortifications. So it was with some surprise and with considerable misgivings that we received the orders to move. Who was there hadn't said himself or acquiesced to someone else's statement that "I'd just as soon sweat out the rest of the war on this line".

Trucks assembled shortly after dark on the 11th, and we left Wimmenau behind at 1945, heading in a northeasterly direction with destination pretty well unknown to all of us but a few officers. There were rumors that we were that very night being moved up for a jump-off, and even before our departure word had come back that Sergeant Burns, one of the advance party, had been seriously wounded during an afternoon reconnaissance of our sector of the line. It didn't sound good. The long, slow ride through a very dark night didn't help any, nor did the long march from the detrucking point on. That was an experience full of foreboding.

We left the trucks on the rim of a sea of black, and we

proceeded down slope into the blackness under the strictest of orders as to security — no lights, no noise, and no losing of contact with the man in front of you. It was a single file trek down through thick woods so black that each of us had to hold on to the man directly in front or watch carefully and stay close behind to keep from losing sight of him. The footing was difficult and slow. At the bottom of the little valley were stagnant pools of water and several ditches to bother the unwary. Any man who hadn't believed the old training poop about seeing moving objects at night best by looking alongside them rather than directly at them found his error that night. You'd look at some object on the back of the man in front of you, concentrate on it and strain your eyes, and pretty soon it would be lost to sight. But, if you'd look a little to the left or right of the man, his dim outline would stay clear enough to hang onto.

At 2245 we arrived at the village of Althorn just back of the line, and the CP was set up in the basement of a house that had been wrecked by mortar shells. The platoons continued up the road a few hundred yards and then on up the side of a steep mountain to positions that were presently occupied by Love Company, 222d. Our guys shared holes with them for an hour, as we crowded in with them at the CP, and then they pulled out at about midnight. Next day the men came in a few at a time from those positions to report hat it hadn't been any picnic to stay out there where they couldn't see where the enemy was and didn't know a damned thing about him except that the other Love boys had said they couldn't plan on much sleep.

This new section in the line was at the extreme left of the 15th Corps sector, joining with the right element of the Sixth Corps. The 100th Division was on our immediate left until it was relieved the following night by the 71st.

They were jittery, we were jittery, and the night was full of flares and rifle shots and the detonation of booby traps, the latter usually being our own that we set off inadvertently. At the point where contact was maintained with the 100th, that division had set up a lighting arrangement called artificial moonlight, and that was the one spot in the sector that wasn't pitch black. It happened to be a weak spot in the line where, without light, the enemy could have gotten to within grenade range with perfect ease before being detected.

In the CP we had constant hubbub. The noise and jitteriness on the line was easily communicated to us there. The Skipper was never far from the phone except when he went up to the positions to look things over himself. The runners wore themselves out climbing the mountain to the line, and Leski found out about the time we left that the short cut he used a dozen times had taken him back and forth through an active mine field.

On the afternoon of the 13th word went up for the platoons to gather bed rolls and water cans at a collection point back of the line and to be ready to move again some time during the night. Then officers of Company "C" 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, 106th Cavalry Group, showed up and were taken over the positions by the Skipper. Their troops came along well after dark, and we pulled out of the line and left the town at 2330. Once again we made the trip on foot down through that dark valley and up onto the ridge to the west, then, still on foot, along the road we had come in the trucks two nights earlier. At one point we were walking along the road below a slight ridge on the west side of the road and toward the rear. Just as we went by, there was a thunderous roar and solid concussion from behind the hill as a wellconcealed battery of 105's opened up with a salvo. We

had an instant of near-panic before we realized what it was.

Hours after leaving Althorn, we dropped down into another black valley and set up a bivouac area on the slope of a wooded hill. We were far enough back to awoid observation and well below the horizon, so a few lights were permitted, and it was possible to discern that this was an assembly area for the battalion.

The 14th was a day of preparation for moving forward again, not for moving up into a quiet area and holding a line, but for moving up to the line and pushing off in an attack. We had a quick perception of what might be ahead and acted accordingly. We cleared out the pockets of our trousers and shirts and jackets, returning to them our choice personal keepsakes that we wanted to have with us and wouldn't risk losing. We looked to our supplies of cigarettes and matches and rations. We made up shortages in essential clothing and equipment. We cleaned up our weapons and filled up on all the ammo we could find space for. Then we bundled up our excess items for temporary storage at the kitchen back at Wingen. We wrote letters, long ones and many of them, and more than likely we unwittingly communicated to loved ones at home that something out of the ordinary was up. One guy suddenly decided he had made a mistake in not taking out insurance and ran around frantically trying to find papers to complete an application — but to no avail.

The officers were mysteriously absent the entire afternoon and evening. Lieutenant Hoyle came along from King company just after dark and told us to get ready to move out fast, and we began moving up the valley trail at 1930 still with the officers gone and with Ruesch as "acting gadget" moving importantly and concernedly up and down the column, wearing himself out before the march was well started. We went out of the valley to the

main road and back for the second time toward Althorn, turning off to the east just a few hundred yards short of there. At 2300 we reached our new bivouac area, picked up our bed rolls that had been brought by Gutting and Howell in several shuttle trips, and prepared to bed down. There was a dug-out in the area that was well blacked out, and half of the company took turns going into it two or three at a time for a last smoke, while most of the rest of us crawled into our sacks for a few drags in cramped positions.

The Skipper and the other officers finally came and got into a huddle inside the dug-out to go over the plan for the next morning. The rest of us tried to sleep but couldn't for visions of what was ahead. We were to be up and ready to move at 0430. There was to be a general attack, Love to be at the MLR for a jump-off at 0645, the same time set for the whole division.

Who could sleep under such conditions? Certainly not we who still were comparatively new to the rigors of combat. We had had a few days at Haguenau under fire and time at Koenigsbruck and at Strasbourg, but we were not the seasoned veterans we had thought ourselves to be by the time we reached Lagarde, and not a few of us wondered how long in battle, if ever, until we could approach it calmly and with equanimity. Would we acquit ourselves well as a unit? And in each man's thoughts, „Will I be afraid? Will I run? If I'm wounded, will I be brave and stoical about it or will I lose my control? . . . God, help me to be a man before my comrades! If I'm to be hit or to die, let it happen so that they will have kind thoughts of me. Help me, Dear God, help me to be a man!"

We were routed out at 0430, and the platoons were all ready to take off by 0515. They left, and the rest of us, the lucky Headquarters group, stood by to watch their shadowy forms fade into the woods. There were two

officers and nine men in our group to stay behind. We had mixed feelings about the deal. Sure, we'd be safer than the men moving up, and we wanted to come out of this thing alive and whole, but we wanted them to respect us and not look down their noses at us because we had been so fortunate as to avoid the actual combat. And we sweatet them out, too, that day and the next and every day thereafter that we brought up the rear in comparative safety.

We got the story of that day piecemeal. Part of the time we were near enough so that we could follow things from the talk on the "536's" . Then we'd buttonhole guys from Battalion who were in better contact with their "300" radio. We'd take ammo up and get a quick picture and then return. And there were the guys who passed us on their way back to the aid station — the walking wounded, the stretcher cases. Altogether, we managed to get the story, and it didn't sound good.

The company got to the MLR just before daylight and had plenty of time to wait around for H-hour. The guys sat or lay in the grass along the line and watched the sky begin to light up and the area around them begin to take on form. With the first full light, they could look out in front of the positions where they were and see the open ground and the wooded ridge they were to work along. A short distance to the front, there was wire stretched all along the sector, wire that the engineers had put out when the line was established at that point. Somehow that wire seemed to be a dividing line between safety and uncertainty. Everything out in front was no-man's land as far as they were concerned, but the wire represented the farthest forward point of operations from our side. They could see that our side controlled the terrain up to that point, and they knew that the wire had been put up by our engineers. They knew also that the engineers had

set up booby traps along the wire. But forward from the wire was all Jerry-land, and they could see from the MLR little ridges and spots where the woods and the brush were heavy, plenty of places where machine guns could be set up and where riflemen could be occupying holes or dug-outs. It was a good defensive spot for the Jerries.

The jump-off was carried out as scheduled at 0645. As Love crossed the MLR, the Third Platoon was on the right with the First to the left and the Second in support. King was to the right of Love, and Item was Third Battalion support company. Our battalion was the left element of the regiment and of the division, joinging with the 117th Recon Squadron. The First Platoon met again the Company "C" of that outfit that had relieved us at Althorn.

It sounded to us as if the First Platoon got off in the lead and moved ahead of the rest of the battalion. At least, it got out past the wire and into the mines ahead of the Third and ahead of King and, in fact, almost got through the field while the Third got just inside the edges of it. That was about 200 yards out from the line of departure, and it was only a few minutes — not much later than 0700 — after the jump-off. To that point, the whole line was moving forward quickly and was meeting only light rifle and MG fire.

Then the first mine boomed off, and Hell broke loose. Everyone seemed to hit the mines at about the same time. Men who were there and in position to see the whole scene couldn't say where the first mines went off, who was hit first, what the sequence was. There was one preparatory explosion, then an instant of silence, and then it seemed that the whole hill was erupting. You'd talk to one guy, and he'd say that the first one blew somewhere over toward the Third Platoon, that it must have been the one that hit Scoggins. But someone near the latter spot would say, "Hell, no! The first one was back

of us and to the left. It must have hit Coslow or one of the guys in his squad".

Not that it mattered how those infernal things went off. They did, and there were too damned many of them. Then, after the "barrage" of explosions that went off all along that sector, there were a few moments of quiet, and nearly every one stopped and stayed put. Then small arms stuff began to come in again, and the Jerries started lobbing in mortar shells as if they had all the mortar ammo in the world. That was when the Hell really started. They couldn't move the wounded out and they couldn't get out themselves. The mines pinned them down, the bullets were like bees to irritate them, and the mortars — well, every man there just prayed to God that one wouldn't zero in on him. Carey, for one, must have prayed pretty hard. He hit the dirt when the mortars first started coming in, and then he looked up and saw a row ofwhite-marked mines a foot in front of his head. Without thinking, he crawled in reverse for 15 feet while sweat poured off his face, and he ended up half on top of Pieterick who was the next man in the squad behind him. A few minutes after that a mortar shell landed two feet in front of him, and he sweat blood and his spine tingled and his belly did flip-flops until he realized that it was a dud.

Back in the Headquarters group, we were a couple of hundred yards forward from the aid station, and we tried to keep count of the casualties as they came by, there being at that time no need for ammo or for anything else that we could have gotten up to the platoons. We saw Red Scoggins go by on a litter set up on a jeep. He grinned at us and waved as he went by, and we tried to answer in kind but flopped miserably. The sight of his right leg blown off was the first confirmation we had had of hints on the "536" that the going was rough.

Miller was on the next litter, but he was hard to re-

cognize. One of the mines had gone off practically in his face, and he was black as a chimney sweep from head to foot. Morris walked by holding his hand where it had been ripped open by a rifle slug fired accidentally from his own weapon. There was a neat little hole in the palm of his hand that blossomed out into a great, jagged hole on the back of it. On another jeep was Haimm, looking white and worn, with a battered shoe at his side and tell-tale shreds of flesh sticking out from under the blanket where his foot should have been. Coslow came along at about that time, too, — was brought along, is more proper — and no one could have told from a short distance that he had been hurt more than superficially. He lay on his belly on the litter, raised up on his elbows and with his chin cupped in the palm of his hand. He waved, gave us that easy, nonchalant smile of his, and said, "Take it easy, boys". He had that defiant look about his chin and that confident, cock-sure sparkle in his eyes. How were we to have guessed that he had lost both legs?

We didn't see Jones come out but heard that he was seriously wounded from catching a burst of MG fire. Pieterick went through another aid station, and the report came back that he was only lightly wounded. Klenk was hit in the left arm, just a flesh wound, another accidental one from his own or a nearby weapon. Osborn was injured by the trunk of a tree that was blown off by a tree burst and fell on his back. Mabry hurt his ankle and couldn't walk. Wills was lightly wounded in the foot, also James. Cortez and "Little" Thomas were the victims of shell shock and combat exhaustion. Both went to the rear shaking from head to foot like men with the ague. Szilagy went back with a bad case of trench foot. Lopez was lightly wounded. James Stroud got bits of shrapnel in his left hand, and Luisetti got a similar light shrapnel wound, both of them returning to duty within an hour.

Ray Bolmes injured his back, but he returned to the line also.

About that time — it must have been 0930 or 1000 when the last of the casualties were brought back to the aid station — we were in for it a little ourselves. The Jerries started shelling the woods where the rear groups of all the companies, and Battalion CP, were located, and a few tree bursts came in right on top of us. Maness was hit in the back while he and Ruesch were sitting at the base of a tree, and after he was carried away, the rest of us went seriously to work digging in. Our only other casualty was Thomas, who had gone back an hour earlier shaking and babbling like a crazy man.

Henry and Larsen, we were told, were killed in the mine field. Both were wounded by mines and set off others in falling. They were gone so quickly that neither could have known what happened or have suffered any pain.

At 0645 the entire company was hale and hearty as 152 men and five officers moved forward from the MLR. Between fifteen minutes and half an hour later, two were dead or missing and 19 were wounded or injured, from slightly to seriously, four being permanently disabled. In that short time so many lives were wrecked, and there were as many acts of heroism.

Henry was a tall, lean, quiet boy from a small town in Arkansas, the kind of guy you always felt good about having beside you when something was up. He was the BAR man in his squad and was in the middle of the mine field when the first mines exploded. He was hit while covering others who had been wounded, and he had disposed of two enemy snipers by the time he was hit.

Larsen was a Mormon from central Utah. He was a slender boy of 19 who lived his religious creed in the army, not prudishly but in such a way that we admired him. You never saw a more friendly and cheerful fellow.

He was up in front of his squad and nad negotiated the whole mine field safely when he heard explosions behind him. He stayed put for a few moments to keep firing at Jerry snipers and to determine just what was immediately ahead of the squad and the platoon. Then he turned and went back through mines to report to Coslow and to help him, for Coslow had already been hit. Just as be reached Coslow, he stepped on a mine and fell and exploded another. Larsen had been away from the company for almost two months on special duty with the Rangers at Battalion and just returned the night before in time to pull out with us.

Coslow and Haimm were about as heroic as any two men could have been in a similar situation. When Coslow was hit and fell, he raised up on his elbows and kept command of his squad. He called instructions to each man and gave them a good fight talk from where he lay. He did not relinquish his command until the Medics finally came for him and took him from the field. Haimm could easily have stayed back and out of the mines almost entirely without being subject to reprimand. As platoon guide, he could have done so, but he heard the mines and came forward to help. He went to Henry and to Coslow and to others to help them. He went in and out of the mine field for aid men and he, as well as Coslow, helped direct the engineers who came in to clear the mines. When he was hit, he knew one moment of panic and then continued to try to do what he could to help.

Bolmes went through the mine field and came back out of it without touching a mine. He went back to the aid station with back injury and then returned to take over as assistant squad leader and carry on in spite of much pain from that point on through the Hardt Mountains and on into Germany. There were plenty of others like him who were sick enough to drop out and could have cleared

through the aid station and headed for the rear but who had enough determination to stick it out.

We had a good bunch of non-coms and officers in our company, and they proved themselves on the jum-off as they had done earlier at Haguenau. Pellowitz, Coslow, Haimm, Dailey, Johnson (Edgar), Eldridge, Byrer, Brooks, and Bolmes in the first platoon; McGinley, Nettleton, Gallegly, Kanieski, Huish, Roebuck, Stroud, Wright, in the Second; Carey, Noland, Leff, Brewer, Boltz, Beltrame, Morris, Croix, Dew in the Third; and Gerber, Zysing, Webb (EE), Baker, Dietmeyer, Dowling, Richmond, Hamilton, in Weapons. They were all old men in the company, though some of them had just gotten their ratings and some were still "acting". Our officers then were Captain Cook, Lieutenant Tucker, and Lieutenants Kelley, Benson, Snyder, Bak, and Skilling. The last four had come over with us as NCO's and had made battlefield commissions. Snyder was the only one not present at the jump-off, he having gone on pass to Paris the day we were at Althorn.

