BATTLEFIELD DIARY

By
Joseph Drasler

L Company, 3rd Battalion,
317th Infantry Regiment
80th Division

Dedicated to
Alice, whose deep and abiding love
sustained me during the sad, bitter
days of the war.

Denver, Colorado
1987

Contents

ADVANCE TO THE FIGHTING FRONT

I write this War Diary as a fortunate survivor of active combat duty in World War II, which included six months on the front lines with the Third Army, in some of the bloodiest fighting of the entire war—the Battle of the Bulge—which many soldiers consider the most decisive of all.

A dirty, rat-infested British ship transported our group of new recruits across the English Channel where landing craft put us ashore on Omaha Beach, November 4, 1944. Tent City, our home for the next two weeks, was established a few miles inland, in the middle of a massive sea of gooey mud, churned and re-churned constantly by the feet of thousands of US troops who passed that way ahead of us.

Our short bivouac there was simply a waiting period for transport trucks that would haul us across the French countryside, towards the battle-front. As the rain continued in a steady pattern the mud became thicker and sloppier by the minute. Everything one looked at was covered by mud, mud, and more mud. The only time we ventured out of our tents was to line up for some hot chow. Otherwise we stayed inside attempting to keep warm and dry. Desperately needed rubber overshoes were stacked in Government warehouses somewhere in the rear echelon, we were told.

On a cold rainy November morning a convoy of Army 6x6 trucks, known as the "Red Ball Express" arrived and we climbed aboard. Still loaded down with overstuffed barracks bags, gas masks and rifles, we crowded into the canvas-covered trucks until we looked like the proverbial sardines in a can and began a four-day journey that terminated in Nancy, France.

The convoy moved in the dark of night only, over rough, improvised roads, temporarily repaired bridges, around deep potholes and flooded areas, with the leading vehicle employing nothing but its so-called "cats eyes" to avoid detection by enemy aircraft.

All too soon, upon arriving in the city of Nancy, the grim reality of war, in all its frightful aspects, the unnerving feeling of actually going into battle, hit home like a bolt out of the blue when the order was given - "Put on extra clothes, stuff knapsacks with extra socks, a change of shirt and underwear, and drop the remaining gear at the Post" (an appointed spot near a farmhouse that had been converted into an Army Collection Center.)

This was IT—the brutal reality of war. No more sleeping indoors, sheltered from the bitter elements of winter weather. No more reliance on hot meals, or a place to shave and wash up. It was now down to living strictly in the field, in the open, in foxholes, occasionally in abandoned buildings, or whatever. No more regular sleeping hours. Get by as best you can. You are on your own.

For the infantryman there were only two outs left—death or the end of hostilities.

We were now in General Patton's Third Army. Recruits were coming in from every possible source to rebuild decimated companies and battalions back to full strength. It was still

raining hard and the entire countryside was fogged-in when our company maneuvered into a thick pine forest, in pursuit of enemy troops well-entrenched in that section of the front. It was also our first taste, our initiation to living in foxholes, out in the cold and rain, surviving on K-rations and a canteen of water.

L Company dug in to protect that flank against enemy counter-attacks. Battling infiltrating German troops and dodging enemy, as well as our own artillery fire, became a new way of life. Maintaining constant surveillance day and night, along with leading patrols into enemy territory left precious little time for sleep, or writing letters back home.

Bad news always traveled fast within the company. Within a few days, I learned the sad news that some of my boot camp buddies died in those woods—even before they were able to inform loved ones back home of their whereabouts.

What a horrible shock it must have been to their families when they received the bad news!

IN BATTLE - ACROSS FRANCE, GERMANY AND AUSTRIA

I was assigned to Company "L," 3rd Battalion, 317th Infantry Regiment, in Nancy, France.

Conversation among the troops centered mainly on the costly fighting at Pont-a-Mousson, Mt. St. Jean, and, the bloody Moselle River crossing. Our troops were pushed back by a German counter-attack with heavy losses. Continuous artillery fire took its toll.

Our Company Commander was killed by artillery fire while deploying new men to a hillside position, where they were to dig in and hold. Losing our C.O. turned out to be no unusual occurrence, since we would have five different Commanding Officers during the next six months of combat.

After assignment to platoons and a reorganization of the Company in general, we were issued a new supply of ammunition and enough K-rations for two days. We struck out again on a dismal rainy morning, retook a town lost previously and fought through a thick forest not far from the French Maginot Line.

These forests were full of enemy snipers, so we had to comb every square foot of ground. Many German soldiers came out with their hands up, in surrender. A large farm house set in a clearing on the edge of the woods was turned into a stockade and another building nearby was converted into an aid station where our wounded were treated until medic jeeps could come up and remove them to field hospitals.

In the dark of night we came back through the same forest. The moon was shining brightly. We were moving as quietly as possible. Suddenly the line of troops would veer to one side or the other, for there laid a dead soldier, half-buried in the mud. There was no time to pick up the dead. A soldier lying dead in the mud, with his brains blown out or half his head shot away was a ghastly sight—until one got used to it.

Here and there a Mauser rifle stood propped up against a tree, and a German helmet lay nearby. Another German had had enough of the war and decided to surrender.

Occasionally we stopped upon hearing troops moving through the trees. These were tense moments, as one didn't know what would happen next in a confused situation where anything could happen.

The last of the enemy troops in that area were on the move, maneuvering to avoid being surrounded.

Our next objective was to clean out pockets of resistance in the Maginot Line. Although many of the huge pillboxes were unmanned, the fighting was intense in some areas, and many a stubborn Kraut who dared hold out against our infantry and tanks, paid with his life.

In this area we came across one of the longest anti-tank ditches I have seen anywhere. Fifteen feet deep, it stretched for miles and miles, deep and wide enough to hold any tank that

might try to cross it. It appeared to have been dug by hand labor, and the soil was leveled off to blend in with the surrounding terrain. Undoubtedly, thousands of slave laborers brought in by the Germans from Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other countries, worked on this project.

Was it any wonder the Russians were meting out stiff punishment to German prisoners and continually accusing Americans of being too soft with the Germans?

The only German prisoners the Russians would release were the old and sick.

One returned German prisoner told people in his native village that Stalin has promised that not one healthy or physically fit German prisoner would return to his homeland until Stalingrad and other destroyed Russian cities were rebuilt.

Our planes soon strafed the troops hiding in this deep ditch and our bulldozers filled in areas wide enough for our troops, tanks and armored vehicles to cross.

As we moved on, I noticed quite a number of cows had fallen into the ditch and were dying of starvation. No one had time to rescue them or put them out of their misery.

Formidable looking pillboxes, barbed wire entanglements, and a countryside disfigured with trenches, was a sight I am glad we here in America do not have stretching across our farmlands.

