

IX -- COUNTER MARCH - TO THE BULGE

"The battalion had just moved to the vicinity of Dehlingen the day before and we were preparing to crack the Siegfried Line. I had gone to the QM depot and when I got back I was told to stay put. We were moving again. Everyone was running around in circles loading up. I was told we were going back to where we had come from. Maybe farther. It would be another night of riding.

"We went way back in a half circle. It was strange because for the first time since landing in France we had our headlights on. People in some of the towns we went through also had lights on in their houses. We stopped somewhere in a village on the outskirts of Luxembourg City. We were assigned to a very large house something like an inn. It started to snow that afternoon. I don't remember how long it snowed but believe it snowed at least once each and every day for the next thirty days.

"In Luxembourg we were on the go everyday, driving in the snow and ice to the supply depots and up to the firing batteries. One day, enroute to the QM depot, we had just passed through Wiltz into the open countryside when we stopped for a few minutes. Some troops in the area had built a bonfire by the side of the road to warm their hands and feet. Very close to the fire was a stack of wooden boxes. Someone warned them to watch the blaze because the boxes were full of live ammo. The response, 'That's O.K., if they go off we'll finally get warm!'" ---Frank Lankford

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"When we went to Luxembourg, we left late in the afternoon and drove all night with our headlights on." ---Elbert Custer

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"While in Luxembourg, one of the places the Air Section slept at night was on a farmer's living room floor. The farmer would come in about five o'clock in the morning and build a fire in a small stove which was about a foot and a half square and fairly tall. His fuel was small, pressed coal bricks, the likes of which I had never seen. This family had buried their good clothing and valuables out in their fields so the Germans could not take them. They dug up their possessions while we were there." --- H. Kenyon

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"One afternoon when we were in Luxembourg, Sgt. John Malagise told me he wanted me to help man an OP/guard-post that night and took me out to show me where it was. We went to the edge of a town and climbed a bank. Phone lines to the various OPs came together there. John told me the wire on the right side led to the ridge where I was to go and all I had to do was follow it. He said the OP was dug-in in a sugar beet mound. (When Luxemburgers harvested their beets they piled them in long, high mounds in the fields and covered them with dirt. The dirt helped preserve the beets during the winter.)

"Since I was not to go on duty until 1 - 2AM, I returned to the battery, had chow and went to sleep. The guard awakened me about 12:30 and I set out for the OP. It was a clear, cold night and the moon was shining. The wind had picked up and was blowing very hard by the time I reached the top of the bank where the wires were. I picked up the wire on the right and proceeded up the hill, letting the wire slide through my hand. I reached the top of the hill and continued on. Then the end of the wire slipped from my hand. Thinking it had been cut, I groped around in the snow for the other end. I couldn't find it so I back tracked the wire down the hill to where I had started. I kicked around in the snow and found that the blowing snow had covered the wire I was supposed to follow. I had followed one to an abandoned position. Setting off again following the correct wire I arrived at the OP some twenty minutes or so late for my scheduled watch.

"After all that hiking around in the cold wind I was chilled to the bone and my teeth were chattering. I snuggled into the dug out part of the beet mound and tried thinking of everything possible to get my mind off the cold. Every few minutes I would raise up from the hole and look over the top of the mound to see if I could see or hear anything. It was lonesome there all alone and very quiet.

"One of the times when I raised up to look over the mound, just as I got my head out of the hole, the phone rang. I nearly jumped clear out of the hole. Then it dawned on me that the phone was ringing so I crawled back in and fumbled around in the dark for it. When I picked up the phone my teeth were chattering so much from the cold and my fright that I could hardly talk. At last I managed: 'Custer speaking'. It was Capt. Heneghan who wanted to know if everything was alright. I said it was except for my chattering teeth and the fright which the ringing phone had given me. It sure was good to hear his voice and laughter."

--- Elbert Custer

I'm not certain anymore where we were in Luxembourg but I sure had a scare one night. We had just moved to a new position. After the CP had been set up, a farmer from a nearby house in whose barn many of us were going to sleep, invited several of us to his house for dinner. It was a delicious chicken dinner and sure beat Bruce Dunsha's warmed up "Cs".