Benson did the outstanding job among the platoon leaders. He had both the good fortune and the skill to get his platoon through the mines with few casualties. He had been a mine and booby trap expert at Gruber and knew as much as anyone in the Rainbow about them. All four of our platoon leaders were men who had come over as NCO's and had been commissioned since we hit combat. They knew their men and they knew their jobs. We felt fortunate to get them back rather than strangers, and we had reason to trust their ability and their judgment.

When the patch had been cleared through the mine fields and the wounded had been evacuated, the battalion got ready to move forward again. King had suffered casualties both from the mines and the mortars and had to be replaced in the attack by Item when the line began

to move forward again by 1030. Lieutenant Benson saved King more trouble when he cleared up a machine gun nest that had been harrassing King men pinned down in the open by mortars and mines. The recon outfit had been hurt even more than King, but they all had to push forward to keep lines straight and to keep from exposing flanks of the attacking forces. The whole 7th Army was on the offensive, and it could go not much faster than its slowest units.

After the mines there wasn't much resistance during the rest of the day. Our own fire had accounted for high Jerry casualties, and the force opposing us at the mine field had been a delaying force, the bulk of them having started a withdrawal on feeling the first shock of the main American attack. The whole attack moved fast all day long, so fast that our ammo bearers couldn't catch up with it. We had to wait for the mines to be cleared from the roads in order to take the jeeps along, and that job wasn't done until the next morning, so it wasn't until the next day that we caught up for a while and learned that there had been more casualties on the 15th.

The company followed ridges generally leading eastward. At about dusk they reached high ground above the little town of Melch, and everyone was beginning to think of where they were going to spend the night, when word came from the right that Item was being held up by some substantial resistance. Love began an attempt to outflank the Jerries, but they were ordered back in favor of trying to lay in artillery fire in that sector. Just at the time when both Love and Item had pulled back sufficiently and were getting into positions — at a time when there was little close control of the squads and of individual men and when there was almost a state of disorganization — the Germans launched a counter attack. Everyone was ready to quit for the day. It had been a rough one and a

weary one. The advance had surged for miles through heavily wooded, rugged hills to this point, which was much farther than the planned objective for the day, and no one wanted to do more than flop to the ground and rest. So the Jerries caught the battalion off balance. No one knew exactly where he was supposed to be or exactly where the line was, and no one was paying much attention to anything but getting himself set to take it easy.

The Jerries came through the woods toward our lines yelling like a bunch of Comanches and trying to confuse our boys with Jap banzai tactics. Love and Item were still the two companies up front, and the Jerries hit the two with about equal force. The First Platoon on the left already had an exposed flank to worry about because the recon outfit hadn't been able to keep pace during the day.

For 15 minutes to half an hour or more there was unutterable confusion. The men in the platoons told us later that they sought the cover of trees and the edge of a road that was about coincident with the line and that they just faced in the direction of the noise and of the Jerry fire and began pumping lead back in that direction as fast as they could. Some were caught in such positions that one man was directly behind his buddy by a few feet or yards and had to fire over his prone body. One man was caught with his rifle 15 yards distant, and he grabbed a BAR that someone else had set down and began whanging away with it. Ben Gerber picked up a machine gun that the squad had left untended for a moment in the process of getting settled down, hastily chose a position and set it up, and then fired two full beltes by himself before the squad could get back to take over.

Some time during the engagement Zeysing and Shumpert were hit. Crossland was killed there, but he had to be reported as missing in action because his body was not immediately recovered. Toward the end of the fighting

one of the men in the First Platoon area threw a WP grenade that fell close in and lit up the woods momentarily, showing scattered Jerries just then turning to flight. Firing thereafter died down quickly.

It was an exciting time. The duration might have been 15 minutes of half an hour or an hour. No one could say for sure about that, but nearly everyone present did have something to say about the volume of fire that the two companies had thrown at the attackers. The machine gunners and the AR men had used more ammo than at any previous time. Some of the riflemen had used up nearly all their T/E allotment and would have been short had they not been carrying extra clips and bandoliers. At any rate the attack had disintegrated, and the men returned to getting ready for the night, though now with more alertness for what was going on around them, for any signs of movement or any sounds in the dark.

The two wounded were not in serious condition, but it was impossible to get them out to the aid station during the night, and they suffered from pain and exposure until nearly noon the next day when they were evacuated on mule-borne litters.

Nothing more happened during the night. Jerry had met more than he bargained for and wasn't anxious to try again. However, the night was memorable in another way. This was the first time since being in the ETO and on line that it hadn't been possible to bring along blankets or bed rolls. Everyone had been loaded down with all the ammo and food that he could carry, so there was no prospect of keeping warm. It was mid-March and the air turned from cool during the day to downright cold at night. All set to, digging foxholes and gathering dry leaves and boughs, though they were scarce and hard to find in the dark. Then a cold "K" ration and a fruitless attempt at sleeping.

Back to the rear near the mine field, we dug in, too, and

set up a guard around the vehicles. We had a blanket or two or a light bed roll each and slept cold. How much worse it must have been for the men a few miles ahead of us! They were higher in the mountains than we were, and they hadn't been able to carry any extra clothing beyond a change of sox. They were on top of an open ridge, while there was higher ground all around us to keep out the wind. They were tired and half soaked with the sweat of their efforts, and we were fresh. They had a two-on and two-off guard through the night while we each pulled two hours and then had the rest of the night for sleep. They had the continued strain of being subject to attack. Ours was the security of the rear echelon. Naturally we didn't complain much about our own circumstances when we thought of our preferred situation, and we had uncomfortable thoughts when we crawled between blankets we had carried on the jeeps and pictured the four piles of bed rolls that were still at last night's bicouac area.

XV

SLUGGING THROUGH THE HARDT MOUNTAINS

The events of the next week were like a three-way rat race. The entire Seventh Army was pushing forward as rapidly as its supply would permit, trying to catch up with the main body of the Germans, who in turn were triyng just as hard, but more frantically, to keep ahead until they could get behind the fixed defenses inside the Hardt Mountains. We brought up the rear as one of the little supply units following each company, doing our best to stay close enough to our outfits so that we could get food and water up and replenish supplies of ammunition and deliver bedding and mail.

For most of the week the Jerries kept out of our way. There were a few small groups left behind to snipe from deep woods and to harass both the oncoming troops and the supply lines to the rear. They would fire away until their ammunition was gone or until they were cornered, and then they would surrender very meekly as if they had never had a thought to harm anyone in the world. There were also the little groups that slipped away from Jerry units and waited for us to come along so they could give up. They included the unwilling soldiers of other nations that had been overrun by the Germans, men willing enough to fight and to work for the Nazis while the going was good, but anxious to trade sides now that they could see the approach of the inevitable.

There were frequent mines to be avoided and a few booby-trapped buildings, and the Jerries sent in some long

range artillery to harass our advance, but those things were principally irritants that served to nag at us and to keep us from becoming too coksure and too complacent. The advance swept forward at high speed through woods and hills and on into the mountains.

From the hills above Melch, our battalion proceeded eastward over steadily sharper slopes and through narrow valleys, by-passing towns and avoiding travelled roads and even mountain trails. On the 16th, Mouterhouse was by-passed, and the Battalion front pointed toward Baerenthal. By the evening of the 18th the advance had reached high ground above Sturzelbronn, only four or five miles west of the German border, and the following day the advance continued on across the border and reached hillside positions dominating the Lembach-Eppenbrunn highway in sight of the town of Ludwigswinkel.

At that point movement stopped for three days. The Third Battalion was the forward element of the entire army, and Love was at the front of the battalion, having been the first unit of the Seventh Army to cross into pre-war Germany. The halt was ordered to await straightening out of the line, thereby avoiding establishment of a vulnerable salient and allowing time to prepare for further attack. During the halt, supplies caught up with the troops on the line, and the men in the platoons slept on the ground with a blanket — a single one per man — for the first time in a week. Johnnie came up from Wingen, too, and saw that there were sandwiches and coffee at least once each day.

Even with a blanket it was cold on the top of that mountain. The only time the men got warmed through was when we got sizzling hot coffee up to them and when, during the few hours the sun reached their forward slope, they could lie on the rocks and soak up heat.

In our group at the rear we had better luck. We had

our blankets with us the entire week, or blankets and bed roll, and we dug in each night, not so much for protection from bombs and shells as to get out of the cold winds that whistled through the mountains. We got around by jeep most of the time, but we also did a little walking. On the afternoon of the 15th Tuck led two or three of us through a cleared strip in the mine field and we went wandering around looking for the battalion CP, looking for the troops, looking for anyone who might be able to tell us how things were going. On the morning of the 16th we moved to a crossroads below Melch and went on by foot — Tuck and Vitale and Ruesch. From the crossroads we followed a route that we were told the company hat taken and that would lead to it. Pretty soon we were in a single file column of men moving slowly with a wide interval between men. They were hugging the inside of the road against the hill, some of them with slung arms and some of them with rifles at the ready. They were going too slowly for Tuck, and we soon reached the head of the column and started to push on past them. As an afterthought he asked a sergeant who they were and where they were going and who was up ahead of them. We found that they were a strange outfit, that they were moving forward, and that no one was ahead of them but Jerries... "And who the Hell are you and where do you think you're going?" "Oh, my God!" from Tuck, and his Adam's apple wobbled a time or two. "We thought we were catching up with Love Company, 242. I beg your pardon! Hey, Ruesch, Vitale, let's get out of here, and quick!"

We went back to the crossroads and then tried going by the road to Melch, finding that little town all but obliterated and deserted except for a platoon that had just cleared out some snipers and that had orders to keep other troops out and to stop anyone going through headed forward. Back at the crossroads again there was only one

way left for us to try, and that was up a sharp hill and due east. We took that road with the jeeps and had to rebuild part of the road as we went. Almost at the crest of the hill we found elements of the battalion, and we met the stretchers bearing Zeysing and Shumpert and men of Item who had been hit during the surprise counterattack of the Jerries the previous evening. They had all been up on that mountain for 16 hours or more with nothing but first aid, and they were suffering plenty as they made the rough trip down the mountain. Then we ran onto the spot where the company had bivouaced the night before and where the fight had been. We saw some wrecked Jerry transport and a "Good Jerry" here and there on the ground, and we heard of 80-odd dead Jerries who had been found earlier in the morning where the point of their attack was and where our boys had thrown in a wall of lead with devastating effect. We saw where our boys had surprised a Jerry kitchen crew in the act of preparing supper, and the remains of the kitchen and the crew and the supper. We saw where one German driving a wagon loaded with bread had headed right into some of our guys and had not seen them until he was only a hundred yards out in front of them. He had suddenly, then, gone one way, to be stopped by a snap shot that hit him fairly between the eyes, the wagon had crashed into a tree and scattered its loaves of bread all down the hillside, and the horse had broken a leg and been given a mercy shot in the head.

But we didn't find the company. The boys were long gone from that spot, and it wasn't until nearly dark that we reached the spot where they were supposed to bivouac. We started hauling water and rations to them, only to learn that they were coming down off the hill they were on and were going forward to the next ridge. So we waited and lugged the rations and cans of water up what was almost a

cliff to where they were to dig in for the night. We were practically dead by the time we got back to the jeeps, and then we had to move on farther back to where the motor pool was set up for the night, and we got almost settled there when there was some firing back in the woods, and we were alerted for half the night for fear there might be a Jerry patrol that had filtered through our lines or a bunch that had holed up when the line passed by in order to come out later to harass our supply trains.

We were inclined to bitch a little, but we all realized how much easier even at the worst our jobs were than were those of our buddies up on that ridge this same night. There wasn't one of us who didn't realize the essential differences between our spot and theirs. Instead of bitching, we prayed to God that they'd make out okay and that we'd be able to be of some real help to them.

On the 17th we reached the company early in the day just after word had come to the Skipper that present positions on the crest of a hill would be maintained and that bed rolls were on the way up. We climbed the steep hill with rations and water and mail and had the greatest of pleasure in delivering letters to a bunch of very tired but very happy infantrymen. Only a few of the men were in position. The majority of them were lying on the sunny slope resting and looking back over the past few days and hoping into the future.

There was time there to make up a promotion list and get it down the hill with the Skipper's signature to Battalion and time to check on shortages and fill them and time to shoot the breeze with the guys, learning that they were in good spirits. Then orders came along to prepare to move again, and we went back to the jeeps to wait our own orders. The bed rolls had come and had been dumped at the side of the road. Howell came with boxes of hot beef sandwiches, and we were ready to go up the hill with

them just as the platoons came down it and the boys marched by wistfully gazing at the bed rolls and the sandwiches. Fortunately a tank column came along and held up the foot troops just long enough so that we could get the sandwiches out and then stand aside and watch the boys move on with something more appetizing than "K's" for a change.

After a while we moved out with the regimental convoy and up the road toward Germany. All the vehicles of the regiment and a few from division special units — probably 200 in all — made way slowly along the dusty road leading around hills and between them and through thick woods. We started and stopped a dozen times and didn't get farther than three miles in an hour. Then a similar convoy of another regiment, headed the same way, broke into our convoy and tried to pass it, making wild confusion on the road.

Both convoys halted while they tried to unsnarl them, but they started again simultaneously with no solution reached. In a few minutes a tank and truck outfit came along toward us headed for the rear, and that put three convoys together into a jumbled mess. About that time we were travelling through thick woods in a rare stretch of flat country, and that was the time Jerry chose to drop in some long-range artillery.

The jumbled traffic halted when the first shell burst in the trees 50 to 75 yards away, and nearly every man high-tailed away from the road and into cover offered by abandoned dugouts and foxholes. It was a foolish thing to do, and we all returned somewhat shamefacedly to the vehicles after half a dozen rounds more had fallen, all farther away than the first. In a few moments the convoys got untangled and made off faster than we would have thought possible half an hour earlier. We ducked shells from then until we bivouaced near the road soon after

dark. No one in any of the three convoys was hurt, though many rounds were thrown in during the afternoon and until midnight. For that we could be thankful to the Jerries for their poor zeroing in on the road. We could be thankful, too, that our own swift advance had made it difficult for them to leave observers behind, and that our air force was harassing their artillery positions and keeping any of their observation planes from hovering over us. We could, and did, curse the leader of the convoy that barged into the midst of ours and made us all highly vulnerable to wholesale slaughter. We thanked God, too, for His benevolent protection. General Collins learned of the incident and sent out a memo threatening dire consequences to the responsible officers in the event of a repetition of such foolhardiness, and he must have done a royal job of reaming those concerned in this case.

There was general movement forward again on the 18th. We reached Sturzelbronn, where we found the aid station and the forward battalion CP. We parked back in some woods for the day and took supplies and rations up from that point. Late in the afternoon we moved up the road a mile or so to a draw between two hills that looked safe enough from artillery that we didn't bother to dig in. During the night an ammo train moved in with us, and we weren't quite sure about staying on, with tons of high explosives and white phosphorus beside us. Along toward noon some guy, without warning, detonated a dud bazooka round 50 yard away from the ammo, and we all ran for a deep ravine without waiting for an explanation. Thankfully we received word that we were to move from that place to a point nearer the lines.

Our supply group had been cut in half by different ones being called up with the platoons. At the next move only Lieutenant Skilling, Little Dog, "Drod", Shafer, Howell

and Gutting stayed behind as a supply unit, while the rest of us had joined platoons or were with the Skipper.

* * * *

A new jump-off was to take place early on the 22nd. The last coffee was brought up at 0200, blankets were turned in, and we had last smokes under cover of raincoats or in dug-outs. At 0300 we marched back up the mountain to where some of our positions had been and then part way down the forward slope to wait in the cold for H-hour. In the blackness below us was a narrow valley, scarcely a valley, but more a draw that separated two steep, high ridges. From the top of the one we were on to the top of the other by a straight line might have been as much as 400 to 600 yards. Down below, the width was not more than 200 to 300 yards. We had to go down the slope and across the valley and back up to the top on the other side. The ridge that we knew was across the black void in front of us was our day's objective.