The next few days found us pursuing the Krauts from town to town. We sloshed through ceaseless November rain and mud all day and half the night, then dug in for a few hours of sleep before daybreak.

One night, adding to the misery and gruesomeness of the scene, a wounded German near my foxhole kept crying for help. As we had been previously warned of such German tricks, no one volunteered to go to his assistance.

Farebersviller, November 26, 1945—a day and a town I will never forget.

When I first joined L Company all talk was of the heavy fighting at Pont-a-Mousson and Mt. St Jean, where a German propaganda broadcast on the morning of October 7 advised: “Do not attack the hill in front of you.” Our soldiers attacked the hill and captured it.

In Farebersviller, the fighting was equally fierce and the enemy counter-attacks more numerous. We approached the town on the afternoon of the 25th, moving along a fine stretch of macadamized highway, flanking both sides of the road. The Germans had machine gun outposts along the highway and vehicles in which they planned to make their getaway, but as soon as our scouts met fire, our jeeps, with their 50-caliber machine guns blazing, dashed forward, knocking out the enemy vehicles and capturing their occupants. An ammunition supply dump near a field gun position exploded, filling the air with lead.

We reached a little town just outside of Farebersviller at dusk and dug in for the night. French people from the village brought out buckets of pears, black bread, and cognac for our use. Enemy artillery made the night anything but comfortable. The next morning, in a heavy mist and fog, the real fighting began. We encountered and overtook armored vehicles, field guns, and

machine gun nests. The battle was fought under a constant hail of enemy 88s, since that is one great advantage retreating troops have over the attacker. All territory he is forced to relinquish, he still has covered with artillery fire—all perfectly zeroed in.

Germans used their 88 artillery weapons extremely well as anti-tank, anti-aircraft guns, or for firing fragmentation shells against attacking troops.

The battle for Farebersviller raged all day. As dusk fell, we dashed for the town and into basements, as the town was under heavy artillery fire from the enemy.

About nine o'clock that night the Germans counter-attacked with Tiger tanks and hopped-up troops. This was one of their favorite maneuvers, we learned to our sorrow.

Enemy night attacks of this nature were invariably carried out with drunk troops, riding on their tanks and shouting like crazy. That was probably the only way they had of getting up enough courage to attack. The German army used liquor extensively for this purpose.

On this particular day they succeeded in capturing some of our men and officers, but had to retreat minus quite a few Krauts who laid dead in the streets and doorways.

Our officers, who were captured, had set up their Command Post on the ground floor of the same building in which about twenty GIs, including myself, sweated out the night in the basement. Because of the confusion and mix-up following the all-day battle, it was impossible to know which companies the officers represented. Generally, following a tough battle, it took a day or two for all men to get straightened out with their C.P. and officers.

Germans relied on their concussion grenades in city fighting, one of which landed in the upstairs room where our C.P. was located. One of our men was killed and about a dozen others, including officers, were captured.

When the grenade exploded upstairs, one of the GIs in the basement began to scream hysterically and would have gone raving mad if we hadn't grabbed him and gagged his mouth with straw. We knew damned well one concussion grenade, coming from the window opening at street level, would have taken care of every one of us, since the walls and ceiling of that basement were of solid concrete. The motivating purpose of these people, every time they built their home and basement, seemed to be to make it a bomb-proof shelter.

This incident proved to be one of the very closest scrapes I had with death, and I still believe the only reason the drunken Germans didn't toss a grenade at us was that they were too jittery and too anxious to get out of town.

Many times afterwards I thought of this basement and my captured German Lugers I had to abandon there. The straw-covered floor of this German "keller" had served as a shelter for their troops many times, apparently, before we captured the town. And at the time we thought we would be either killed or captured, all German pistols, watches and other war loot taken from captured prisoners, was hastily stuffed under the straw. Anyone searching the place or shifting through the straw later would have been pleasantly surprised with Lugers, P.38s, and Mausers, plus wrist watches and money we garnered from prisoners captured that day. We hid it for good

reasons. Getting captured with any of that stuff on one was equivalent to losing your life. Germans had no sympathy for us at best and much less if they caught you toting their "hardware" as they didn't have to think twice about how you acquired it.

We stayed in that cellar all night—German prisoners for a night—since we could not determine if the enemy was still in town, or had retreated.

One of the happiest sights of the entire war was observing one of our jeeps entering the town next morning. It didn't take long for us to clear out of the basement.

On the following day, our company was relieved by supporting infantry who liberated the rest of the town, as we moved into St. Avold for a short rest period, followed by special training in destruction of German pillboxes, as we were headed next in the direction of the Siegfried Line.

During such so-called rest periods, new replacement troops were acquired, to keep our company near full strength. Very few of the men I knew personally and came across with, are now left in L Company.

We practiced on French Maginot Line pillboxes, which were conveniently located, employing a sixteen-man assault team in which riflemen, machine gunners, artillery, B.A.R. riflemen, bazooka men, (our anti-tank weapon carried by infantry men) and flame throwers participated. Also included in this team were powder carriers who would set T.N.T. charges in entry ways, or wherever it would be most effective.

On December 18, we moved into Altwiller in preparation for an attack on the Siegfried Line.

From Altwiller, I believe we would have pushed towards Saarbrucken and across the Rhine River, somewhere in that territory, if it hadn't been for Rundstedt's counter-offensive in Luxembourg.

On the afternoon of December 19, we boarded trucks and raced 150 miles north to Gonderange, Luxembourg, where, for the next three days, swift preparations were made for carrying out our part of meeting von Rundstedt's counter-offensive, or the "Battle of the Bulge."

A few hours before daybreak on Dec. 24, two of our supporting infantry companies and a machine gun platoon, supported by tanks, moved towards the town of Welscheid. By daybreak, they were cut off and had to fight their way out of a trap.

After three days of maneuvering for position, short of, and often, completely out of food and water, for we had been on the move day and night, we encountered opposition on Christmas Day in the vicinity of Niederfeulen. What a nightmare that became! A Christmas Day I shall never forget, for it turned into one of the bloodiest battles the 317th and, in fact, the entire 80th Division engaged in throughout the war. The night before the attack, my foxhole companion was a Polish doughboy from Chicago. The ground was frozen solid. Temperatures had been hovering around zero. It was simply impossible to dig even a slit trench, so we selected a shell crater which we enlarged and deepened so that we would be hidden below the surface of the ground.

All night long, my companion continued to question the soundness of our decision. “Suppose they fire artillery on the same reading that blasted this crater?” he kept asking. It wasn’t a very pleasant thought, but what could we do about it?

Deep snow covered the ground. A stiff wind shifted it into our hole, soaking through our field jackets.