After the welcomed meal it was dark. I made my way to the barn, picked up my bed roll, and in the pitch black climbed the barn stairs to the loft. There I tripped over someone and said "Excuse me". Then I stepped to the left and fell through the hole where they dropped the hay for the animals on the floor below. Luckily, as I fell I caught both hands on the ledge then dropped to the floor below. Shaking, I turned on my flashlight and found I was facing the rear end of a large white horse. I was scared.

Using the flashlight I scampered back up the steps. Someone asked if I was alright and I said "Yes". Then men scattered everywhere in the barn had a big laugh. --- Norris Eltzroth

"About the middle of December two men from the Battalion, William Whiteside (Hq) and Montgomery Long (C), were sent back to the States on a thirty day furlough. My name had been drawn in "B" Btry as being eligible for this reward, but I did not make the Battalion finals. I sure was dissapointed.

"However, on January 29, when we were at Haller, Lt.(Abraham) Botnick told me I was to receive a four day rest period in Nancy, France. Four of us from the Battalion received passes but I can't recall the names of the other three.

"What a four day pass it turned out to be. We were taken to Nancy and Metz, saw parts of the Maginot Line and many other things that we in the gun sections rarely had the opportunity to see. When we finally got back to the 314th we had been gone a total of ten days without being AWOL one minute." --- Tom Haynie

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"Before we crossed the Our or Sauer River into Germany, the CP was in a large grainery at the foot of a long hill. A battery of very large howitzers moved in behind "C" Btry, which was in a defilated position. Then it moved ahead of "C" Btry to the forward slope of the hill.

"After delivering some messages to the batteries, I was returning to the CP and stopped to see the tremendous howitzers. I believe I could have crawled through tube on my hands and knees. I told the people there that they were on the face of the hill in full view of the enemy and if the Germans started to fire they would be hit. I believe it was a Major who said: 'Don't try to scare us, we've seen the enemy lines before'.

"I didn't stay long and headed for the CP. Near the top of the hill I met Col. Minahan, who asked if that had been me at the gun position and I had. I told them they were being observed by the Germans. I told him I had and they thought I was trying to scare them. He commented that it was too late now for about that time the enemy opened up on them." --- Francis Neighly

"It may have been fate or just coincidence, but just as it was getting dark the same day that I had seen the fox and the disappearing battery near Cruchten, I saw the telltale flicks of light of a German battery evenly spaced along the edge of a small patch of woods that jutted out from a larger forest several thousand yards off to the northeast. The woods were readily identifiable on the map so we radioed the coordinates. I didn't expect any action because it was too dark to see at that distance so no adjustment would have been possible. To my surprise, in a few minutes we received an 'On the way' alert. Most likely one of the observation planes or another FO had already registered on the target. Then it seemed some fifty or more freight trains thundered overhead. It was a frightening sound. I don't know how many battalions fired, but the next morning it was hard to pick out where the finger of woods had been." --- John Beard

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"Just after we crossed the Our River into Germany, one landing field we used for several days had a fence line running along one side of the big open field. Along this fence line were some twelve to fifteen holes about one and a half to three feet in diameter and about five feet deep. In over half of the holes a dead German was slumped down into water up to the top of or over his head. There were no rifles nor other equipment lying about and we never found where they put the dirt that was dug out of the holes. We didn't bother them and they didn't bother us." --- Hubert Kenyon

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Robert Futrell was a jeep driver for an FO crew. He used to tell lots of stories about their experiences when he came back to the Btry for a few days. I remember him saying that once when they were on their way up to the forward elements of the infantry shells suddenly started landing on the road just ahead of them. Bob slammed on the brakes, stopped the jeep, put it in reverse and made a rapid 90 degree turn saying: "This is getting too damned close for Mrs. Futrell's husband." They came back a short distance, laid low until the shelling stopped, then proceeded on to their destination. --- John Hix

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