At 0415 we thought that the world must be suddenly coming to an end, for there was a terrific bombardment beginning then that shook the earth and almost deafened us. The slope of the hill across from us was plastered with "105's", "155's", "4.2's", "81's" — everything the division could muster, plus some from Corps. There were some WP shells, but they were mostly high explosive. We had known there would be a preparatory barrage to soften up the opposition across the way before we started, but we hadn't expected anything so terrific or anything so close. The shells weren't much more than above the trees in order to spatter the whole slope of the other hill, and we expected any moment there would be a short round or a low one that would not clear the trees overhead. For 15 minutes our ears were tortured with sound and concussion, and we were half blinded by the WP. If anything

could live on that hill through such a barrage, it would be nothing short of miraculous.

The bombardment ended as suddenly as it had begun. In the deathly stillness that followed, whispered commands were like stage whispers, shouted so that the audience couldn't miss them. The shuffle of feet, the clink and tinkle of equipment jostled by body movement, the grunting and breathing of men, the crackling of leaves and branches; minuscule sounds exaggerated by the breathless silence — how could we help but be heard half way across the Hardt Mountains?

We started down the hill a platoon at a time in open squad column, and then on across the flat and slowly up the opposite side. Everyone was on needle edge — we had heard stories of how the Jerries laid low during a barrage, or pulled back, and then were on hand to give advancing riflemen particular Hell — and walked along on tip toe with weapons off safety and at the ready. We passed a white house in the draw that someone had investigated shortly ahead of us and had found to be a camouflaged pillbox, unmanned. When the first scout of the first squad reached the foot of the other hill, without drawing fire, and started climbing, the rest of us breathed a sigh of relief and moved on more confidently.

The top of the hill was the battalion objective for the day, but we had climbed the battered and burned slope and reached the summit by 0720. Then we stopped for a cold "K" breakfast and pushed on along the crest of the hill, then down and up the next one and the next, through the morning and the afternoon. By 1700 we had reached a road and were beginning to think we had done a day's work. We stopped on the road while the "big dogs" went over the tactical situation, and an hour later we were on our way again. Before dark we were down in the valley following a main road and marching in open company

formation. There must have been a great change in the situation, we felt, for us to be moving forward so, and we learned later that the First or Second Battalion had moved ahead and pinched out our front.

On the road we passed through two towns, stopping a few moments in one of them while firing on the left was investigated (One lone sniper was being sought by the fire of three .50 calibre machine guns on tanks, plus some AR's and M-1's, giving the sound of a small war), and then moving on. Farther up the road, we saw what could happen to a convoy when artillery zeroed in on it. The day before, an artillery "Oscar" had spotted a slow-moving Jerry convoy made up of all kinds of vehicles and partly horse drawn. He radioed back to his CP and watched while a battalion fired once. The first salvo bracketed the road, so he sent back word: "No correction needed. Fire for effect". Then he circled high and watched. Little of the convoy escaped. Wreckage was spread over the road for a mile or more, and we had to pick our way through the thick of it. Parts of equipment and vehicles were strewn everywhere, along with pieces of horseflesh and of men. Pools of blood were everywhere, and the stench of cordite and of death were overpowering . . . Some of us could not help but think how easily the same thing might have happened to our convoy back in the woods near Sturzelbronn.

Several trucks of the Jerry convoy had been loaded with blankets and overcoats, and they were scattered up and down the road. We salvaged what we could of them. There wasn't much chance our bed rolls would reach us that night, and after a few nights of freezing we couldn't be squeamish about whose blankets we had.

We bivouaced outside the still burning town of Dahn that night at 2230.

On the 23rd we continued our march, following the road

for two or three miles and then sweeping woods and hills for most of the day. By late afternoon we had passed through the town of Dimbach and set up positions in the hills east of it. Soon after dark some of us went back into the town to set up a CP, word having come that we might stay in that vicinity for a while. It developed that the 103d Infantry Division had come in from the left and moved forward across our sector to squeeze us out of the front.

XVI

DIMBACH

Whenever we stopped at any one place for more than a day or two, we seemed to hit small towns and very dirty ones, all of a type with that first village — Vergaville — we were billeted in. There was Lagarde, then Wimmenau, and now Dimbach. None of them had been badly damaged by the war. They hadn't been battlefields. They were just naturally ragged, down-at-the-heels, poor, farming towns. They were like towns in our erstwhile dust bowl or in the marginal sections of the South and of every other part of the country at home. It wasn't that they were dried up and ready to blow away like Dakota wheat towns, for they were in fertile areas where there was heavy rainfall, but, rather, it was a case of tiny farms and low incomes and lazy people.

In Dimbach we had one house as a CP kitchen and quarters, another for supply and kitchen personnel, and a third as a sort of special Love Company rest center. These houses were on a muddy street at the edge of the town from which the road meandered up the hillside to the positions the company occupied. Battalion CP and Headquarters Company were down in the center of the town, and most of the rest of the battalion was in or near it.

The first two or three days we were there positions were maintained in the hills and patrols were active in rounding up Jerry stragglers and in screening civilians who had taken to the woods to avoid bombing and shelling, but then the war had moved so far beyond us that we felt, and actually were, farther to the rear than we had been at

Lagarde. Even blackout rules were finally disregarded openly, and on the hill the platoons kept up only a light security guard. We just sat around and took things easy and listened to the news while other divisions were forging ahead to the Rhine and on beyond it.

We had the kind of easy, indolent life that soldiers talk about wanting when they are actually in combat. There were few duties to be performed. The guys up on the hill rotated at coming in to the rest house to clean up and write letters and sleep indoors and be first in the chow line for a couple of meals. Twice there were movies in the village church, and Lieutenant Skilling got showers and a change of clothing for us twice. There were regular services held by Chaplain Fife in the local church and by Catholic and Jewish chaplains elsewhere. A Red Cross Clubmobile unit came once with dougnuths and coffee, but it didn't get to Love in time to dole out the stuff. No one who saw the two battle worn and case-hardened gals in the outfit was too unhappy about being missed that trip.

But as is generally the case, the rest and relaxation that a guy thinks he needs wehn he is in combat is hard to take when he gets it. There was so little to do and to see that the place palled on us in a hurry, and time drug monotonously.

Some of the guys got so fed up with doing not much of anything that they began to take French leave to go exploring through the hills and into nearby towns and to the disrict in Dimbach where all the civilians of the town were isolated. A few of them found schnaps and cognac and had themselves a whingding, and the smart ones got away with doing as they wished. Johnson (Minnesota Johnson) and Wooten and Robinson were picked up in a nearby town where they were found in a gasthaus drinking a little wine, and a report was sent from Battalion by the officer

who found them, directing that they be properly disciplined. The Skipper wasn't in a very good mood when they reported to him, and he gave them a Scotch blessing and a little extra duty. The kitchen needed a sump-hole, he told them, and it ought to be dug in the rocky soil back of the CP, and it ought to be about 6'×6'×6'. Good soldiers, too, ought to dig such a hole with their entrenching tools rather than stoop to pick and shovel. They worked about five hours and had the job half done when the Skipper relented and let them go on good behavior.

We expected each day to be pulled out of Dimbach and moved forward. At first it appeared that we might have some fighting to do in eliminating a pocket left behind in that area by advancing armor and infantry, but as the days went by, it became evident that the war had passed us by. Then there was daily waiting for orders to move forward. At first the story was that we were to move up as part of a task force to follow armored units and clean up pockets passed up by the tanks. Then it was reported that we were to move up to take the city of Frankfurt on the Main River. Another story even had it that we were to move across the Rine purely as an occupation force.

Every day for a week we were alerted to move. Bed sacks were rolled, equipment was packed, the jeeps were loaded, the kitchen operated half from the trailer, areas were policed and latrines were closed. But there was daily postponement of the promised move, while we sweated out the news of armor running rampant over almost the whole of Germany. The Third Army, so we heard, skirted and passed Frankfurt, and then spearheaded to a point even beyond Nuremberg. Soon it was within 60 to 70 miles from the Russians. Our trucks were called for to take the 4th Armored from positions on the Rhine south of Worms across and into the fighting zone, and word was that we

were next to move after it got well forward. Still nothing happened.

In the CP we used the break to work on reports and to write up stories on individuals who were to be put in for awards. The latter made some interesting bull sessions. We had poop from Division and Army setting forth the requirements for bronze star, silver star and medal of honor, and they are specific in pointing out what constitutes acts of bravery and acts above and beyond the call of duty. We were inclined to take them at face value, in spite of the fact that all of us knew of cases where awards had been made with little or no basis. The Skipper maintained that only those who rally merited distinction for outstanding performance should be put in for awards, and that was the way we did it. Later, to our sorrow, we found that other outfits had a general policy of getting all the awards they could and had submitted recommendations by the bundle. They were outfits, too, that had had no more, if as much, actual combat than we had had. It's all a relative matter. Love Company came out of the war with a total of six bronze stars and six silver stars as a result of that policy and the regimental policy, whereas companies in other regiments of the division with similar experience got awards for half their men. Those who got them deserved them, but those who didn't and who deserved them almost enough to meet the exacting standards that were adhered to were gypped. When a man has had 100 days in combat and has nothing to show for them, he'll feel pretty naked alongside a rear echelon soldier covered with bronze stars and oak leaf clusters for meritorious service.

At Dimbach, Regiment distributed the contents of a liquor warehouse, and there was enough to go around to the whole company and provide a good party. We had

cognac in quantity, and enough benedictine, dago red wine, and vodka so that everyone got at least a taste of it.

The last day of March we were alerted again for movement the next day, which was both Easter and April Fool's day. We took the alert seriously in spite of the latter. On the morning of the first, we assembled bed rolls and equipment and began to wait around for further orders. At 0900 word came down that there would be time for services in the local church, and there was a capacity crowd attended.

It was a beautiful day. The sky was dotted with patches of cumulus clouds, and there was a nip in the north wind, but still it was a day with a promise of spring. We went to church seriously and filed into the partly bomb-wrecked building with feelings of humility. The chaplain caught our mood and fit the songs and his sermon into it. In that simple little village church he talked of the war and our part in it and of our comrades who had already given their lives and of those of us left who would yet pay that supreme sacrifice. His calm, quiet voice and the sincerity of his manner reached us and gave us hope and courage and a feeling of kinship with one another. In a war, men need to stop once in a while and go over their individual scale of values and assess themselves so that they can approach their crises more calmly, so that they won't be caught frantic at the thought of injury or death. Chaplain Fife did the job for us that day to perfection.

* * * *

Religion in the army. Most people believe there just isn't any, but we in Love Company could give the lie to that notion. Under our tough hides and our vulgarity and our apparent proclivity for wine, women and song, we are the most religious men on the face of this earth. That's not just an arbitrary or mere categorical statement but a

firm belief of a group of men who've lived and fought and played together now for nearly a year.

Our enforced profession is to kill and destroy without mercy. There aren't any of us who, when we had enemies to shoot at, intentionally aimed in the air or tried to do no more than inflict superficial wounds. The Army taught us to kill and sent us over here on that kind of mission, and we tried to carry it out to the best of our ability.

We liked our wine, women and song, most of us. That's not saying we were a bunch of immoral men and indulged in bacchanalian excesses, but we lived for today because there might not be a tomorrow or it might dawn on us in unpleasanter circumstances. We had to be practical and realistic.

Not many of us went to church services regularly. There wasn't such a thing as regular services during combat, and we didn't always feel like sitting through a sermon when there were services despite the fact that our chaplains were excellent men and well suited to their tasks. Nor were we particularly avid readers of the Testaments the Army gave us. There were some well thumbed copies among us and some without a soiled page.

Our religion was usually something apart from sect or creed. It was a living religion that meant as much and was lived as well on Wednesday afternoon as on Sunday morning. It was a natural religion, too.

Just as we learned to be an efficient combat team, so we learned to live together in mutual respect, tolerance and appreciation of one another. In each squad and platoon we found that each of us, no matter how apparently bad, had saving traits. Some guy who'd been selfish and greedy and generally difficult back in the States would prove himself in the generosity of passing out valued contents of packages from home. Guys who were weak and frail or who had most trouble in standing the

gaff would get help in carrying their packs or bedrolls. There was a nearly universal sharing of things that were scarce and dear.

Back in garrison the Army tried to improve our effectiveness by instituting a "buddy system", but it was a miserable failure. Everyone was out for himself there, and to Hell with the guy who couldn't take it. Over here we put the buddy system into effect ourselves as the only practical way of living together. If a guy was hurting for cigarettes or cigars, if someone didn't have stationery or stamps or most anything else, that didn't last long if there were any in the crowd he lived with. Many a new man got his best training from the guy he shacked up with. Many were the double guard tricks stood by one man because his buddy was sick.

In actual combat the examples of unselfishness were legion. One guy in charge of a patrol woudln't let any one who had a wife and children go with him because, well — "Jesus Christ", he'd say, "there's plenty of us single guys with nothin' special waitin' at home without takin' you old married stifts. Gammit, use your head for once, Joe". There were plenty of our guys who took risks, not out of sheer reckless bravery, but for love of friends and desire to save them.

George Harrison was the most outstanding example of selflessness. In an obviously suicidal attempt to save his wounded buddies, he threw his rifle down and went out after Steve and Leff, and he was shot down just as he stooped to carry Steve back to safety. Some people would say that was just reckless bravery, but it was more than that. He didn't say to himself "They can't hurt me. I'll dash out and get those guys". Rather, he just have said or thought or felt, „My God, those guys can't be left out there to bleed and freeze to death". And then he looked around for someone to help — there were half a dozen

within sound of his voice — but he thought of the danger, told them to cover him as well as they could, handed someone his rifle because it would just be a hindrance to him, and then turned around and crept and crawled out to certain death.

There was the Medic named Dumb who was with us at Wimmenau and went on combat patrol with the First Platoon. When he was first hit, he went on to help another wounded man and then was hit again. With one foot gone and the other in shreds he still tried to help, and he wouldn't be touched until the others were cared for and on their way back to an aid station.

Are these things expressions only of love for country? Are they only examples of great bravery? No. They're examples of unselfishness, of love and concern for others. It's easy to give someone a little bread and wine when you have plenty and he has none. It's the highest expression of unselfish love when one man willingly gives all he has to save another. These things are an expression of religion in its only true form, not what you profess to believe in the abstract, but what you prove by your actions that you believe. There were no Pharisees or Sadducees among this body of men. What religion was expressed was made clear by actions.

XVII

WURZBURG

When an irresistable force meets an immovable object, well, everyone is supposed to know what results. When, however, an irrestistable force meets nothing, it rolls on and on and on. That was the case when the American and Canadian and British armies struck across the Rhine and pushed forward in every direction to hit at the wehrmacht and to break it up and to destroy its parts. At some places there was undoubtedly stubborn and fierce opposition, but most of the Seventh Army and certainly most of the 42d Division just rolled on and on and on. It was a pushover from the Rhine all the way to the Danube and beyond that into Austria. There were a few stubborn little groups and a few that didn't have sense enough or know how to surrender, but they constituted nothing like any effective opposing force, and they did little to even delay what amounded to a triumphat march through the country.

That was the big picture, and the small picture, the picture that concerned the company, varied from it only as to details. True, we didn't go entirely unscathed. During that victorious march through southern Germany, we lost Mac and Biagi and the Second Platoon medic, but they were not losses to be attributed to any stubborn opposition. There were also six men "lightly wounded in action", but two of them were so slightly hurt that they merely went to the aid station for a patch and returned immediately to duty. The remaining four got back to hospitals and apparently from there home.