Gas masks, which were re-issued just before we were dispatched here to help stop the new German offensive, were one of the first items we threw away soon after we left Omaha Beach. But on the strength of the rumor the Germans might resort to gas warfare on this new breakthrough, we were again carrying these cumbersome items. However, after the Battle of the Bulge which lasted from December 19 to January 28, we soon ditched them for the last time.

Another item we parted with early in the campaign was our bayonets. I was always of the opinion that a rapid-fire weapon like the M-1 rifle to rely on, I would never allow myself to get into a spot where I would have to fight my way out with a bayonet.

Bayonet practice in boot training camp never appealed to me either. Depending on that weapon for self-defense was definitely not in my book.

The battle was fierce for control of a hill that had to be attacked three times before it was secure. This strategic hill later became known and referred to in just two words “Bloody Knob” and would remain in the memories of men of the 317th forever as just that.

Not only was the fighting severe and unrelenting, but we also had furious winter weather to contend with, which affected food and ammunition supplies. The frozen hills of Luxembourg brought the problem of food supply into sharp focus. One of the platoons came up with a brilliant idea for hauling rations up the icy hillsides. They managed to confiscate a horse and sled, loaded it with rations and were on the way. Half way up the hill the horse turned temperamental and refused to take another step. Undaunted, the plucky men hauled the food and coffee on their backs to our dug-in position.

Casualties mounted like wildfire, overwhelming our medics and leaving wounded men to shift for themselves. During a period when the sound of bullets whizzing overhead let up slightly, I crawled towards two of our buddies, both badly wounded, and helped them back off the hill, as they would have certainly been captured in the next enemy counter-attack.

My Italian buddy from New York, Silverio Perciabosco, wrote to me later about this hellish scene and couldn’t thank me enough for helping him off the hill. In the history of World War II, the battle of “Bloody Knob” takes its place alongside such others as Pont-a-Mousson, Mt. St. Jean, and the Moselle River Crossing, in all of which the 80th Division was involved.

During the next five days, we remained dug-in, maintaining a defensive position. Dressed in white snow capes, perfectly camouflaged, we patrolled the area by night, often shooting it out with enemy patrols we were practically on top of before recognizing them as Germans.

Everything the enemy had was camouflaged, from the uniforms they wore to the entrances of their underground factories. All of their railroad cars and trains, warehouses, and

other installations which turned out war materials, were camouflaged in green and grey colors, blending them in perfectly with the background. Every trick the Germans employed in their desperate attempt to keep production of war materials going, was eventually uncovered.

In thick Bavarian pine forests, they set up airplane factories, assembly lines, arsenals, storage buildings, hangars, and munition dumps, all carefully disguised against Allied bombers. Most of the buildings had grass and trees growing on their roofs, so that from the air, they blended in with surrounding terrain. Some of the concrete buildings were constructed of walls that tapered from roof to the ground. Narrow paths cut through the forests, serving as railroad strips and concrete runways, were no wider than necessary. In air photos, they were difficult to spot in the heavy forested areas. I have also seen concrete highways painted green to blend in with the surrounding countryside.

On the road to Garmisch, where we went one night to take in a stage show produced by a Radio City, N.Y. cast, we observed an airplane plant near Oberammergau, built in a hillside. It was only partially completed when American troops arrived on the scene at war's end, but its 500-foot tunnel laid exposed, waiting for a dirt covering, which would blend it with the mountain.

German soldier's uniforms resembled nothing so much as a jig-saw puzzle of green and grey colors. And months after the war ended, those uniforms could still be seen on city streets serving as everyday clothing.

Probably one of the greatest concentrations of Allied artillery of the entire war moved in to attack Rundstedt's army in the Ardennes forest. Our artillery units fired so many shells that in many places there wasn't a tree in the forest that hadn't absorbed some lead. Sawmills cutting these trees into lumber later on, must have encountered untold problems.

German soldiers killed in some of the forests probably laid there a long time before they were recovered and properly buried.

What an awesome sight, our artillery firing away, in the night! It kept the sky lit up all night and the air filled with the rumble of guns.

It was during the latter part of December and the entire month of January that we saw the greatest formations of our bombers winging their way into the heartland of Germany. In bright daylight they resembled giant silver birds tracking up the sky, their vapor trails turning the heavens into well-used ski trails.

During those long cold nights, standing guard at our foxholes, we would listen to formations of bombers passing overhead that seemed to last for hours. Our spirits rose and our hearts gladdened. It was good news indeed to know our planes were reaching so far into enemy territory, and unloading their death-dealing cargoes.

More than once, I saw one of our bombers leaving a trail of smoke in the sky, which increased in intensity and finally burst into flame. I saw pilots parachute from burning planes and their parachutes fail to open.

In areas where the enemy had strong anti-aircraft defenses, the sky was so full of flak it was surprising to see our planes get through as well as they did.

"The flak was so thick you could walk on it," became a standard pilot joke.

The city of Kassel was a case in point. Divided into two sections—the Old City and the New—neither of which survived Allied bombers, Kassel was a typical example of the kind of destruction white phosphorus bombs could produce. A phosphorus bomb landing on a rooftop could burn through the roof and continue its fiery destruction, from floor to floor, until the entire building was gutted.

Battling our way through the streets of Kassel, we destroyed some of the most formidable anti-aircraft positions encountered anywhere. German gunners lived day and night in large barracks built close to their gun positions.

When our cub planes—used to spot enemy artillery positions and troop concentrations—first scouted approaches to the city, flak was heavier than they could penetrate. Supporting artillery units zeroed in the enemy positions and destroyed them with concentrated fire.

Still another hazard for our bombers were the German flak trains, which they could move from city to city, prior to our bombing of the railroads.

On a railroad siding in an Austrian city, I noticed train upon train of these battle cars, abandoned, but their anti-aircraft guns still mounted. Their general makeup was two gun positions on each car—one to the front, and one to the rear—with a concrete pillbox in the center, where gunners could take shelter.

Maneuverable as they were, they could operate effectively from rear positions, until our bombers blew up the railroads on which they traveled. Oddly enough, German women soldiers, ranging in ages from 12 years on, traveled with these trains and apparently were the gunners.

Some that I interrogated revealed that a group of about eighty manned their train continuously over a period of seven weeks, always retreating just out of reach of the fury of Allied bombers.

When one takes into consideration that this type of activity transpired during the coldest, rainiest and most uncomfortable part of the winter, with no heating or toilet facilities on the trains, it must have been quite an experience for these Hitler-Jugend.

When the battle of "Bloody Knob" finally ended, Phil and I were the only two men of our squad left, which was typical of the kind of casualties suffered by all companies engaged in the battle.

That unfortunate Christmas Day will certainly haunt my memory to the end of time.

Observing other men coming into the hospital—some of them old buddies I knew, their wounds field-bandaged, some walking, some on stretchers—added to the gruesome events I had endured on the battlefield that day, proved just too damned much for my emotions, or any other human being, to withstand.

