

XIII -- OVER HILL, OVER DALE, OVER THE ALPS

"From Niederholzheim our convoy moved south past several large lakes, then up into and over the mountains in a long slow haul. It was hot and dry when we started out and everything was covered with dust. When we arrived at Tweng we pitched our tents in a big, grass covered field that was about a half mile wide and sandwiched between two mountains which towered hundreds of feet above.

"I was very dusty and dirty and in need of a shave. Someone told me there was a stream of water at the far end of the field, so I got my kit and took off. Now streams in this part of the world are clear water, coming cold and fresh from the melting snow on the mountain tops. This one was no exception. It was the coldest water I had ever felt. To make matters worse, my stove would not work. I lathered up and somehow, with the help of several blades and after numerous nicks, managed to get most of the whiskers off with the icy water.

"The next day we woke up to what we at home called a 'nor-easter'. There was a cold drizzley rain all day. I stayed in my tent the whole time, coming out only to eat. Every one was in a bad mood because we had to stay in our cramped tents or get wet.

"The following morning we came out to find the sides of the mountains at each end of the field covered with snow about half way down. It was then we discovered that the rain we had the day before was the snow melting as it got down to us.

"One day while we were there we had bean soup. You had to chew each and every bean. Everyone was howling at the Mess Sgt. I asked him if he had soaked the beans before he started to cook them. He assured me he had put them on to soak very early in the morning when he first got up. A few days later we had some more of the chewable beans. Again I asked him the same question as before, and he said he had put them to soak the night before. We could not figure out why they did not cook-up. Someone said it was because we were very high in the Alps and that the air was so light the water would boil before it really cooked, so that things had to be boiled much longer than the recipe called for. Maybe so. We didnt get to test this theory because we left there a few days later." --- Frank Laikford

"Just after the war had ended, when we went down into the Alps as part of a Task Force, "Hq" Btry was short of certain rations but I can't remember why. It was going to be a steady diet of nothing but 'Cs' and 'Ks' for several days.

"Shortly after we arrived at our bivouac in Tweng, I spotted some brown cattle up on the side of the mountain behind our position. I wondered if they might not be the solution to our problem.

"Art Donovan, Thornton Riffie and I set out in a 3/4 ton truck to try our luck. When we arrived at the area where the cattle were grazing, Riffie insisted on doing the honors with his P38, which he highly prized. He fired four or five shots but the old steer just stood there looking at us. Donovan then took out his 45 and fired once. To Riffie's chagrin, the steer dropped like a stone.

"Back at the battery we butchered the steer - fortunately I had been a butcher before the war. Across the road from our position was a small saw mill that had a crane hoist in an adjacent shed. That hoist greatly expedited our undertaking for it permitted us to hang the steer up off the ground. We skinned and cleaned it, then left it hang overnight for all of the blood to drain out. Throughout the whole operation we had an enthusiastic audience cheering us on.

"That steer was a mighty tough old rascal and would have been very difficult to chew. Luckily we had several small, hand-held meat grinders. For a full day and all through the night, shifts of KPs were kept busy grinding away.

"Hq' Btry enjoyed hamburgers and bisquits for the next several days." --- Bruce Dunsha