We did a lot of firing and engaged in the proper military maneuvers, for it was necessary to proceed with caution

and to maintain alertness, no one being able to divine for sure if the crazed Nazi mind might at some point or other turn like a cornered beast and make a last fight to the death. But he did not, and as a result "Campaign Germany" wasn't a great deal more dangerous for us than maneuvers staged by the Red and Blue Armies in the Louisiana swamps four or five years ago.

* * * *

We left Dimbach on the afternoon of Easter Sunday, 1 April, in a battalion truck convoy, and headed eastward toward the Rhine. It was a day of alternate sun and wind and clouds, just cool enough so that the long ride was pleasant and clear enough so that we could see the kind of country through which we passed and find it bathed in a soft flattering sunlight, void of harshness and of the too-bright light that makes things sordid and ugly.

We rolled down through the mountains on a smooth surfaced road that wound through hills and across tiny valleys where vineyards and potato and grain fields replaced the small patches of alfalfa of the uplands, and we came from hills onto the open Rhine plain where we could look for miles and miles toward the horizon. There we rolled onto one of the great super highways that Adolph built to move his armies along.

Four hours after leaving Dimbach — at 2125 — we were at the Rhine and crossed on an Engineer Corps pontoon bridge that spanned the river at Worms just downstream from the wrecked main bridge leading into the city.

We saw Worms on a dark night, but even then we saw as much of it as we wanted. An unearthed Babylon couldn't have had any more of an air of desolation about it. The route we were on led through the industrial and transport sections of the city and through low class residential districts that are gathered around them. The bom-

bers had not missed anything. The poetic efforts of the war correspondents have been puerile in trying to picture the utter desolation that is there and that is typical of a commonplace sight in every large German city today. The photographers have come nearer to doing the job, but even they miss much. They can't picture the stinking deadness that hangs over the fields of civilisation's rubble, nor the futility and hopelessness on the face of the unhappy victims, nor the dread horror that is the picture of Europe's future. It can't be done. And those who have seen the starkness of modern war's ravages shun its realities.

From Worms we were to have gone on to a small town only a few kilometers east to a bivouac area to remain in corps reserve. At least that was the picture just before we left Dimbach. But last minute orders or changes made while we were enroute called for a different plan. We headed instead toward Wurzburg, and we travelled slowly over devious backwoods roads through the entire night.

For the first time on a motor march we travelled with lights on, and that was a strange sight and a strange experience for us, something that hadn't happened to us before even when we were as far back in France as Lagarde. It didn't seem quite right in spite of the rapidity with which all elements were moving forward and in spite of the total absence of the Luftwaffe. It seemed like a reckless flaunting of our power in the faces of the once proud Nazis, and it did bring its consequences.

Along about 0200 on the 2nd of April we were moving along at a smail's space, slowed by poor roads and by the size of the convoy and by uncertainty of our leaders as to the exact route. Out of the quiet that had been disturbed only by the muffled purr of idling engines came the roar of a more powerful set of engines from above and to the rear of us, a war eagle swooping down upon an unwary

prey. Within a period of not more than 60 seconds from that first alien and dreadful sound, the convoy had blacked out as if one master switch had been flipped that doused the lights on every vehicle simultaneously, the unidentified plane had swept over and beyond the whole convoy, there had been three or four short vicious bursts from synchronised machine guns, and those powerful engines were roaring away into the blackness. The convoy sped on in an urgent burst of speed, and we in the canvas topped trucks, jammed together like sitting ducks in a shooting gallery, held our breaths and trembled with this sudden approach of a danger we were so poorly prepared for.

The plane returned and swooped over the road at an angle, unable at the moment to relocate the road and us. The convoy stopped and AA guns and .50 calibres in the convoy were manned while we passengers fled to cover. Back again, the plane found us and had its chattering guns answered. Again and again it swooped over the convoy to worry us, but within a few minutes it gave up the game, either finding the target too difficult or the answering fire too hot upon it. It slipped away and returned and slipped away into the night again. Not a single round had found a mark in the convoy, but it had been a harrowing few minutes for us, and we were thankful that the Luftwaffe had been reduced to relative impotence before we were initiated into the terrors of concentrated strafing and bombing.

We arrived at Miltenburg at 0900 and went quickly to the officers' quarters at a large flying field near the town to detruck and to select billets. Before the looters could finish looking through the place and picking out things to lug along with them, we got word that our stay might not be for many hours and that we had better eat and rest while we could. So we got out our "K's" supplemented them with fruit and ham and eggs from the kellars,

cooked and ate our meal, and lit onto what beds we could find.

Early in the afternoon we were on our way in convoy again, travelling in an hour and a half to Wustenzell, which village had earlier been by-passed by an armored column and which we were ordered to search out for stray Jerries. That was a funny deal because we didn't know until after we had gone through the town and stopped beyond it that we had a job to do there. How differently we would have held our weapons and looked about us had we known in advance that it was still considered enemy territory! We waited outside the town for orders from battalion to go to work. "Pop" Clauser, Nitsch, Shafer, and Allen took off up a hill into some woods just for a little stroll to answer nature's call and came back a few minutes later swaggering along behind six Jerry soldiers and loaded down with Lugers and Walthers they had taken away from more or less willing captives. The sweep of the town took only an hour and the trucks came along and we were on our way again.

We arrived in Birkenfeld at 2200 and set up a perimeter defense around the town, Love facing toward the north in the new direction we were now heading. Battalion had received a report that there was a Jerry column approaching from that direction with the obvious intention of trying to cut behind the armored columns that had preceded us and sever their supply lines and communications. It was a miserable night for the riflemen, with rain and a damp cold. All the platoons but the First had a house or two where the men not in positions could catch a little sleep and get warm, and you could hear Hungry Lou "pissing" all over the place about it just at daylight the next morning. "The First Platoon always gets the dirty end of the deal. By Christ . . ."

The Jerry force didn't materialize, but we were alerted

to move on again at about 1000, still northward, to meet it if it did appear. Just a leaving someone spotted four or five figures emerging from the woods across the valley from where we were then assembled, and, after a quick look with glasses had determined that they were Jerries "mit Hände am Kopf", obviously coming in to surrender, there was a general rush to see who could reach them first and have first chance to go over them for pistols and watches and other loot. None in Love made the grade, though, for they veered off to a closer group from King.

At 0930 we left Birkenfeld on foot. We marched all the morning through intermittent rain squalls, clearing the villages of Billingshausen and Urspringen along the way and taking some 20 or more PW's. Early in the afternoon we deployed into woods about five miles south of Muhlbach und prepared to dig in there for the night. We could hear the rumble of heavy artillery barrages and had no way of knowing whether it was ours or the Germans'.

After two or three alerts on the 4th, we ended by remaining in the woods and making use of time there to bring up supplies and write letters and rest. It was there that two men of the FO's crew had a little argument and settled it between themselves quickly and satisfactorily with bare fists.

At Koenigsbruck we first had had a forward observer with us, though there the observer and his crew weren't actually with us but lived and worked as a separate unit attached to us for rations only. Then in the woods back of Hatten and at Hagenau the FO stayed elsewhere, and when we went to Lagarde he returned to his own outfit. At Wimmenau Lieutenant Green and his crew from Cannon Company joined us and lived in the CP as part of headquarters. Then he left shortly after the jump-off on 15 March, having suffered from wounds and severe shock there, and he and his crew were succeeded by Lieutenant

Hutton and a new crew from Cannon Company made up of Schneider, Waterman, Garrett and Jumper. They were a good bunch and fit in well with the company. "Hut" stayed pretty much with the Skipper and seemed always eager to get a fire mission. Schneider and Waterman were always ready for anything that might come up, from a chance to get at some Jerry schnaps or cognac or champagne or what else, to volunteering to go out on a combat patrol. Garrett was the youngster of the crew, a good radioman, but a cocky lad who hadn't had much experience in the army or in his artillery outfit. He and Waterman, a one-time pug and a rough and ready character, were at odds frequently, and in the woods their difficulties came to a head over a small game of poker. Just as they got to the real name-calling, "Hut" came along and suggested that the best cure would be bare fists. They squared off and went at each other with fire in their eyes, but Waterman knew the tricks of the game and Carrett was a novice, so it didn't last long. Within a few minutes they were through and shook hands, and the poker game was resumed in a much clearer atmosphere.

Trucks came to the bivouac area early on the 5th, and we were off to the southeast by 0730, reversing directions again with a change in plans at higher headquarters. This time we were headed for the Wurzburg district direct. There were no detours or side trips. We got to the outskirts of the city at 1100 and halted to await orders to enter. Another outfit had preceded us there, the 232d Infantry, and had taken a large part of the city, so clearance had to be obtained from it and further plans had to be made on the spot. We entered the city and crossed the Main River just at noon. Assembling in a field along the river to the north of the city, the battalion then detrucked and re-entered the city to help incleaning out the remaining blocks of buildings. Love drew a sector running from

the main bridge below the hilltop castle north and east to the university. The jeeps, our two and the one of the FO, stayed behind with men for an ammo detail if needed, and the men in that group enjoyed themselves in a park for the afternoon, resting and cleaning up and then going out on a highly successfull foraging expedition for refreshments and loot. Waterman and Schneider returned with their jeep filled with champagne.

Late in the afternoon the company reached the edge of the university campus and there was a sharp exchange of fire for half an hour as remnants of an SS group withdrew into and beyond the campus. Then we moved forward to set up a line through the university, most of the men moving into their new positions at dusk.

Just to the rear of the company location there was a three-way intersection that had been the scene of a swift and dramatic little fight before we reached the place. At the tail end of the fight, an SS officer came speeding through the intersection heading Hell-bent for safety. Someone winged him, and he catapulted from his cycle and lay in the center of the intersection. The marksman came out to look him over, thinking he had scored a bull's-eye, but he hadn't and the GI suffered a near fatal wound for his carelessness. But the SS officer wasn't through even after wounding one man. Beside that man he wounded two other GI's and then received half a dozen slugs himself. When a curious Second John came to him to confirm his death, he still wasn't quite through. As the lieutenant leaned over to look at him, the SS'er reached up to grab the lieutenant's hand and, with his last ounce of strength, bit off a finger and then dropped dead in a pool of his own blood. There were some real men among those Jerries, as anyone who met them will readily confirm.

We waited until midnight for our bed rolls, and it was

raining and they were soaked on arrival. No one slept very much. The outfit in the city ahead of us had spent the previous night fighting guerilla SS men, and they weren't reticent in telling us about what a harrowing time they had had. The city is undermined by a vast network of tunnels and caves, part of them connected with wineries, part of them connected with the sewer system, and some dug especially for the use of troops defending the city. The Skipper had our area explored for tunnel openings and got the Engineers out to blow those that were found, but we still weren't too sure that there wouldn't be trouble, and though sleep had been possible otherwise, we'd have slept with one eye open on that account.

XVIII

THE GREAT "BATTLE" FOR SCHWEINFURT

Here is the story of the battle for Schweinfurt as reported in the Rainbow Reveille dated 11 May 1945:

"To capture Schweinfurt, General Collins ordered a wide envelopment of the city so that there would be no opportunity for its defenders to escape. To accomplish this the 232d Infantry was moved around the city to the north and seized four hills, which were the dominating terrain. The 222d moved directly toward the city from the south and the 242d Infantry smashed in from the west, attacking across a plain. Attacking through a maze of 88 mm guns following a terrific air bombardment, the 242d was the first unit into the city and swiftly dashed to the Main River, thus dividing the city into two parts and giving the Germans no opportunity to stage a well-organized fight. While the 242d was engaged in clearing the city the 222d Regiment smashed through a group of Nazi fanatics who defended an airfield to the south and the 232d cut the only escape route to the north, crushing a force which fought desperately to keep the road open. Completely cut off from escape, more than 5,000 prisoners were taken in the city".

The above is the mildest account of the taking of Schweinfurt that this writer has been able to locate. There were a number of hair-raising stories published both in service papers in the ETO and in papers in the States that made the operation sound like a two-day Stalingrad. Some public relations officer in division, corps or army headquarters sat in his comfortable office way back on the

other side of the Rhine or even in France and dreamed himself up a battle. Schweinfurt was famous for its ball bearing plants and for the aerial pounding it had taken over a period of 20 months, and any kind of story about it would be good copy, se he let himself go with all the blood and thunder there was in his typewriter. Many people probably think that it was all on the up-and-up, but there are several thousand soldiers of the Rainbow and especially of the 242d Infantry who get a big laugh out of that "battle".

* * * *

From Wurzburg, which we left on the afternoon of 6 April, to our bivouac in woods a few kilometers south of the ball-bearing city, which area we reached on the 9th, we travelled alternately on foot and by trucks in convoy. There was rain most of the way, and that and a shortage of water were our greatest inconveniences. Just short of Unter Plleichfeld late on the 6th we had a little trouble, but we also saw a pretty good show. We had come by truck and dismounted about two miles south of the town to advance and find if there would be any opposition to our entry. King was in the lead, and there were tanks and TD's attached to both companies.

The armor had gone ahead with King and had parked in a farmyard in sight of the town. As we came along, the Jerries started to lay in mortars on the armor and inflicted several casualties before the TD's could withdraw to defiladed positions. We started digging in, and the mortars continued firing for about an hour before our artillery got located and zeroed in on the Jerry gun positions and silenced them. We suffered no casualties, though Cox in the first Platoon had a close call. He sat on a log at the side of the read when a mortar shell hit the other end of the log five feet from him and shattered the log. Those of us who saw the hit stared unbelievingly when the smoke

cleared away and Cox picked himself up and walked away under his own power. He said that he thought his butt must be full of shrapnel, but there wasn't even a sliver of wood in him.

We saw shells explode all over the area 100 to 200 yards ahead of us, and we could see where they were coming from. When our artillery started to work, we saw it throw salvo after salvo into the Jerry mortar positions, knocking out several of them and forcing the rest to withdraw. Then we saw the "arty" boys go to work on the next town, a few miles beyond, to which the main Jerry force had withdrawn. By this time it was dark, and the WP shells made an impressive sight. We watched most of the show without any incoming mail to bother us, and then we marched into Unter Pleichfeld to get billets and to set up a line around the town for the night.

It was a good deal we had that night. The Headquarters billet was a gasthaus large enough that everyone had a bed, and its kellar was well stocked with ham, fruit, eggs, and potatoes. "Hut" and his crew went to work and fixed a spread that was something to write home about. For about two hours "Hut" — happy over having had a fire mission for a change — was first cook while we gorged on good chow. In the morning we were alerted late enough so that we had the same kind of breakfast before moving out. The "henfruit" ran short, but we found some goose eggs that were fresh and almost as good.

The 7th was a big day. The battalion schedule called for the taking of several towns, all with formidable names — Burggrumbach, Rupprechtshausen, Hilpertshausen, Sulzwiesen, Hausen, Jobsthalerhof, Brusbach, and Gänheim. The day went like clockwork. The towns gave up with scarcely a struggle, and there was a steady stream of PW's moving back on the road to our rear. Love alone collected more than 100. And there was beaucoup loot

from the prisoners and good foraging in the towns. If anyone ate his "K" rations during the day, it was because he was too lazy to pick up something else along the way or because he liked that concentrated food poison.

On the 8th there was a little circus while we were in column on the road. The town beyond us had been taken, and we followed a road that wound around the foot of a hill to approach the town. Someone spotted movement on the hill, and the column stopped while the Second Platoon went to investigate. Its skirmish line was fired on, and Walter Cox got a deep flesh wound in the thigh. TD's on both sides of the hill began firing their .50's, and the whole platoon poured away with rifles and AR's. For a few minutes it sounded like a pitched battle. Then someone laid a WP rifle grenade in close to the Jerry position, and 14 scared krauts came out with hands over head. Had the platoon alone been after them, they would probably have put up a good fight and might have gotten away; but with a whole battalion and tanks and TD's within a few hundred wards of them and almost completely surrounding their positions, they hadn't much hope for a way out.