Near my bunk in the hospital, stood a little Christmas tree, its lights shining brightly. Despite all that had happened that day, I was able to control my feelings until that moment, when a gaily decorated Christmas tree completely overwhelmed my emotions.

I could control the tears no longer.

These were times that tried men's souls, when one discovered that limits to his emotions were not eternal.

When the German counter-offensive in Luxembourg first began, we were immediately issued gas masks. Apparently our army expected the Germans to resort to the last low trick of gas warfare—to stop American troops advancing against them. When I first became initiated into frontline fighting back at Nancy, France, all foot soldiers were carrying gas masks on their backs. But gradually, as we fought across France and Germany, they became excess baggage we gladly abandoned and declared "lost."

As the new German threat developed, we were glad to accept gas masks again for any eventuality that might develop.

Especially vivid in my mind were the horrors of poison gas, as I remembered it from my days of basic training at Camp Fannin, Tyler, Texas.

On "Bloody Knob" gas masks could be seen scattered all over. Like myself, most GIs were just too damned tired to carry this extra weight any longer.

Fortunately, we never had to use our gas masks.

A short stop in Diekirch will be long remembered by all the troops fortunate enough to still be with us. Three bloody assaults had to be made on this city before we could claim it. Potholed fields that absorbed heavy artillery and air bombardment, strewn with dead cattle and horses, was indicative of the severity of the fighting that took place here.

We were billeted in a slightly damaged hotel that featured two beer parlors on the ground floor, and a large whiskey distillery in an adjoining room. Although the distillery was somewhat damaged, full beer storage tanks in a brewery across the street, compensated for it. Sacks of potatoes were stacked in a stockroom, as if they had been just delivered for our coming.

We ate French fries until we had them coming out of our ears.

The hotel kitchen and adjoining area were taken over for headquarters of our entire company. Frying spuds and washing them down with beer went on continuously day and night. Potatoes stored here were used for whiskey production. They were quite sweet—something akin to Irish sweet potatoes back home. The French fries they produced couldn't have tasted better.

It would be amiss not to mention the efforts of two of my Kentucky ridge-runner buddies, "Cash" and Andy, who were most determined to put the whiskey still into operation. And I do believe they would have succeeded, time permitting, as that seemed to be their forte.

For the first time in weeks we enjoyed three good, warm meals each day. Replacing K- and C-rations, which made up the daily grub in our foxholes, warm meals were truly appreciated by every last one of us.

In retrospect, however, it was nothing more than "fattening up for the slaughter," as the adage goes, for we lost men continuously each day after moving out of Diekirch.

Enemy artillery fire, screaming meemies, 88s, and roving Tiger tanks greeted us everywhere. To top it off, Germans never retreated without planting land mines.

The city proper had to be taken and re-taken before we could remain in it, so one can perceive the battered, death-strewn site that greeted us.

After the civilian casualties were taken care of, along with enemy dead and wounded, our engineer outfits commenced to bury about two hundred head of cattle and horses killed in the bombardment, before they began to bloat and stink. Tank dozers dug huge trenches into which they pushed the dead animals and covered them up.

As in many another towns, GIs accounted for a good many chickens, ducks, and turkeys in Diekirch.

Where so many homes were destroyed and people moved out, fowl were on their own, shifting for themselves until our soldiers took care of them, by way of the frying pan.

I recall a town, the name of which escapes me, where we put up for a few days in ruined building on a hillside. We had to cross a bridge leading down into the main part of town, where our kitchen was located.

Carrying our weapons at all times, even to chow, it was a simple matter to shoot a duck or two, conveniently swimming in the river, and later prepare them for a midnight snack.

Fresh eggs were another delicacy we soon rounded up if we stayed in a town for more than a night and Jerry artillery wasn't zeroed in on us.

Most of this kind of reckless living went on only during the latter months of the war, when we had the German troops disorganized and retreating to where they were unable to organize counter-attacks at night. Previously, we always dug in for the night, on high ground somewhere on the perimeter of the particular town we had just taken.

Deep snow and blinding blizzards was the situation weather-wise all throughout Luxembourg. Weather could be described as just two kinds: bad and worse.

The Ardennes forests consist of heavy growth of tall pine trees. In some areas it is almost pitch dark in these forests. Armored units that operated along with us, knocked out many of the German Tiger tanks—their heaviest 75-tonners—in the confined maneuverability of the trees, and it was a welcome sight indeed, to see them destroyed.

It was not uncommon to see one of our tanks get hit and turned into a flaming inferno. Generally, it was German 88s that did the damage. Retreating, they could calculate distances

exactly, then hide out in a barn or some other building near which they had a hidden, previously prepared gun position. As soon as our tanks came within range, German gunners would dash to their positions, zero-in on the first of our tanks to come within range, and score a direct hit.

I saw our men burning up in their tank and had to stand by helplessly because of the terrific heat and flames engulfing them. I saw them crawl out of burning tanks too late to be saved, as they were a mass of flames.

A tanker's life, like that of the infantryman, was no picnic. And when one heard a pilot say that he could at least return to a warm meal and regular bed, following a bombing or strafing mission—if he was lucky—while those poor devils, the infantrymen, had to sweat it out in foxholes, he was telling the gospel truth.

I suffered a dysentery attack on two of the most inopportune moments one could possibly imagine. The first was on the morning of our Christmas Day battle; the second was during a raging blizzard on one of the highest hills in all of Luxembourg, where we had dug in for the night.

Twice I braved the elements, seeking relief. On my second trip, one of my buddies, I learned later, who was dug in across an open field from me, raised his rifle and drew a bead on me, but fortunately changed his mind just in time. An enemy patrol had worked their way up close to us that night along a hedgerow, so our boys were on extreme edge and ready to fire at anything that moved.

On the 22nd of January, we had fought our way into the city of Wiltz and continued into Wilwerwiltz. Our entire regiment was on the move, ploughing through two feet of snow completely covering fields and highways.

When the forward unit, which happened to be our battalion, was caught in a hail of enemy artillery fire, we hit the ditches and were thankful they were plenty deep along the highway. A few of our men were hit before we could pull back and dig in.

That night our Tiger Patrol, dressed in white snow capes, felt out the enemy artillery positions for destruction, and next morning we shoved off again. The Tiger Patrol consisted of GIs from our company, sent out to search for enemy positions. The I&R patrol, on the other hand, was a motorized outfit that operated for the benefit of the entire regiment. Both patrols went into the town of Wilwerwiltz that night, but came back with conflicting stories because the enemy was maneuvering during the night to avoid being encircled.

Enemy artillery kept coming in on us all night and, as usual, just before daybreak they really opened up on us. They threw everything at us except Hitler's kitchen sink. My buddy and I took shelter under one of our damaged tanks, which proved fortunate, as the barrage of "screaming meemies" that landed right on top of us would have killed us had we been foxholes.

Next morning, fortune was suddenly riding by my side. Word was passed up the line, from our Company Commander, that I was next in line for a "pass to Paris." The sound of those

words dazed me completely. I stood before the C.P., dumbfounded. For up to that moment, I was feeling about as low as my spirits had deteriorated on the battlefield.

I made my way back along the road leading to Wiltz as instructed, passing other company troops, arrayed in battle behind us, and answering a myriad of questions on what the situation was up ahead.

The Clearing Station was located in the city of Wiltz. Even that far behind the lines they were still receiving artillery fire from long-range enemy guns.

After days of living on cold field rations, I found myself in the chow line for "seconds" and even "thirds," and would finish off the meal with a piece of bread and jam, to boot.

I was issued new clothing and met other equally fortunate dogfaces, coming in from other companies, preparing to board trucks for the cold, thirteen-hour ride to Paris.

I write of that fortuitous "pass to Paris" in another chapter.

It was enjoyable, to say the least, but what a contrast with what was happening back in Wilwerwiltz, I learned, upon my return.

(I returned to Paris a second time, after the war ended; a trip that was enhanced by more favorable conditions of the war.)

Upon reaching the gay city, news of L Company's encounter with the enemy in an area between Wilwerwiltz and the little town of Pintsch was in Stars and Stripes headlines, all of which was amply verified by those of my buddies still in the company when I returned a week later.

It wasn't often that any of our men were captured. But here, it did happen, only because they got isolated on a point where they became completely surrounded by enemy troops. During all my days in battle, through France, Luxembourg, and Germany, every time we were in close combat with the Germans, some of them would come forward with their hands over their heads, in surrender. Never once did I witness this among our own troops, unless they became completely cut off, as happened in Pintsch.

In my six months on the front lines, our platoon alone had five separate officers serving as platoon leaders, all of whom were either killed or badly wounded. Our platoon leader in charge of the action in the Pintsch battle was captured by the enemy.

The first days of February found us in the city of Diekirch, undergoing intensive training for an assault on one of the reinforced banks of the Siegfried Line. The "sixteen-man assault team" under which we were operating, consisted of riflemen, machine gunners, flame throwers, and explosive experts. Practice sessions were performed on the largest pillboxes of the Maginot Line. Steel doors and thick concrete walls, up to six and eight feet of heavily-reinforced concrete, crumpled under our dynamite charges.

While we were in Diekirch, engineer units were throwing a pontoon bridge across the Sauer River, opening up entry into German territory. This was our first crossing into Germany

proper, where enemy resistance became even more stubborn than before. Army engineers worked under constant shelling that knocked out two of their bridges before our troops were able to cross in strength, accompanied by tanks and armored vehicles.

The Sauer River runs through a deep valley skirted by the main highway. Across the river, opposite the highway, Germans had dug a deep trench that extended miles along the river. This gave them a favorable position to raise hell with us, and they did so, until we were able to cross in strength and started them on the run. Now that we were on German soil, our tankers really opened up in earnest, and it didn't take long for the infantrymen to follow suit. Any building that looked suspicious like it might be sheltering snipers, was our immediate target.

General Patton had promised he would get the ammunition to his men if they would make good use of it. As we continued to roll from city to city, riding on armored vehicles, trucks, and on top of tanks, any town or village that showed the slightest sign of resistance went up in flames. Tankers were using incendiary shells that turned into flame any building they hit—and they used them totally.

In cities and towns where German civilians controlled the Hitler-Jugend, while flags of surrender hung out of windows to greet us.

Striking northwest, our battalion soon captured a bridge on the Enz River and rushed on to take the city of Enzen.

Germans were always dug in just outside the towns. They used slave labor to dig their trenches, fox holes, gun emplacements, tank traps, and road blocks. There was seldom an entry into a town without a roadblock that had to be destroyed. There were instances where they went to the extent of building fake wooden airplanes which they set up in open fields, hoping to mislead our bombers in attacking.

It was during the battle at Enz River that our 1st and our 3rd Battalions locked horns with enemy defenders of Hill 420. One of the key points of German defense south of Mettendorf, Hill 420 was stubbornly defended against repeated attacks of the 317th Infantry. After several costly assaults, that strong point fell to a power drive made by the 1st Battalion, assisted by units of the 4th Armored Division.

During the next few days, the 317th was confined to mopping-up operations in and around Biesdorf.

German resistance was beginning to deteriorate and for the first time we encountered only small forces, employing delaying tactics, while the main body of troops retreated for the Rhine, in hopes of making a crossing before all bridges were knocked out by our bombers.

A welcome sight were the first of many German supply trains we encountered, destroyed by our Air Force. Destroying supplies destined for German troops still operating in front of us was like destroying their armies, for no soldier can fight without ample food and ammunition. When these trains were set afire, either by bombs or shell fire, flames jumped from car to car, burning wildly, until nothing remained but the wheels and a mass of twisted steel.

In the larger towns, our bombers destroyed the main railroads leading into the yards, which automatically tied up all freight therein. Germans were unable to repair the railroads as fast as our planes blew them up.

If there were a few cars among them loaded with 88s or anti-aircraft guns tied up in the yards, the sight was so much prettier for us.

Mopping up continued through the first days of March, as German resistance dissipated into isolated pockets of resistance.

On March 12, a motorized move transferred our entire regiment into the vicinity of Saarburg, to become part of the XX Corps, poised for a drive to the Rhine.

During the early morning of March 13, the 1st and 3rd Battalions jumped off. Under heavy Nebelwerfer, artillery, and mortar fire, we drove through Oberstdorf into the woods, north of Greimerath.

During the next three days, we broke out of the woods and raced through a dozen small towns, sending streams of tattered Volkstormers back to prisoner-of-war camps. By March 18th, the drive had assumed breakthrough tempo as we plunged swiftly towards the Rhine.

On March 19, we took Kassel and on the following day, the first major German city to fall to the 80th Division—Kaiserslautern—surrendered to 317th Infantry Regiment.

It was here I witnessed one of the most horrible scenes of the entire war. Along a road leading into the city, a German column consisting mostly of animal transport and guns, was ripped apart and destroyed by a company of medium tanks of the 10th Armored Division.