We cleared out a dozen small towns enroute to Schweinfurt. There was one, though, that almost caused us trouble. On the night of 8 April we pulled into the town at nearly midnight. We were to have taken the town, but someone else had beat us to it, and the streets were full of GI's and American vehicles. We got our billets, set up a defense, and were ready to call it a day. Battalion CP and Headquarters Company occupied the town with us. During the night, guards and patrols continually ran into armed Jerries. There was a steady stream of them being brought in. Next morning we found that the outfit preceding us thought we or someone else had taken the town while we thought they had done so, and it was jammed

full of Jerries. During the night, more than 100 PW's were counted in at the stockade, and more were found when we swept the town in the morning. The straight dope was that our town was about four kilometers to the left rear, while this one was to have been part of the battalion's objective for the 9th.

Most of the way from Wurzburg to Schweinfurt we had TD's with us, sometimes tanks, and the guys rode them at the front of the column on approaching a village or town. They were damned nice to have along. We would stop a thousand yards or so short of a town that was to be taken, the guys would jump off the TD's or tanks, and the latter would move up just below the crest of a hill or just behind a patch of trees and fire two or three rounds into the town from a 76 mm or a 90 mm gun. If that brought out white flags of surrender, we would move forward in skirmish line and search out the town. If it brought answering fire or no results at all, the firing would be continued, and Weapons would start unlimbering their mortars, and the platoons would start taking up positions from which to attack. Usually the townspeople and Jerries left behind to fight delaying actions saw the light and had no stomach for a fight.

The whole battalion was bivouaced in the woods from the afternoon of 9 April until early the morning of the 11th. We had to dig in immediately, since a battery of 105's set up about 400 yards behind us and drew fire almost as soon as it pulled in. On the 10th we had a vantage point on a hill where we watched artillery zero in on gun positions in and around Schweinfurt, and we watched two or three hundred bombers drop their eggs on what was left of the city.

There was one incident that defied explanation and never ceased to stir our curiosity. From the southwest came a single plane flying slow enough so that we could

identify it as a C-47 or similar transport. It moved along slowly, flying directly over us, and went straight on over Schweinfurt and becond. Miraculously, it was untouched by the spotty ack-ack Jerry sent up, and then it went beyond the horizon seeming to be pointed almost due east. It bore American insignia on its fuselage and on the lower wing surfaces. It couldn't have been strongly armed. It didn't seem to dodge the ack-ack. What strange mission was it about, a vulnerable transport, heading without escort into enemy skies? We were never able to find an answer, and only fantastic and wholly unsatisfactory solutions were offered by the few air corps men we told about it.

* * * *

Now for the battle of Schweinfurt. The big picture involved the conquest of the city by the three infantry regiments of the 42d and by units of the 12th Armored Division. The 42d was to work from the west side of the river. The armored units left us on the 10th to begin a swing to the south, then eastward across the river, then north again behind the city. From left to right were the 232d, the 242d, and the 222d. Two battalions of our regiment were to be on line and move abreast toward the city. Within the Third Battalion, "K", "L", and "M" were side by side, along with "G" to replace "I". The plan called for us to hit Euerbach between our bivouac area and the city before daylight and to push on from there to a large airport and flying school, and, finally, to move across open fields and into the city.

We started in column by companies at 0300 and passed through each phase line to the very outskirts of the city — or to the open fields in front of those outskits — by 1000 without a single shot having been fired at or by the battalion. Then from the left of the road whose course we were following in general, there came a spattering of

machine gun and rifle fire, and things had been going so smoothly that we were rather surprised when we realized from the whing of bullets and the little puffs of dirt on the ground that that fire was aimed at us. The column held up for half an hour while the forward elements of the battalion located the source of the fire and laid mortars on it. Most of us lay waiting in the shelter of the road bank. Some ate, some slept, and some looked around only half-interestedly as two burp guns swept the road. Back at the rear of the column, "Little Dod" Bowman was caught with his pants down right in the act, and he scurried for the shelter of house, maintaining his squatting position on the run and pulling up his pants at the same time.

The snipers were routed out of two houses. They were a group of 15-year old boys who hadn't been in uniform more than a week and who didn't know how to give up when they saw us coming; that is, they hadn't until the mortar shells dropping around and on the houses told them that any way of surrender was better than to stay put and try to argue it out with 81 mm shells. They did know how to kill.

Up front the Skipper scouted out ahead of the company and was pinned down by rifle fire for a few minutes, and Posty beat a rapid retreat from an observation post on a telephone pole when slugs began coming his way and beating a tattoo all around him.

At one point just inside the city we came to the barracks of a panzer outfit and spent some time clearing the buildings and the underground shelters and tunnels, so that other units of the battalion and of the regiment had moved well ahead of us by the time we were ready to push on. Suddenly there was heavy mortar fire from deep in the city, and we could hear shells going over us toward the rear. It sounded as if the krauts had wakened and were

beginning to object to our forward movement. We thought our picnic was over, but then we found that the mortars were our own. Earlier that day we had passed some dug in ack-ack positions on our left, and we had done nothing about them because we understood they were unmanned. Now it appeared they were not, and the guns we had that were most immediately available to work on them were up front. So they were ordered to face the rear and fire over us. Some of the rounds came uncomfortably close before the Jerries waved white flags and the firing ceased.

That slight opposition was all that deterred our entry into the city. By 1500, or five hours from the time we hit the outskirts, we had cleared our sector through the main part of the city to the river, which was the stopping point. The whole city was ours — the Rainbow's — early enough in the afternoon so that everyone had time to get located in assigned billets and do a little exploratory looting before dark.

The Third Battalion had not over a score of casualties, mostly light ones, and half of those were accidents rather than the result of enemy action. The same was generally true for the regiment and the rest of the division. Casualties were definitely light. Opposition was almost negligible. The job consisted mainly of picking up stragglers and cleaning out a few small nests. There was much more work involved in screening the civilian population, which took us almost the entire following day.

As we rolled leisurely across Germany and had few difficulties and little opposition, we read accounts of other units also rolling rapidly along but, according to write-ups in Stars and Stripes and other papers, meeting stiff resistance all the way. We finally came to disbelieve such reports, feeling that they were written, like the account of Schweinfurt, by men who followed along with rear (or "Ruhr") echelons and got the action second-hand. The very

nature of the war during April bore out our belief, as would an accounting of the casualties suffered by various units during that month. It was just an easy mop-up of a thoroughly beaten, discouraged, disorganized, and frightened wehrmacht. That was the "big picture" east of the Rhine, and for the most part it was also the little picture; thought it must be admitted that there were small units that did have fierce fights on their hands and that did suffer extreme casualties. Those latter, however, were the rare exception to the rule.

It isn't meant to be implied here that we were just ont on a glorious picnic. We don't want our friends or our people who may read this account to believe that because there were few battles and little shelling and no bombing and not many mine fields that everything from the Rhine on was a busman's holiday. Ask any one of our number if he wants to do the same thing over again just for the fun of it and see what answer you get.

We didn't get any particular kick out of the hours we walked in the rain in strange country, always having to watch the flanks and having to keep security out front and rear. We didn't enjoy overly much coming to a town or within a few hundred yards of it by truck, dismounting, and then moving forward in a skirmish line. How can you know that the Jerries in that particular town aren't just waiting to blast Hell out of you? How can you know that the next step you take won't be onto a vicious little Schumine or into the field of fire of a Jerry machine gun that is just waiting for the rest of your squad to step forward? How can you know that that little patch of woods and brush 800 yards to the left front doesn't conceal a Jerry tank mounted with an "88" or that an "SP" gun hasn't just pulled into cover there? We had those things to sweat out all the time. Of course, you don't carry your heart in your throat waiting for that first blast to come. You can't

if you want to retain your sanity and get to the end of every day without being a bundle of nerves and a case of combat fatigue. But every once in a while you think of such stuff, and the realization of what could and what may happen keeps you just a little on edge and prevents you from having too much of a picnic.

XIX

EAST TO NUREMBURG

14 April —

On alert the night before, off at 0100 . . . Alerted again at 0800 and again called off at 0900 . . . Unpacked bed rolls . . . "Hut" left us after bringup his replacement, Lieutenant Christensen. Laughed about being sent back for a rest . . . Alerted a third time, off again, on again stuff . . . "Farringbone" pissed off as he loaded and unloaded and reloaded the Jerry truck he had commandeered . . . Rumor came down we were to be in division reserve . . . Trucks showed up and we took off finally at 1500 . . . Beautiful day, smooth riding on the autobahn . . . Retraced our steps to Wurzburg, seeing again most of the towns we took on the way.

Colonel Caum came along in his captured yellow sport job, a Merzedes-Benz . . . Stopped and "reemed" guys not wearing their helmets . . . Sent Major Smith back to Headquarters truck to tell N C O in charge, Ruesch, he'd be busted for not making everyone wear them. The major didn't have his own on, but nothing said about that . . .

Saw Wurzburg again . . . Huge Rainbow adorned wall of hilltop castle where "Heil, Hitler!" was a few days before . . . City full of MP's and other rear echelons . . . Beaucoup WAC's, "Jigaboos" everywhere . . .

Crossed Main River at Kitzingen and on to Frohstockheim to billets secured by advance party . . . Civilians had full day's notice before we arrived and stripped their houses, so no looting and no "essen" . . .

15 April —

Church services in grove behind chateau where Battalion CP was . . . Left by truck 1230 headed eastward . . . Cold, miserable day. . . . Passed heavy art'y positions enroute. Saw our first Long Tom's and 240's in the ETO . . . Arrived Ingolstadt 1400. Took billets. Headquarters got a big gasthaus where each of us had a full bed. Plenty of room, but the joint stunk of stale beer and of barnyard odors . . .

Found a drunk Ruski slave laborer sleeping off his jag in the CP. Ushered him out and then had to pick him up later when the burgomeister complained that he beat up every Jerry civilian he saw. He'd just walk up to one of them on the street, man or woman, and let loose with a roundhouse swing. He got on a crying jag telling us about his wounds. He'd put a finger on his leg or body and say, "Verwundet, da." There must have been ten or more wounds. Finally, he pointed to his crotch. "Verwundet, da. Alles ist kaput. Alles ist kaput." Then he'd want to go out again looking for Jerries to beat up . . .

Everyone bitched about lack of mail. Six days with no deliveries. Something "snafu" between Paris and our forward positions . . .

16 April —

"Prima" hotcakes for breakfast. Only company in Battalion to get them and Colonel Lovsnes and other officers invited themselves in for a stack . . . Left Ingolstadt 1430 . . . Arrived and detrucked outside Eggensee 1830 . . . Set up CP in farmhouse. Company in perimeter defense positions, with King. Beaucoup "Fleisch" and "Eier" and "Brot" . . . Had trouble getting rid of an Italian DP who was supposed to be able to speak English. His vocabulary

was mostly unintelligible. All we could pick out was "Hokay, Jesus Christ."

17 April —

Alerted 1330. Stalled around. Took off "zu fuß" 0445 headed for Brunn... Planes overhead for 30 minutes going eastward in unbroken stream... Reached Brunn 0800 after someone else had taken it.... Off again in column at 0900 as support behind Item and King... Marched through three more towns... Bivouaced in woods 300—400 yards west of Seukendorf at 1720... Got first mail since 9 April, along with "K's" and PX rations.

18 April —

Up at 0415. On the march at 0515 headed for Fürth and Nuremburg... Got to Jerry barracks west of Fürth by mid-morning. Held up there pending further orders... The 242d was to move in on Fürth from the southwest. First Battalion on our left was to hit squarely into the city. We, in the center, were to skirt the southeast edges of it, with the 2nd Battalion to the right of us. The First Battalion hit some real opposition. We didn't, thank God! ... Moved on from the barracks to suburban outskirts of Fürth in early afternoon... Met a little snipper stuff in the woods. Found thirteen 170 mm Jerry art'y pieces in position with plenty of ammo by them and well camouflaged, but unmanned. Left a guard there. The Second Platoon found an underground luftwaffe parts plant... Farther on, drew direct fire from 88's and ack-ack guns. Damned close but no casualties... Set up line along high ground overlooking Fürth and about 600 yards west of the river that skirts the city... From a forward OP could see enemy positions and our art'y dropping in on them. Good positions, well dug in. Art'y didn't hurt the Jerries

much except for some direct hits that took out a gun and crew each... One 88 demolished the second floor of the OP while the Skipper and others were on floor above, and they high-tailed it out of the place... "Big Chris" got a real fire mission and had himself some fun...

Settled down in billets and talked up the rumors that were stirring. Sounded like a general attack due for the a. m.... The Goddamned war almost over and we had to run into something that sounded like a rough time... Sweat it out, boys! Sweat it out!

At 2200 word came on the phone that a Jerry patrol was in our area or headed for it... Much excitement. Guns popping off al over the place. Our art'y giving Fürth a fire bath with WP. Ought to soften them up... The Jerry patrol reported back of the Second Platoon or somewhere between the Second and the First. Where the Hell was the Second Platoon anyway? Had it moved?... Hard to hear small arms firing with so much noise from the art'y.

At 2345 a call to the CP from the Second Platoon, an urgent one.... "Get a doctor out here quick, for God's sake! Three men have been hit!"... Battalion busy getting rid of some Jerry wounded, and all the aid station jeeps gone, but they get help out fast anyway... More calls from the Second Platoon... "Where the Hell is that doctor? Guys are dying out here!"... "Hey, what's happened, Joe?"... "God, I don't know. Everything's all screwed up. Nobody knows what's happened, but Mac and Biag and the Medic got it. Damned bad, all of them."

We couldn't be sure at first just how those guys were hit. Someone thought there might have been a short round from our artillery dropped near the Platoon CP, spraying the lumber shack with shrapnel. Maybe the Jerry patrol hit the CP, for the Medics said the wounds were from small arms fire, not shrapnel. Or it was thought possible

that some supporting HMG's somewhat to the left and rear could have pulled their fire just a little too far around to the right. About 2340 a hand grenade had gone off just outside the Second Platoon's CP, and that woke most everyone up. They'd just gotten to bed in the CP anyway. Mac and Snyder jumped out of bed and grabbed their guns. Biagi and the Medic (a new guy named Kehoe) were not yet out of bed when automatic fire tore through the walls of the flimsy shack. Mac was hit just as he got outside the door. The other two got it while they were still in bed.

Within a few minutes the men in the First and Third platoons knew who was doing the firing, for they ran onto part of the Jerry force, killing two of them, wounding one, and taking a fourth prisoner. We learned then that they were part of a combat patrol sent out to filter through our lines, raise what Hell they could, and then try to get back with prisoners for questioning.

There was no sleep the rest of the night. The loss of those three men was too much to permit sleep, tired as everyone was and much as we knew that there was likely a very big day ahead of us.

XX
FÜRTH

In fiction writing there is a rule called the rule of verisimilitude that dictates to the author that what he writes, what he attempts to create, have the appearance of truth whether it actually happened or not — that he make it appear to have been possible of happening. Completely fanastic sets of circumstances violate that rule and have only a scant reader interest. Many of us who tried to write home and tell our folks about the events of 19 April felt that the contrasts of that day were so many and varied that they wouldn't have the appearance of truth, that those who read our letters would think we were dreaming up "snow jobs" for them. The fact is that anyone would have had to be with us and would have had to think and feel as we did to be able to believe such a day of extremes actually was.

The 19th wasn't really a day by itself, for there wasn't any sleep to make a break between it and the day before. The little while we did have to hit the sack we lay and tried to get a full realization of what had happened at the Second Platoon CP and sweated out what was to come with the new day. No one could quite believe that three of our buddies had been killed during the night, and we found it hard to realize that, with the war apparently in its last stages, we were to come up against something rough.

We knew that our job was to take Fürth and that we didn't have long to wait before we had to go out there to make an attack. We knew that the Jerries were there because some of us had seen their positions and had seen

the crews mannning dug-in guns. We knew there were 88's and ack-ack guns, for we had felt the hot breath of their fire. And we had seen tanks moving around in and out of woods near the edge of the city.