General Patton had this to say about the slaughter:

"General Weyland, Colonel Codman, and I drove from Saarburg via St. Wendel to Kaiserslautern, and from there through the woods, for about twenty kilometers in the direction of Neustadt. Here we witnessed one of the greatest scenes of destruction I have ever contemplated. A German column entering the road from the northwest, consisting mainly of animal transport and guns, was struck on the right flank by a company of medium tanks of the 10th Armored Division. The Germans were moving up a rather steep canyon with a precipitous cliff on their left, while the tanks came in between them and the mountain. For more than two miles, horses and vehicles were pushed over the cliff. You could see the marks of the tank treads on the flanks and shoulders of the horses, and see the powder marks on the men where they had been shot at point-blank range. In spite of my pride in the achievement of the 10th Armored, I was sorry for the poor creatures."

Our company moved past this scene of horror soon after it happened, before vehicles and animals were pushed over the cliffs to clear the road. The injured and dead, both men and animals, were everywhere amid the flames and smoke that enveloped the road and ditches.

In Kaiserslautern, I found myself in the hospital again, with feet swollen so badly I couldn't take another step. We had been moving forward so rapidly, without proper rest or sleep that the entire regiment was ready to drop in its tracks.

Pushing the Krauts continuously, day and night, was the only way to keep them disorganized.

I stayed in the hospital for about a week. During that time the entire 80th Division was moving forward so rapidly, the field hospitals had to move forward every few days. In the larger cities, our Army took over city hospitals where our medical staffs took care of the wounded, along with German civilian casualties, of which there were always large numbers, plus the German soldiers wounded in battle or left behind by their army which, by this time, was so short of vehicles and gas, they couldn't transport their wounded.

One of the largest cages of German prisoners was located in this city. Captured enemy officers included one colonel, four majors, five captains, along with numerous lieutenants and non-coms.

On March 28, our regiment moved into the city of Mainz. In sweeping successes of the following days, the 317th captured six large German towns, in addition to an airplane factory, a landing field, six enemy aircraft, an ordnance depot, a military hospital, a champagne factory, (stacked with 4,000 cases of champagne) and a slew of enemy field pieces and anti-aircraft guns. By the next day, our prisoner of war compound was swelled with about 1,000 more disconsolate Wehrmacht men who sought the shelter of its barbed wire enclosure.

For weeks we had been noticing landing craft, loaded on huge trailers, moving up behind us. We even heard incredible rumors that the Navy would be on hand to transport us across the Rhine River. That was an exaggerated dream, if I ever heard one.

The night before we crossed the Rhine was spent in the city of Mainz. All night long, the sky remained lit-up by enemy artillery fire, zeroed in on the river. At daybreak the order came: "We are moving out." We walked through rubble and ruins of a once beautiful city, loaded into landing craft, manned by Navy men, sure enough, and were soon across.

Some of the boats were large enough to transport a hundred men at a time, and were wide enough to accommodate our largest tanks. On the return trip they were loaded with German prisoners and our own wounded men. About two hundred GIs were lost in this operation when their boats sustained direct hits from enemy mortar and artillery fire.

We preceded mopping up the section of the city located on the east bank of the river, moving on foot, until our armored vehicles and tanks were transported across to join the battle.

In what seemed no time at all, Army engineers were extending a Bailey Bridge across the river. This type of bridge was another of the many miracles produced by the war—as appropriate to the occasion as was the amphibious tractor, or Water Weasel, along with DDT, the magic powder for killing vermin, tablets for purifying water, penicillin, sulfa drugs, and plasma.

We watched our engineers begin a Bailey Bridge one evening as we dug in along a river bank. The next morning, we were able to cross on their completed structure: a steel bridge strong enough to carry our heaviest tanks.

One of our supporting companies won a unit citation for their part in the Rhine River crossing. Their assault boats were driven back under a hail of 20mm flak and machine gun fire on their initial landing attempt, but returned to force a bridgehead and push forward and clean out the town of Kastel.

About twenty miles east of the Rhine, we loaded onto tanks and armored cars again in pursuit of the retreating enemy. With German supply lines suffering from severe bombardment, their entire army began showing signs of crumbling.

Our main obstacles now were blown-up bridges, mined roadways, and fallen trees clogging passage. The Germans had a trick of fastening sticks of dynamite to the base of large trees lining main roads. They would then bury landmines in the road and set the charge off just before retreating. Our Mack trucks and tank dozers, assisted by mine detectors, would push the fallen trees aside, freeing passage for troops and armored vehicles.

Wherever opposition was encountered in cities, infantrymen went into the town first to clean up resistance, followed by the armored vehicles and tanks.

There were many occasions when we were miles ahead of the armored units, or they were miles ahead of us. In each instance, you can be sure we were sweating them out, or they were sweating us out.

There was one thing this war proved beyond shadow of a doubt—it took the combined effort of ground troops, tanks, and armored units working together, with artillery and air support, to win battles.

ONE DAY OF HORROR FOLLOWS ANOTHER

Arrived on Omaha Beach Normandy peninsula on Nov. 4, 1944, at noon, my 33rd birthday.

Nov. 5th. Continuous rain. The mud is ankle deep. Eating apples picked in a nearby orchard while exploring the hedgerows. First mail went out today. I sent a letter to my sister Julie and three to Alice. I am no longer handling the mail, a job I handled for our outfit in the States, Eating biscuits and spam. Later, we found out that spam would be on the menu daily and that was the good reason why this place was appropriately nicknamed "Spam Beach."

Nov. 6th. More rain. Sleeping in tents. Explored a section of beach strewn with wrecked landing craft. Got gas from a tank of a damaged vehicle to use in our makeshift heater we used to warm our food. Also found some rope to use as a wick, on the dock at Southampton, where we landed upon. Arriving from the States and next day, crossed the English Channel in a stinky rat-infested English boat. The wind blew up a WAC's skirt, to which an Englishman standing nearby said, "A bit airy, eh!" And she replied, "What did you expect, feathers?"

Third week without a bath, but there would be a lot more of that. Our camp is a city of lights, thanks to the gas we are able to confiscate from abandoned vehicles.

Nov. 7th. Camping about 2 miles inland from the beach. Today, Tuesday, Election Day, still raining. Mud gets deeper each day with hundreds of feet stirring it up every day. Our chow kitchen is two hedgerows away. Two seas of mud! Tonight, we have a battery hooked up to a spot light which we inherited from a party that moved out this morning. But the water is gradually seeping into our tent. We are on alert and cannot send any mail today. We will probably move out tomorrow, the 8th. No incoming mail since we left the States and no newspapers. We do not know what is happening. The last rumor was that the Russians were in the suburbs of Budapest, and there was a news blackout on the American front. I am writing by our sputtering light tonight, cramped for space in tents, raining like heck, and starting to leak through the canvas, after four days of this miserable weather. Our food consists of spam, peanut butter, cheese, biscuits, corned beef, grapefruit, and salmon.

We were on the ocean eleven days from October 22 to November 4, in a convoy of Liberty Ships, escorted by battleships. The battle wagons dropped depth charges a number of times, which I suspect saved us from German submarine attacks.