Most of us had a fair picture of the terrain in front of us. We were on the brow of a hill that slopes down quickly to level fields that stretch for 500 yards or more on either side of the river. There's no cover and no concealment for over a thousand yards, and the Jerries were well dug in across from us in positions covering all the routes available to us. We had to cross those open fields no matter what, and it looked as if here there might be SS units who would live up to the propaganda about fighting to the last man before giving up the city. We had heard, too, that the 45th Division, working on Nuremburg to the northeast of us, was meeting some rough opposition in its sector.

The First Battalion had run into a big fight the day before and had suffered heavy casualties in an assault to take positions that were holding up the whole advance. Then things had been comparatively quiet except for scattered snipers and the 88 and AA stuff they threw at us. PW's began pouring into every stockade in the division area, and we figured we were picking up the dregs of the Jerry units in front of us, that those who were left to meet us were the cream of the wehrmacht and of the SS.

There was one other thing that bothered us. There were searchlights on the other side of the river and well north of our positions, lights that played up and down the stream all night. We wondered about them, and the story became current that they were Jerry lights intended to help detect our coming. We could imagine what targets we would be with those lights on us.

We were up and getting breakfast at 0315. At 0445 we started marching along the road that led from the com-

pany CP past where the Second Platoon had been and downhill to the open fields before the river. We saw the bodies of the Jerries killed in the Fracas during the night, and our thoughts went to our own men who were lost. We stopped behind a hedge just before entering the fields while word was passed along the column that from this point forward we would be under observation and that the Jerries could probably hear us if we made any sound at all in the unnatural stillness between explosions of artillery rounds. Tuck did the talking. "Tell them, by God, that I'll personally shoot the first man who shows a flicker of light or makes a sound. The interval's five yards, and they better keep it if they want to get to Fürth in one piece . . . Okay, let's go."

So, out we went into those open fields. Our skin crawled with dread of what was to come. Our eyes ached with the effort of trying to see through the blackness and to make familiar and harmless objects out of the forbidding and distorted shadows. Way to the north on the other side of the river was the glow of a fire set by the burst of WP shells. Those big search beams made fingers of light in the sky, and we expected any moment to have them depressed to search out our column. Not until hours later did we learn that they were not Jerry lights at all but lights put up by the 45th that were intended to help us by lighting up the sky to the rear of the Jerries facing us.

We got to the river without mishap or event, but there we had an interminable wait. The Engineers were to have spanned the river with a pontoon bridge before our arrival, but they were only just starting as we came along, and we had to stand and freeze for nearly an hour while they got the thing done. The Engineers must not have been G-2'd on the situation, or they must not have believed all the scare propaganda put out about the tactical situation, for they worked carelessly and noisily, throwing lumber

and tools around and yelling at each other and gunning the engines of their trucks. We finally started down a little incline to the bank of the river, and we were amazed and somewhat let down when we found that the stream was so small we could almost have jumped across it. Then we started across the fields on the other side just at the first hint of dawn. Four or five hundred yards away we could see a stone and iron grill fence at the foot of a hill, and trees and brush on the slope behind it. Off to the left front were large houses and apartment buildings marking the edge of the city. It looked almost ideal for defensive purposes.

The first false dawn caught half of us still in the field strung out in an extended double file, and half of us along the fence. We had made it that far without any sign of resistance, and we began to breathe a little easier and to let down on the tension we had been under since leaving our billets. While contact was made with the other units on line with us, we lay in the field and along the fence and looked around surprised at the realization that we had come so far safely. We weren't over the hump yet, and any moment Hell might break loose, but things were looking good. Half the spots for Jerry to catch us and punish us severely with mortar and machine gun and artillery fire were already past. There might still be plenty on that hill behind the fence and in those first houses off to the left, but once we reached the latter we would have something solid and tangible in which to anchor ourselves if anything did happen.

Suddenly there was commotion at one point along the fence as a group of men got up and started through an opening and up the hill. Pretty soon we heard German voices on the hillside, and they were all saying "Kamerad! Kamerad!" What a welcome sound to our ears!

Someone else got up from the ground along the fence

and peered through and then brought his rifle up to the ready. In another moment, everyone along the fence was up and searching the brush on the other side. That first man had seen a foxhole and a sleeping Jerry in it. Soon there were scores of Jerries coming through the fence, Jerries who had been sound asleep at their positions with their loaded machine and burp guns and rifles and machine pistols beside them. It was unbelievable! Enough krauts "mit Hände am Kopf" came through that fence in five minutes to have decimated our company had they caught us in the fields. They had the weapons and the ammunition and excellent positions. Why had they not poured it to us? The day before there had been sharp fighting on both sides of us in terrain much less favorable to them, and now there was no resistance at all. Could it possibly be — after all the noise and confusion of the night — that we had caught them asleep? Had the artillery barrage so shattered their nerves, on top of weeks of constant retreat, that their outposts and their whole line had fallen in exhaustion? Or had they just intended to sit by and let us come up and take them?

A careful evaluation of the circumstances involved in the river crossing and our subsequent entry into the city seems to indicate that our good fortune was the result two-thirds of good planning and execution and one-third favor in the eyes of the gods of war. The observation from the OP the previous afternoon had revealed that there were three low ridges or rises in the fields on the east side of the river and running parallel to it. The first was less than 100 yards from the river bank, the second was just behind the fence, and the third and highest was 100 or so yards beyond that. They Jerry outpost positions were along the fence and the ridge behind it. The principal positions were on the third ridge, and the fields of fire from there did not cover completely the open fields on both sides of the river.

They covered the fields on the west side of the river entirely, but at the point of the crossing they covered us only the first hundred yards after we crossed to the east bank. Then we were shielded by the first and second ridges. The first ridge was also protection from artillery and mortar fire had they attempted to lay it on us so close to their own positions. After we reached the first ridge and from there on, the second ridge concealed us from observation and covered us from fire from the main positions on the third ridge. The point chosen for the crossing was the only one so favorably situated from our point of view. As for the noise we and the engineers made, that was largely offset by the fact that there was a wind blowing toward us and that the artillery of the 45th was active to the north and east. The final point in our favor was that Jerry actually did not expect an attack from our positions where he was generally situated favorably when the frontal assaults on Nuremburg were being made already and were moving successfully forward. We did surprise him completely. The movement was well carried out, and luck was with us all the way.

The first fire that we hit was light burp gun stuff just as we approached the first houses. It was quickly and easily silenced. Then we reached the houses, and the whole battalion began to move into the city, sweeping though buildings and collecting PW's. In Love Company, the Second and Third Platoons pushed ahead, joining with King on the right, while Weapons protected the flank as we were the first element from the river and some distance separated us from it. Headquarters got the job of taking care of PW's collected, and the First Platoon was company reserve.

Now the pressure was really off. We still had the city to take, but we were inside it and surprised the Jerries so thoroughly that they were either on the run and had

little fight left or were merely waiting for us to come along and pick them up. It should be a cinch from here on in, and that it was.

The Third Platoon had some excitement soon after we got into the city when they came to a race track and had to knock out a machine gun before they could proceed. Then they were joined by the First Platoon helping to clear out two others. About 0830 the whole company was held up for nearly an hour while King took care of snipers barricaded in some buildings that gave them fields of fire dominating open ground King had to cross. After that the battalion moved forward rapidly and scarcely deterred by any opposition.

PW's began to come in to our company stockade that we set up in a large house. Everybody brought them in. The house was filled up and we herded the overflow into the front yard. Then a runner came back with orders from the Skipper for us to move forward to a new location. The platoons were getting too far ahead of us. We had been looking for word on disposition of the prisoners, but none came so we had to take them along, and we had to enlist the help of the First Platoon in taking care of them. The next stopping place was a warehouse, and it wasn't long before that was filled — partly with uniformed PW's and partly with male civilians, many of whom were undoubtedly quick change artists who had managed to shed uniforms just before we arrived.

When we received the PW's from the platoons, we had to search them all and segregate them. Then we kept a guard of half our number and more as our collection grew. The civilians we put together in one big bunch. The soldiers we separated by rank and by type, whether wehrmacht, SS or volksturm. All were searched, and we soon had enough in our stockade that our main interest was

more the loot we could find on them than any weapons they might have, for the platoon men got their Lugers and Walthers before they turned them over to us.

We had to move again, and our column was three or four times the size of a full rifle company. At the new location we got word that a battalion stockade had been set up, so we about-faced them, and nearly the whole First Platoon took the motley crew on back, while Headquarters moved forward again and set up a new enclosure. At first the Second and Third platoons had sent heavy guards back with the prisoners, but by now they had reached the point where they just started them down the street on their own. There were so many that they couldn't do otherwise, and there were enough GI's on the streets back of the forward elements so that none of the prisoners could get lost or slip away from us.

Before the city of Fürth was completely taken, we had counted more Jerries through our stockade than we had men in the company, and we found later that half or more of those the two platoons had taken went to the rear via a stockade that King Company set up on the same basis as ours. The civilians we handled would have made more than a full regiment, and a lot of them were found to be German soldiers and ended up in army PW enclosures and prison camps.

Fürth was ours by 1400, and we were in the northern part of the city not far east of the river near the railroad yards. For a while heavy guard was maintained along the boundaries of our sector, and then we turned to the pleasanter job of locating billets and of looking to our own welfare and enjoyment. We had hopes of staying for a while in this big suburb of Nuremburg, for it looked good to us, and we were tired enough to want to take a few days off.

Headquarters pulled up at a brewer's castle the Skipper picked out for CP and billets, and we lay on the lawns outside the place and slept and ate. Then we looked the place over and found that we had rare good luck, for the place was modern and richly furnished and large enough for Headquarters, plus half the First Platoon, plus a Mike Company HMG section attached to us for the day.

The first looters inside got to the basement and returned with champagne and a wide variety of wines and cordials enough for everyone to work on, — which we did willingly in preference to eating our "K's." Then we found supplies of preserved fruits and vegetables and all kinds of canned foods, so that we didn't have need for any of our army rations at all the rest of the day. We had fine beds with clean sheets and mattresses and springs. We had radios and phonographs. There were showers and bath tubs all over the place. And the quantity and variety of souvenirs there for the taking were endless.

We ate and drank and drank and ate and drank some more, and we went to bed one or two at a time anywhere from 2000 until 0400 the next morning. No one was worried about anything that might be ahead or gave a thought to any serious matter, other than for the fact that we drank to our buddies who were gone. We didn't mourn them so much as we did tip another one for them. We felt that we had cause to celebrate, and we had the reaction of heavy strain to counteract. No one could blame us too much for being in our cups.

The next morning we had a good breakfast, for the kitchen had caught up with us, and we went to church, and we lay around and relaxed. We took pictures of ourselves draped with Nazi flags and garbed in Nazi uniforms and helmets. Some of us took an experimental sip — hair of the dog that bit us the night before.

There were bull and business sessions among the officers in the CP. Colonel Lovsnes and Captain DeRues and a few others visited us from Battalion. No one was in a hurry or was concerned about anything but the luxury of the immediate present . . .

XXI

ON TO MUNICH

20 April —

Soft day in Fürth . . . Loothing . . . Taking pictures . . More wine and cognac and champagne . . . Sleep and relaxation . . . Yes, and church services . . . Hot breakfast and dinner served to us bread-line fashion in a narrow street . . . Everyone tired but happy. God, but it was good to be alive!

Alerted to move on again . . . "Farringbone" got a soft deal on DS as Acting Top of the division replacement company . . . Loaded onto trucks and took off at 1830 . . . Went west on road back to Schweinfurt as far as Neustadt, then took a dirt road leading south . . . Billeted in the little town of Ammerndorf.

21 April —

Left Ammerndorf on foot at 0800 . . . Marched eight hours in rain . . . Arrived Rurth at 1630 and waited around in the rain for orders. Finally took billets there.

22 April —

Took off in truck column at 0845 and rode for 10 miles. Then "zu fuss" again and on for another six miles more . . . Reached Unter Wurmbach at 1430.

23 April —

Began march at 0900 . . . Back at the head of the battalion again . . . Cleared towns of Sherfeld, Pflaumfeld and Gnotzheim . . . Reached and pushed on beyond Hechlingen

by 1600, then pulled back into the town to stay for the night... Twelve damned weary miles on foot through woods and hills.

24 April —

On foot again, and on through the same monotonous routine. The first days of marching our officers and noncoms would pass along the order "Off your dead ass and on your dying feet" at the end of each break in the march, but it was now down to "Off and on, off and on... Let's go. What are ya waiting for? We're fightin' this war, not the WAC's."

Took off at 0700 as the leading unit of the battalion... Hit mined area but got through it without casualties... Marched on to Gosheim where we entrucked and then rode another four or five miles to the south... Then afoot again and toward Mundling where we hoped to take billets for the night... Four Jerry fighters strafed us on the road. There were no hits on men or equipment but plenty of near misses... Got almost to our billets in the town and they started shelling the place, keeping it up intermittently until midnight... God damn the sonsabitches! The lousy krauts won't leave us alone. They oughta know by now the war's over.

25 April —

Left Mundling at 0900 on foot along a road through the woods... Reached high ground above Berg, a village just north of Donauworth, and spent the afternoon there, resting and herding prisoners we'd picked up on the way through the woods... Item was in the lead and took the town. We marched in at about dusk to occupy overnight quarters. The town was supposed to have been cleared, but five fully armed Jerries walked out of the house we picked for a CP just as we were about to occupy it.

We just got settled and had finished our supper of looted ham and eggs when our outpost north of the town called in excitedly (2330) to report a 30-man Jerry patrol crossing the valley from east to west behind the town. Then Eaton came rushing breathlessly with the same news, the first time anyone had seen him the least bit flustered... Skipper checked with Battalion to make sure it wasn't a patrol of our own and then rousted out nearly the whole company — all not on duty — to investigate the report... Big Chris and his whole crew volunteered to go along... When they got to the area, there were no signs of the patrol, and they began scouting around to see if the Jerries had just hit the dirt and were waiting for a chance to move on... Beltrame saw three or four dark shadows in a shell hole and went to look closer at them. When he kicked one of them and felt the give of human flesh and yelled at the guy to get up, he got a burst of rat-gun slugs in his legs for reply. But Rudy disposed of that kraut as he fell, and the rest of the Jerries jumped up and ran... Everyone in position to fire did so. Three or four more Jerries were killed, and several of them were wounded. The company got back and to bed by 0100.

26 April —

No sleep for "doughfeet" (What a bastard name to tag onto a bunch of soldiers!). An alert came through at 0200 and after that we sat around until 0430 before moving out again on foot, this time to the eastward... Just skirted the city of Donauworth and followed along he River Danube.

Reached the "beautiful blue" Danube, a muddy brown stream that always seemed to us to be about to flood its banks, just after daylight and made our crossing at 0700 on flat-bottomed scows brought along by the 142d Engineers... Thirteen men and a crew of two per boat

each trip . . . had a rope across the river and one crewman pulled along on the rope while the other one kept the skow righted in the current . . . From the river we moved south toward the town of Eggelstetten under cover of a heavy artillery barrage . . . Took the town against light resistance while unit to right had a stiff fight . . . Once in the town we took a heavy shelling from kraut guns south of Oberndorf until our own artillery zeroed in with counter-battery fire. Left Eggelstetten in late afternoon and marched through fields to take Oberndorf and remain there for the night after outposting the town . . .

27 April —

Morning report recort of events: "Spent day in Oberndorf. Alerted several times. Ran recon patrol. Got clean OD's, underwear and sox (but no bath). Left Oberndorf on foot at 2330 headed for Munster. Still enroute at 2400." . . . Kitchen caught up with us at Oberndorf too late to feed us but in time for Johnnie to tell us a vivid story of being shelled while waiting for a pontoon bridge to be put across the Danube . . . Toon LWA there, with shrapnel in hand . . .

28 April —

Off your dead and on your dying . . . Continued march from Oberndorf. . . . Thought we were recrossing the Danube just after midnight, but it was a tributary, the Lech River . . . Reached Munster at 0630 and rested for an hour before pushing on . . . Took town of Thierhaupten at 1145, after approaching the place on tanks and trucks. Billeted there.