Nov. 8th. On the move today, through Caen and St. Lo, both in complete devastation. Utah Beach is another landing point where some GIs we met came ashore. Apples are plentiful everywhere we go, but they are common cider apples. Regardless, I eat some every day. In our new location, which we reached last night by foot, we are still sleeping in tents on wet ground with only two blankets for protection. Have five pair of socks but they are always wet. The difference in time between here and home is five hours. We are 8 miles from Mons.

Calvados, referred to by GIs as "liquid lightning,'' is made from these cider apples after they ferment on the ground. It is a drink that can kill you, but we drink it anyway.

Our group is now in the 14th Replacement Depot. Of all things, genuine holly grows along the hedges near our tents.

We are camped on a French family farm. A beautiful place, but all one sees here is horse-drawn carts and wheelbarrows, with the women pulling and the men pushing them along. It is the unfortunate wave of uprooted farmers and peasants being pushed along by the war, moving away from the front lines, with all their worldly possessions in a cart wheelbarrow.

We are not exactly welcomed by the French people. Prostitution is rampant. French women come right out in the fields and forests, wherever troops might be found.

Wonderful cathedrals can be seen in every major city, and Christ on a cross at the main crossroads. An anti-clerical movement has been afoot in this country since the beginning of the century, some claim.

According to medical tests, ninety percent of the street walkers are diseased, the chaplain warns.

We are hearing a completely different story about the war from local people. They tell us our army is stopped and the stiffest fighting lies ahead. Of course, I realize the psychological angle of this report. They can't logically tell us anything else and expect us to be fighters. We are attached to the 583rd Regiment.

The hedgerows of Normandy, according to local legend, were planted by the Romans to protect their small fields from half-civilized local tribes. Hedgerows are mounds of earth with stone and twisted roots imbedded in them, packed tight by the centuries into tough, steep-sided walls. They surround small, irregular fields, called "bocages" by the Norman peasants, the earth and stone ramparts themselves being from three to seven feet high, often in double row with a ditch between them. On top grow the trees and hawthorn thickets, natural fences in peacetime; tank traps and natural camouflage in time of war.

We have been traveling by Red Ball Express since leaving Omaha Beach. Each truck had a large red circle painted on the front. We traveled in convoy, mostly by night with just two little lights on, which were called "cat's eyes." Wreckers, repair crews, and supply trucks carrying fuel and food moved with the convoy. They made new roads across fields and streams, avoiding mined roads.

Two and one half miles to La Chapelle, St. Fray, the last sign read.

We are always looking for old buddies as we pass other troops. There is a very tall tree that grows all over the country side. It has very short branches. Could be poplars. Ferns seem to thrive under the spruce and pine trees.

Gare. Le Bozage, 6 kilometers from Range.

Nov. 13th. Left the 14th Replacement Depot and traveled 14 hours by Red Ball Express to Toul, near Nancy. We are now in Patton's Third Army. New address:

327th Replacement Company, 83rd Battalion, AFO 873. Even more mud amid miserable conditions here. There are accommodations for 250 men and they are handling 1,000.

Nov. 14th. Moved up to Nancy, very close to the front lines. Lit-up sky and the rumbling of heavy artillery can be heard. We have bedded down in the attic of an old hospital being used as a barracks.

I was awfully sick on this ride but they let me sit in the cab with the driver so that I could open the window and vomit out. Days of cold meat rations and sweet chocolate bars brought my stomach to a complete halt. I laid on the cold ground in a tent without cots, shivering like the proverbial dog dropping you-know-what. A horrible attack of the chills kept me freezing cold, despite all the blankets and overcoats my buddies could round up. They summoned a doctor who gave me vomiting pills that really worked wonders. Otherwise, that solid mess in my stomach would have been the end of me.

One guy shot himself through the foot this morning in the adjacent room. I couldn't help but speculate if he did it on purpose, looking for the so-called "million dollar wound." Tough luck, buddy.

We are to join up with another Division tomorrow morning.

Boot camp buddies, Joe Donofrio, Walt Hevessy and Fred Hocke, are still in L Company. They all missed me last night, thinking I would be left behind because of my illness.

We were all still together on that stinky limey boat crossing the Channel, where they served us fish and a bottle of wine for breakfast. It was definitely third class, down in the hole, low as you could get, and infested with bugs, rats and roaches, literally alive with them.

Left Luxembourg and moved up to the German border today—four kilometers from Linhofen, and twelve miles from the fighting front. We can hear artillery rumbling in the distance. We are in the 80th Division, presently under General McBride. The 80th Division was organized in 1917 and adopts the Blue Ridge patch. Troops from Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia make up its legions. It was reactivated in 1942. We are now assigned to L Company, 317th Infantry Regiment. The letter by which various companies were identified, always represented something. For instance, "A" stood for able, "D" for dog, "C" for Charley, and so on.

Nov. 18th. The 5th and 35th Armies are on our flanks and behind us. We are dug in, waiting for them to catch up with the 317th Regiment, dug in and waiting, around the town of Herny, ready to move up to the front to relieve other companies.

We have been carrying a full duffle bag, just as we brought it over from the States, with full extra set of clothes, shoes and blankets. Last night, the order was given to put on winter clothes, pack a raincoat and extra socks in our knapsacks, along with trench shovel and gas mask, and drop our duffle bags on a pile alongside an old barn designated as a depot. That was the last time we would ever see our duffle bags again.

We are huddled in a cellar, waiting for orders to move up to the lines. A few shells are lobbed into this town every hour. The Jerries are dropping them from their Siegfried Line positions.

L Company, we have heard, was practically wiped out crossing the Moselle River. It has been refilled with new men a few times already.

It appears we will be living on field rations from now on. That means, C-rations, which consist of canned meat. K-rations, consisting of cheese, crackers, beef bouillon, and Sanka coffee.

The Ninth Army, we hear, is the "Ghost Army," since much of it is buried on Normandy Beach.

Nov. 21 and 22. We are maneuvering in a heavy wooded area about five miles out of Herny, still in reserve, but doing some patrol duty.

On our first move through this forest, we were shelled by our own artillery, in which some of my buddies who came across with me were killed even before we had an opportunity to write home, informing loved ones of our whereabouts.

Nov. 23. We had a wonderful Thanksgiving Day dinner out in the field consisting of turkey, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, corn, pineapple, candy, and cigarettes. We are back in Herny, patrolling and guarding the town.

Nov. 24. Day after Thanksgiving. Half of our squad has the GIs from too much feasting on all the food they gave us.

We are moving out today, five or six miles to the next town. It continues to rain like hell, as it has been ever since we arrived in France. I had to leave Louis Adamic's book "The Natives Return" behind. It was one of the books our Army published in paperback for the reading entertainment of its troops. It was reprinted in 50,000 copies and was a great boost for Adamic.