29 April —

Alerted at 0300 but didn't move out until 0700 . . .

Headed for Munich as the forward element of the division, on tanks and TD's . . . Reached main autobahn to Munich and rolled forward on it for about 30 miles . . . Pulled off the road then and into the woods near Bergkirchen, waiting for orders. The roads from there to Munich were jammed with military traffic, and further forward movement for us was blocked by tanks and TD's that had been held up by mud . . . Billeted in Bergkirchen . . . Took beaucoup prisoners during the day and liberated three Canadian soldiers who had been in PW stockades for over two years.

30 April —

Moved out on foot again and crossed the Amper River at the village of Feldgeding, waiting there for armor to accompany us . . . Skirted Dachau about noon. The stench that filled the air made us certain we hadn't missed the place by far . . . Pushed on into Munich during the afternoon, taking many prisoners and seeing many liberated Allied PW's . . . Revolting elements in the city had failed in an attempt to overcome the garrison there but had weakened it sufficiently to prevent too great opposition. The simultaneous convergence on the city of the 42nd, 45th and 3rd divisions and of the 3rd Armored was enough to convince that garrison of the futility of any last ditch resistance.

Within the city our company was the first to reach and cross the Isar River, and that was our stopping point for the day . . . Set up outposts and then secured billets for the night.

Headquarters got billets in a small apartment house that was in front of a large cold storage plant loaded to the rafters with frozen meat and fruit and vegetables along with butter and eggs. We all had beefsteak and fried potatoes and eggs with fresh strawberries and honeydew

melons for supper. We listened to radio programs and all had hot showers during the evening, then played host to the chaplain who had lost his way and could not locate battalion headquarters.

1 May —

Thought we were due for a few days' stopover in Munich but got moving orders at breakfast and loaded onto trucks at 1130 for a rainy trip . . . The rest of the battalion and most of the regiment had heard of our cold storage plant, and every truck that pulled out of our part of the city was loaded with all the eggs and meat and butter that could be hauled away . . . Arrived at Waldparlach Neubarg by 1300 and took billets after collecting numerous PW's and setting up a perimeter defense . . . In one house picked up two Wehrmacht men just as they were in the act of changing from uniforms into civilian clothing. They had false discharge papers showing they were released from the army ten days earlier . . . Headquarters got the house of a famous German egyptologist as a CP and quarters . . . "Minnesota" Johnson and Ruesch departed for the hospital with yellow jaundice.

2 May —

Left billet area 1100 on trucks and TD's . . . Arrived Glonn 1400 and took new billets . . . No action, few PW's.

3 May —

Left Glonn 0530, still with TD's, and travelled to Vogtavath. Found new billets and a CP and got settled . . . Then off again on foot for about two miles before being picked up by trucks . . . Arrived Sochtenau 1330 and stayed there for the night . . . Kitchen caught up and served a hot supper at 2030.

4 May —

Left Sochtenau 0800. Walked four miles and loaded onto artillery pieces and trucks . . . Went on to Siegelby village and took billets.

5 May —

This time an advance party left to get our billets for the night. We pulled out on TD's at 0900, arrived at Holzhausen 1430 . . . Occupied billets and set up town guard . . . Prospect of the war's end made us forget how tired we were.

* * * *

We remained in the village of Holzhausen for eight days. There we saw the end of the war, and there we had the first real rest since leaving Dimbach seven weeks earlier. We had, during that time, travelled over 600 miles from the Hardt Mountains of western Germany to the hilly and wooded lake country bordering on Austria. We had had all kinds of motor transport, and we had done our share of walking. We had taken or had a part in taking four great German cities and countless small cities, towns and villages. We had gone along victorious and unopposed, and we had in places fought our way through sporadic but die-hard Nazi resistance. We had had fun, and we had suffered. We were happy, but we were dead tired, and Holzhausen was a chance for us to rest and regain strength and energy that had been drained from us during that long trek across Hitler's Third Reich.

For the next eight days we had not much to do. We collected scattered PW's and maintained regular guard and patrol schedules. We replaced lost and worn out clothing and equipment. We got typhus shots. We had hot showers and a change of clothing. We got three hot meals each day, and we got regular sleep. We started some

group athletics, and we had some close order drill and a light dose of training. We had a retreat parade at which the Skipper was awarded a bronze star by Colonel Lovsnes. The new "Top" (former mess sergeant Johnson) got out a lot of paper work. A Red Cross clubmobile unit stopped by long enough to dish out doughnuts and coffee.

At Holzhausen, too, we made a valiant attempt at celebrating the end of the war. On arriving at the town, we were notified that we would not move farther, that the war was almost at an end and that we would stay put there in order to avoid any unnecessary endangering of lives. We were also told that General Kesselring would be coming through our lines on a peace mission and that due respect would be accorded him should he pass through our sector. That was on the 5th, and hostilities were actually over for us then, though they did not cease generally until the 7th and the official announcement was not made until the 9th. On neither date did we have anything like a formal celebration, but among ourselves we tried to get a corner on the cognac and schnaps in the area, and we did a pretty fair job of drinking up what we found.

XXII

FERTIG

This account could go on for another year, for there were still some of our original number left in the theatre that long after the end of the war. It could go on to our long stay in Austria: our first move to the little mountain resort town of Krimml near the Italian border, our move to Kitzbühel in the Tyrol where we were General Collins' honor guard, then to Salzburg and Neukirchen and on back to Krimml, and then the final move to Vienna where our regiment succeeded the 222d as the garrison force in the American zone.

It could describe our transition from a combat to an occupation force. It could go into our sweating out — between May and September — of redeployment to the Pacific. It could describe the gradual breaking up of our original Love Company as, one by one and in small groups, we were transferred out on the long trip toward home. Perhaps it might even attempt to tell something about how we found Austria, her people, her land, her customs, her institutions, as they came out of the war.

At one time this writer prepared a long chapter on the single subject of fraternization and only determined to omit it after long deliberation. That was a hectic subject. It is left out, along with several others, not for fear of misinterpretation of what it did to us or to what extent we participated in it, but because it's rather extraneous to the purpose of this story. It would add little to what has already been written here, and in a sense it is large enough to be dealt with by itself in another volume.

This seems a good enough stopping point after a little review.

People are interested in statistics, so here are some. We left the States when there were still 165 days of the European war left to be fought. We spent 14 days in the crossing from New York to Marseilles. We spent another two weeks or more getting to Strasbourg and to our first stretch in the line. We had two weeks rest at Lagarde. There was more time out at Dimbach and a day here and there all along the way. Altogether we spent about 100 days in the line. That's far from being a record, but it was more than enough to satisfy us. Even if you take from the 100 days the time when we were in an easy defensive position and when we were moving forward against little or no opposition, there was still plenty of the rough stuff so that no one will ever need to remind us what combat is like.

We had 187 men and six officers when we embarked from New York, and there were three men with us from the Medical Detachment. We lost one officer, 16 of our own men and a relief Medic — — 18 killed out of 196. Our wounded amounted to roughly 50 men, and battle injuries and non-battle casualties accounted for at least another 25. Other outfits suffered worse losses, but that was plenty severe for our actual combat time. God knows we didn't want any more. From January through May we received 85 replacements, and a lot of those who were wounded or injured in our first fighting got back in time to finish the war with us.

We were no famous bunch of fighting men, and we don't lay claim to having done anything to put us in a soldiers' hall of fame. We were just typical of thousands of similar groups of men who fought and sacrificed because we had to, because we are members of a society that made us collectively responsible for our own collective welfare.

Most of us didn't want to be infantrymen, but we were and couldn't do anything about it and so generally made the most of our lot. Now that it's all over with, most of us are glad that we have a right to wear blue braid and the combat infantry badge.

Probably the one finest thing that happened to all of us — it would be a fine statistic if it could be measured — is the manner in which we all scraped off the veneer we brought with us from civilian life and got a good look at each other as human beings.

GANGPLANK ROSTER

Company Headquarters

Capt	Cook, Jack L	608 W Main, Princeton, Ky
1st Lt	Casazza, Albert J	1019 Wayne Ave, Dayton, Ohio
1/Sgt	Primiano, Robert J	268 East 181st St, Bronx, N Y 2nd Lt
S/Sgt	Bowman, Henry A	Route No 2, Portageville, Mo
S/Sgt	Johnson, Norman K	Box 34, Palmya, Wis 1/Sgt
Sgt	Ebenau, Irwin	84 Ave "B", New York City, N Y
Sgt	Farrington, Earl J	Bloomingdale, N Y S/Sgt
Sgt	Lisenby, Tom R	Fairfield, Fla
Sgt	Smith, George W	Tylersville, Pa
T/4	Buster, Vernon A	RFD No 2, Clarksville, Texas S/Sgt
T/4	Echols, Luther A	2204 Norris Ave, Gadsden, Ala
Cpl	Maness, William M	Gen Del, Lexington, Tenn
T/5	Clauser, Harold C	75 President St, Hempstead, N Y
T/5	Kreuger, Francis A	1128 Rathbone St SW, Grand Rapids, Mich
Pfc	Anderson, Paul A	421 So Thomas Ave, Minneapolis, Minn
Pfc	Branan, Merrell B	215 Walnut St, Marianna, Ark
Pfc	Brunner, Bruce W A	109 E Everett St, Falconer, N Y
Pfc	Dickinson, Wesley I	Main St, Whately, Mass T/5
Pfc	Dremann, James W	
Pfc	Gilman, Ralph	2168 NW 1st Terrace, Miami, Fla S/Sgt
Pfc	Goldstein, Jules	47 Ostego Road, Verona, N J
Pfc	Hale, Daniel R	Route No 2, Box 724, Pensacola, Fla S/Sgt
Pfc	Kirkpatrick, Edward J	2017 W Dean Ave, Spokane, Wash
Pfc	Larson, Harlan J	Colton, S D
Pfc	Li Puma, Giacomo J	239 Jerome Ave, South Beach, L I, N Y
Pfc	Mikkelson, Lloyd S	Lake Park, Minn
Pfc	Roberts, Paul C	Route No 1, Maysville, Ga
Pfc	Ruesch, Sherman H	221 Fourth St, Idaho Falls, Idaho M/Sgt
Pfc	Slucki, Stanley J	503 Clay St, Joliet, Ill Sgt
Pfc	Tevepaugh, Richard J	Bear Poplar, North Carolina

Pvt	Coins, William J	112 E Division St, Mt Vernon, Wash
Pvt	Hall, Richard T	8062 Homer Ave, Detroit, Mich
Pvt	Keown, Fredie L	Route No 2, Waterveliet, Mich
Pvt	Mathews, Carl R	Mahomount, Ill
Pvt	Minnis, Clifford C	4133 Kalamuth St, Denver, Colo Pfc
Pvt	Reed, Berl	Morgantown, Ind Pfc
Pvt	Thomas, Gilbert G	1008 Elm St, Reading, Pa S/Sgt

First Platoon

2nd Lt	Rice, Billy J	Kaufman, Texas 1st Lt
T/Sgt	Snyder, Oley O Jr	201 Woodland Ave, Clarksburg, W Va 2nd Lt
S/Sgt	Eldridge, Homer E	Leechville, Ark
S/Sgt	Haimm, Saul C	1324 52nd St, Brooklyn, N Y
S/Sgt	Pellowitz, Louis	2326 Brown St, Philadelphia, Pa T/Sgt
Sgt	Dailey, Arthur G	315 69th St, Brooklyn, N Y S/Sgt
Sgt	Gallegly, John J	Corning, Ark T/Sgt
Cpl	Johnson, Edgar C	Gen Del, Gainsboro, Tenn S/Sgt
*Pfc	Barry, Donald F	57 Bradley St, Lewiston, Me
Pfc	Bolmes, Raymond L	931 S 15th St, Milwaukee, Wis Sgt
Pfc	Brooks, Merrill R	404 E 1st St, Britt, Iowa S/Sgt
Pfc	Byrer, Donald W	Barbon, Ind S/Sgt
Pfc	Coslow, Rex P	123 Berry Ave, Lansing, Mich S/Sgt
Pfc	Des Jardins, George	Maple Lake, Minn
Pfc	Drozdzewski, Frank J	7491 Montrose St, Detroit, Mich
*Pfc	Henry, Jerry J S	Box 385, Greenbrier, Ark
*Pfc	Renard, Ronald	2518 6th Jaeger St, Bellingham, Wash
Pfc	Samit, George P	3136 W Clifford St, Philadelphia, Pa
Pfc	Spernick, Raymond J	4013 43d Ave, Minneapolis, Minn
Pfc	St John, Oscar	Mills St, Epping, N H
Pfc	Torres-Reyes, Ricardo	Box 1794, Bayamon, Puerto Rico
Pfc	Vitale, Frank P	9917 42d Ave, Corona, L I, N Y
Pfc	Zarn, Fred C	710 Pine St, St Joseph, Mich

*Pvt	Dickens, William G	RFD No 2, Box 113, Galax, Va	Pfc
Pvt	Dickerson, William N	1931 Common St, Houston, Texas	Pfc
Pvt	Diderich, Lawrence A	Route No 2, Clinton, Wis	Pfc
Pvt	Forman, Thomas P	541 10th Ave, Sacramento, Cal	Pfc
Pvt	Giffin, James M	458 12th St, Fresno, Cal	
Pvt	Gutting, Vaden C	Revere, Mo	Pfc
Pvt	James, Marion R	5331 Washington, Houston, Texas	Pfc
Pvt	Klenk, Waldemar	Route No 2, Box 183, St Joseph, Mich	Pfc
*Pvt	Labhart, Walter F, Jr	4508 Nolan, Forst Worth, Texas	
Pvt	Leski, Clarence	3407 Milwaukee Ave, Chicago, Ill	Pfc
Pvt	Lynch, William E	Kuttawa, Kentucky	Pfc
Pvt	Meichels, Harold A	3907 Nokomis Ave S, Minneapolis, Minn	Pfc
Pvt	Nance, Dalton N	RFD, Dudley, Mo	Pfc
Pvt	Pieterick, Gerald J	Independence, Wis	S/Sgt
Pvt	Pool, Austen K Jr	609 N Grove Ave, Elgin, Ill	
Pvt	Rios, Modesto	Gen Del, Tilden, Texas	
Pvt	Stroud, James W Jr	3015 N Hudson, Oklahoma City, Okla	Pfc
Pvt	Syslo, Henry C	2633 W Potomac Ave, Chicago, Ill	Pfc

Second Platoon

2nd Lt	Tucker, Donald M	117 S Morley, Baltimore, Md	1st Lt
T/Sgt	Anderson, Berry L	Route No 1, Porter, Okla	
S/Sgt	Frieri, Frank J	1647 Burnett Ave, Union, N J	
*S/Sgt	Harrison, George N	1830 Broad St, Trenton, N J	
*S/Sgt	McGinley, Claude E	Winn, Maine	
Sgt	Huish, Jack T	792 E Empire St, Salt Lake City, Utah	
Sgt	Kanieski, Henry C	RFD No 5, Little Falls, Minn	S/Sgt
Sgt	Roebuck, Charles R	42 Goldenham Rd, Walden, N Y	T/Sgt

Pvt	Sprouse, Willie W	Green Springs, Va	Pfc
Pvt	Stroud, John M	1144 S McDuffie St, Anderson, SC	S/Sgt
Pvt	Swanson, Donald A	1134 S Madison St, Marenette, Wis	Pfc
Pvt	Tuberville, Paul E	Route No 1, Erin, Tenn	Pfc
Pvt	Wheeler, Leroy	5505 Pennsylvania Ave, St Louis, Mo	Pfc
Pvt	Whitfield, Edgar A	493 Main St, Picayune, Miss	Pfc

Third Platoon

*2nd Lt	Yelton, Robert F		
S/Sgt	Benson, William E	1 Main St, Franklin, N H	2nd Lt
S/Sgt	Brewer, James M	Route No 3, Holdensville, Okla	
S/Sgt	Kelley, Russell E	34 Albion St, Methuen, Mass	2nd Lt
S/Sgt	Phillipi, Clayton A	704 N Ash St, McPherson, Kan	
Sgt	Leff, Tom	515 N River Drive, Stevens Point, Wis	
Sgt	Noland, Millard E Jr	New Meadows, Idaho	T/Sgt
*Sgt	Webb, Graham Y	Chilton, Texas	
Cpl	Morris, George J	7 N 5th Ave, Long Branch, N J	S/Sgt
Pfc	Allen, Chester L	309 W Paramore, Topeka, Kan	
Pfc	Beltrame, Rudolph	618 Bluff St, Bridgeville, Pa	Sgt
Pfc	Boltz, Raymond R	1201 9th St, Waterton, Wis	S/Sgt
Pfc	Carey, Bernard J Jr	536 Orange St, Jackson, Mich	1/Sgt
Pfc	Croix, Leamon L	2320 Glenarm, Denver, Colo	Sgt
*Pfc	Larsen, Max G	Mayfield, Utah	
Pfc	McCoy, Winfred W	2700½ Home St, Sioux City, Iowa	
Pfc	McGrath, William E	13802 Maxwell Ave, Cleveland, Ohio	
Pfc	Miller, Horace F	Lexington, N Y	
Pfc	Osborn, Junior P	Route No 1, Blountsville, Ala	
Pfc	Scoggins, Paul	Route No 1, Concord, Ga	
Pfc	Stengel, Louis J	34 Millard St, Tarrington, Conn	
*Pfc	Stephenson, John H Jr	Box 167, Simsbury, Conn	
Pfc	Thomas, James R	Monteagle, Tenn	
Pfc	Vlasaty, Carl G	193 Yonkers Ave, Yonkers, N Y	
Pvt	Barron, Jose R	Route No 1, Cuero, Texas	

Pvt	Blanchard, Wilbert C	5886 Jackson St, Dearborn, Mich	Pfc
Pvt	Butcher, Glen B	Box 449, Worthington, Minn	
Pvt	Dew, Dalton D	RFD No 2, Stockport, Ohio	Pfc
Pvt	Frost, Arbor	Trixie, Ky	Pfc
Pvt	Hunter, Dean A	Bradford, Ark	S/Sgt
Pvt	Iwen, Wilbert W	3025 S Kedvale Ave, Chicago, Ill	T/4
Pvt	Kwiatkowski, Edward T	2142 W 18th Place, Chicago, Ill	Sgt
Pvt	McDaniel, William J	Route No 1, Bethlehem, Ga	Sgt
Pvt	Spilman, Clinton D	325 Evergreen St, Ottumwa, Iowa	Pfc
Pvt	Stemple, Andrew J Jr	Joker, W Va	Pfc
Pvt	Sullivan, Lee R	Route No 1, Pool Ville, Texas	Pfc
Pvt	Turner, Wilbur C	Box 124, Antioch, Ill	Pfc
Pvt	Velasco, Ralph M	617 Austin St, San Antonio, Texas	
Pvt	Yates, Esper E	54½ Dakota Ave, Columbus, Ohio	

Weapons Platoon

2nd Lt	Skilling, John M Jr	1704 Bancroft Parkway, Wilmington, Del.	1st Lt
T/Sgt	Bak, Edward J	4831 McGregor St, Detroit, Mich	2nd Lt
S/Sgt	Gerber, Ben J	Box No 3, Monroe 3, Nebr	T/Sgt
S/Sgt	Webb, Earl E	Route No 5, Lauranelburg, Tenn	
Sgt	Anderberg, John J	Hudson, So Dak	
Sgt	Burns, Robert J	Williamsburg, Iowa	
Sgt	Zeysing, William L Jr	Wellington, Mo	S/Sgt
Cpl	Zajac, Leo M	1250 W Chicago Ave, Chicago, Ill	
Pfc	Baker, Edwin F	6 Cora Ave, E Providence, R I	S/Sgt
Pfc	Bernhardt, William F	303 A St, Girardville, Pa	
Pfc	Dietmeyer, George P	703 Poplar St, Waukegan, Ill	Sgt
Pfc	Dowling, William E	1321 Pine Ave, San Jose, Cal	S/Sgt
Pfc	Ellis, William E	589 N Spring St, Wilmington, Ohio	Sgt

Pfc	Forgiel, Francis J	13 Robinson Way, W Warwick, R I	
Pfc	Hamilton, Tom S Jr	1513 W Clark St, Champaigne, Ill	Sgt
Pfc	Howell, Edward	416 Lacy St, Hot Springs, Ark	T/5
*Pfc	Kruszyinski, Eugene J	4612 S Western Ave, Chicago, Ill	
Pfc	Lambert, Henry E	RFD 1, Burbonsville, W Va	T/5
Pfc	Mabry, Dabney S	19 Woodland Place, Scarsdale, N Y	
Pfc	Morgenstern, Conrad J		
Pfc	Nitsch, Oscar W	Bennington, Kansas	
Pfc	Richmond, Edgar N	Thayer, Va	Sgt
*Pfc	Skirrow, Arthur G	14 Sawyer Ave, East Orange, N J	
*Pfc	Szucs, Michael J	66 21st St NW, Barberton, Ohio	
Pfc	Toon, James M	Route No 2, Fancy Farm, Ky	
Pfc	Ward, John T	Route No 1, Olyphant, Pa	
Pfc	Wills, Alfred E	237 Grove St, Brooklyn, N Y	
Pvt	Barron, Thomas C Jr	Route No 3, Ackerman, Miss	Pfc
Pvt	Borders, Dillard H	908 Seminary, Kansas City, Kan	Pfc
Pvt	Bridgeman, Glen E	Grayville, Ill	
Pvt	Brinson, Robert E	7105 Montana Ave, Hammond, Ind	Pfc
Pvt	Hutchens, Marion G	Eaton, Ind	Pfc
Pvt	Swenson, Stanley	Route No 1, Bagley, Minn	Pfc
Pvt	Szilagy, Alexander A	P O Box 358, Owosso, Mich	Pfc
Pvt	West, Wilford M	109 W Middle St, Williamston, Mich	Sgt

Attached Medics (including replacements)

Pfc	Abma, Ellery R	1855 S Sawyer, Chicago, Ill	
Pvt	Dumm, Russel A	Nicktown, Pa	
*Pvt	Kehoe, Jerry P	4851 E Lawn, Detroit, Mich	
Pfc	Skelton, Charles E	Box 246, Westbrook, Tex	T/5
Pfc	West, Clifton R	250 Armat St, Philadelphia, Pa	T/5
Pfc	Young, Arthur H	1111 Guion St, Ottowa, Ill	T/4

REPLACEMENTS

January 1945

Pvt	Windham, Hewell B	2634 Long St, Chattanooga, Tenn	Pfc

February 1945

Sgt	Schneider, George J	413 Spruce St, St Marys, Pa	S/Sgt
Sgt	Luptak, John A	1735 Center St, Whiting, Ind	
T/5	Ridnouer, Daniel V	W Montgomery St, Knoxville, Iowa	Sgt
T/5	Prosio, Terry	1023 Chestnut St, Ambridge, Pa	
Pfc	Brescol, Edward B	3363 Chestnut St, Toledo, Ohio	
Pfc	Watson, James E	2105 Cumberland St, Rockford, Ill	
Pfc	Sica, Robert T	42 Main St, W Orange, N J	
Pfc	Silver, Eugene	333 E 70th St, New York City, N Y	
Pvt	Ackerknecht, Donald P	10 Wood St, Gloversville, N Y	Pfc
Pvt	Cornell, Frank H Jr		Pfc
Pvt	Cortez, Richard B	535 Woodward Ave, St Paul, Minn	Pfc
Pvt	Cox, Walter F	Cedar Ave, Marshallton, Del	Pfc
Pvt	Craft, James S	Silverstreet, S C	Pfc
Pvt	Crist, William J	Box 404, Floodwood, Minn	Pfc
Pvt	Culley, Hovey Jr	529 W Water St, Mt Vernon, Ind	Pfc
Pvt	Dane, Dudley C	350 26th Ave N, St Cloud, Minn	Pfc
Pvt	Davis, Carl	Pruclen, Tenn	Pfc
Pvt	Day, William E	510 3d Ave, Duluth, Minn	S/Sgt
Pvt	Delgado, Hilario L	Box 387, Pharr, Texas	Pfc
Pvt	Revia, Claude	High Island, Texas	
Pvt	Seidman, Milton	131-07 Liberty Ave, Richmond Hill, N Y	Pfc
Pvt	Copeland, Richard L	1010 S McDuffie St, Anderson, S C	Sgt
Pvt	Cornell, Vernon A	1726 14th Ave, Ft Dodge, Iowa	Pfc
Pvt	Cox, Lyle F	355 Baldwin, Pontiac, Mich	Cpl

Pvt	Crabtree, Allen E	RFD No 1, Box 128, Paw Paw, W Va	Pfc
Pvt	Crider, Donald D	229 Banview, Ontario, Calif	
*Pvt	Crossland, Arthur W Jr	1106 Knox St, Columbia, S C	Pfc
Pvt	Curtin, John F	6102 Bass St, Capitol Heights, Md	Pfc
Pvt	Danner, Leland S	2620 Clovis St, Bluefield, W Va	Pfc
Pvt	Davis, Johnny Jr	324 W Johnson Ave, Lake Wales, Fla	Pfc
Pvt	Decker, Rollan L	Route No 1, Park Rapids, Minn	Pfc
Pvt	Schultheis, Grant T	Box 94, Ladrove, Pa	Pfc
Pvt	Seraydarian, John J	248 Knickerbocker Rd, Tenefly, N J	Pfc
Pvt	Shumpert, Martin V	Route No 1, West Columbia, S C	Pfc
Pvt	Siler, Harold M	1579 N Hill Ave, Pasadena, Cal	Pfc
Pvt	Simmons, Frank Jr	MacDonaldton, Pa	Pfc
Pvt	Lee, Frank D	4218 Giles Ave, St Louis, Mo	Pfc
Pvt	Leftwich, Walter R	Edmonton, Ky	
Pvt	Leonard, Norman W	Hickory Ridge, Ark	Pfc
Pvt	Livingston, Lloyd E	1200 N 10th St, Mattoon, Ill	Pfc
Pvt	Lopez, Joseph E	1904 E 1st St, Los Angeles, Cal	
Pvt	Luisetti, Eligio	1632 Olive St, St Louis, Mo	Pfc
Pvt	Wantland, Robert E	3706 Grandel Square, St Louis, Mo	
Pvt	Wiley, William J	5019 Bancrost, St Louis, Mo	Pfc
Pvt	Word, Orie A Jr	Route No 1, New Edinburg, Ark	Pfc
Pvt	Wren, Neeley A	Box 101, Leachville, Ark	Pfc
Pvt	Wright, Billie C	Box 81, Pound, Va	Pfc
Pvt	Yorba, Michael J	Box 326, San Juan Capistrano, Calif,	Pfc

March 1945

T/4	Saunders, William S	Smithfield, Va	Sgt
Cpl	Reesman, Lawrence J	207 High St, Freeport, Pa	S/Sgt
Cpl	Campbell, Harley E	Box 302, Lincoln, Cal	Sgt
T/5	Hawkins, Charles W	Route 2, Carrier Mills, Ill	

T/5	Lettman, Bernard W	Route 13, Calumet, Mich
T/5	Myers, Jay R	315 So Olive St, Anaheim, Cal
Pfc	Barber, Carl A	4113 Flower Ave, Cincinnatti, Ohio
Pfc	Greitzer, Julius	185 Sheridan Ave, Brooklyn, N Y
Pfc	Newman, Russell O	Route 438 Whicolm, Royal Ooak, Mich
Pvt	Cox, Orville W	Route 2, Edon, Ohio

April 1945

Pvt	Lewis, Donald E	Benton, Md	Pfc
Pvt	Pharr, Erskine F	26 White St, Concord, N C	Pfc
Pvt	Pratt, James W	RFD 1, Stoneville, N C	Pfc
Pvt	Presley, Raymond T	Route 3, Eatonton, Ga	Pfc
Pvt	Rainey, James L	Route 2, Jefferson, Ga	Pfc
Pvt	Rezek, Frank	Route 1, Box 10, Silver Hill, Ark	Pfc
Pvt	Ricker, John Q Jr	401 Mauldin St, Anderson, S C	Pfc
Pvt	Saczawa, Walter F	70 Ansonia St, Hartford, Conn	Pfc
Pvt	Shahan, David F Jr	110 N Main St, Norwich, Conn	Pfc
Pvt	Sidden, Jessie K	Joynes, N C	Pfc
Pvt	Scopino, John A	RFD 2, Terryville, Conn	Pfc
Pfc	Rogers, Victor F	Lamesa, Texas	
Pvt	Siess, Oscar A		
Pvt	Slobodnjak, Peter P	517 Todd St, Wilkinsburg, Pa	Pfc
Pvt	Stein, Elmer P	607 Hatman St, McKeesport, Pa	Pfc
Pvt	Toussaint, Vernon E	RFD 1, Lyndonville, NY	T/5
Pvt	Whalen, John M	8 Springdale Ave, Westfield, Mass	Pfc
Pvt	Wood, Robert C	274 Woodlawn Ave, Jacksonville, Fla	T/4
Pvt	Yates, Clarence E	Route 1, Cecilia, Ky	Pfc
Pvt	Witter, John L Jr	1802 Caroline St, South Bend, Ind	Pfc
Pvt	Ziegler, Roy F	Route 1, Kimmswick, Mo	Pfc

May 1945

T/5	Garcia, Herbert S	38 W 100th St, New York City, N Y	T/4
T/5	Groves, Arthur C		
T/5	McGuire, George R Jr		
Pfc	Marzec, Roman B	3771 E Layton Ave, Cudahy, Wis	

Remainder of 1945:

Sgt	Orwig, Robert M.	2979 Ridgewood Rd, N. W. Atlanta, Ga.
Cpl	Levine, Leonard	91 Elm St. Yonkers, N. Y.
Pfc	Beckett, Eldon L.	278 Post Ave, Rochester, N. Y.
Pfc	Antes, Harry D.	1520 E Walnut St., Des Moines, Iowa.
Pfc	Benthall, Marvin E.	2241 A Warren St., St. Louis, Mo.
Pfc	Birdsall, Richard J	14959 Cavell Ave, Detroit, Mich.
Pfc	Bixler, Robert L.	Center St., Westminister, Mo.
Pfc	Boone, George W.	Rt. 1, Candler, N. C.
Pfc	Borud, Sheldon O.	Box 162 Quamba, Minn.
Pfc	Bott, Forrest L.	Clementsville, Idaho
Pfc	Bourdeau, David L.	2917 Amsterdam Ave., Schenectady, N. Y.
Pfc	Brennan, Erwin J., Jr.	30 Addison St., Gloucester, Mass.
Pfc	Breslow, Harold	2328 S Beulah St., Phila, Pa.
Pfc	Brinkman, Gaylord M.	Rt. 1, Hinckley, Minn.
Pfc	Brune, John C.	609 N Main St., Independence, Missouri
Pfc	Bryer, Robert K.	3383 Sutton Rd., Cleveland, Ohio.
Pfc	Cote, Edward R.	442 High St., Holyoke, Mass.
Pfc	Dupuis, Thomas G.	368 Thomas Ave., St. Paul, Minn.
Pfc	Dzuibek, John E.	140-41st St., Pittsburgh, Pa.
Pfc	Eads, Robert L.	RR 2, Jamesport, Missouri
Pfc	Eckhart, Sessel S.	1316 Appleby Ave, Baltimore, Md.
Pfc	Lierly, Richard C.	2825 Cutting Blvd, Richmond, Cal.
Pfc	Reasoner, Egbert S.	Box 828 Bradenton, Fla.

* Killed in action

Rank shown to the left of the name is that at the time the company left the States, that to the right the one at departure from the organization or the theatre (no entry on the right where no change).