Omaha Beach is called "Spam Beach" because spam appeared so often on the menu.

Our next move was from Herny through Nancy into Mainville, headed for Falkenberg. The 1st Battalion has moved out ahead of us. About two dozen German anti-aircraft guns and tanks litter the fields and roadsides.

Talking with the German woman, owner of this house where we had beds to sleep in for the first time, discovered how it was possible, through collaboration, to retain her property. A two-faced creature, she still had a large herd of cattle, her two daughters, along with two Poles and a German sent here to work for her.

We battled over an area of high ground like we never had before, capturing a strategic hill three times before we were able to claim it.

This hill later became known as "Bloody Knob" and will be forever remembered by the men of the 317th as just that.

I recall a farm house off in the distance from which I felt sure the German snipers were doing the greatest damage, picking off our men just as they reached the top of the hill. From the protection of a boulder with lead flying all around me, I put a rifle shot into each window of the house, starting from the ground floor, to the second story, and I kept repeating the fire, over and over until it seemed the resistance ended.

Not only was this battle severe and our casualties great, but we were fighting winter weather, lack of food, water, and ammunition. The frozen hills around Bastogne brought the problems of food, dry socks, and ammunition into sharp focus. Wet feet, day in and day out, soon brought on a severe epidemic of trench foot. Every time our field kitchen was able to get warm food and dry socks to us, I made a special effort to change socks, using plenty of foot powder, which I always carried in my pack. But even exercising these precautions, I ended up going back to the hospital with frozen feet. At the time I froze out, I was helping one of my buddies, who was shot through the ball of his foot, get back to a jeep our medics were running back and forth to the hospital, when I decided to go to the hospital also, as I had no more feeling in my feet.

"Bloody Knob" was too steep for the kitchen jeeps to reach us, so they came up with the idea of hauling warm food by horse and wagon. It always ended however, with a squad of our men going down the hill to pick up the containers of warm food for distribution in the company.

Casualties were becoming heavier than our medics could handle. On two occasions, I helped wounded men off the hill who would otherwise have been captured in the German counter-attacks.

The following is a copy of a letter I received from one of my buddies.

Silverio Perciabosco, 36975271

Pfc. Joseph Drasler, 37362825
Co. L, 317 Inf.
APO 80, c/o US Army

Fussen, Germany
June 28, 1945

Dear Pal and Buddy:

Just a few lines letting you know that I have received your most welcome letter of the 6th of June.

I was very happy to hear from you. Doubly glad to know that you are still O. K. I hope that you stay that way.

I don't know how I can ever repay you for what you did for me on that day up on Bloody Knob. The thoughts and happenings of that day run through my mind many times over and over again and I always wondered what had happened to you. I don't think you'll ever realize how much easier and how much comfort you made it for me on that day.

As for myself now, I am O.K., and so is the arm, thanks a Million to you old pal.

I am now with Regt. Hq. Co., 317th Inf. as a C.P. guard, doing guard duty day and night, which is a pretty good deal as long as it will last. How are you boys doing now? Good, I hope. Well, Joe, sure wish we were back at Camp Shanks, getting ready for a furlough home. How about you?

Have you ever run into Donofrio, Hocke, or any of the other boys we knew? Well Pal, have to get ready for my turn at guard duty, so till I hear from you again, which I hope is soon, may God bless you and watch over you. I remain as ever and always,

Your Pal and Friend,
Silver

This letter from another buddy.

Richard Thorne
618 Pennsylvania Ave.
Elizabeth, N.J.

January 23, 1949

Dear Joe:

I received your letter and sure am glad you came out O.K. I wrote to you some time ago, in fact, when I first came home. I was wondering all the time about you and how you came out of the mess.

I remember Lt. Carlson. Too bad. How about Lt. Gardner, and Meeks? (Lt. Paul J. Carlson, our Company Commander, 0-1328115, L Company, 317th Inf., 80th Div., Third Army, was killed at Enzen, Germany, on Feb. 24, 1945, in a foxhole next to me. – J.D.)

Joe, did you remember Pop Rider and Thornburg, Mandoza and Palmer—they went over with us to the 80th? You have no idea how glad I was to hear from you. When I left the 80th I went back to Paris to the 108th General Hospital and from there to the 19th Replacement Depot. I met a fellow there from the 80th by the name of Skinner. He told me Sgt. Smith got killed, of the 3rd Platoon—did you know him?

I was placed with the 378th Gasoline Truck Company as a driver in January 1945, till the war ended. We stayed in Hanover, Germany for a while. I got home March, 1945.

Well, Joe, I hope we meet again but under different circumstances. Here is hoping you are well, and your family. If you are ever out this way stop in to see me. I sure will be glad to see you. Here is hoping to hear from you soon.

Your friend, Dick

The New York Daily News reported on the 80th Division's 150-mile dash to Luxembourg as follows: (Reprinted from "The Blue Ridger," a news sheet put out by the Special Service Section of the 80th Division.)

"Troops of the 80th Infantry Division, going without hot food and riding in open trucks through freezing weather, made a 150-mile dash into a defense line formed to save the city of Luxembourg, it was disclosed today as more details were released on the part played by Lt. Gen. G. S. Patton's troops in stemming the German counter-offensive.

"The 80th, commanded by Major General Horace L. McBride, was resting at the French town of St. Avold after hard fighting in the Saar, and was due to go back into the line on the night of 17-18 Dec. So it traveled 40 miles east to Bitche, and then got a sudden order to move north to help when the Germans opened their attack.

"One regiment was loaded into trucks there at 1 a.m. Dec. 19 with the orders to form a defensive line north of Luxembourg and hold it to the last man. Luxembourg was a vital communications center and sheltered at least 5,000 men, women, and children. The regiment was in the line the morning of Dec. 20, registered its guns and opened fire. By the afternoon of the 20th, the whole Division was in position, although the greater part of its men had had nothing hot to eat or drink for 36 hours. Although the line was a defensive one, the 80th was ordered to attack on the morning of the 21st. The order was countermanded and then given again, because the position was decidedly fluid. One regiment's trucks had gone back for more troops, so the regiment moved the show on foot for six miles to the west. It turned back when the order was changed, then set out again to the west, a total hike of 18 miles in all."

* * *

"Bloody Knob" was later associated with such fierce battles as Pont-a-Mousson, Mt. St. Jean, and others.

During the next five days, we remained in a defensive position, trading patrol punches with the enemy.

We wore white snow capes and were perfectly camouflaged against the Luxembourg snow. Many times we shot it out with German patrols in the dead of night, being almost on top of them before we could recognize them as the enemy.

During the latter part of December when some of the greatest formations of Allied bombers winged their way into the heart of Germany, I once observed one of our bombers trailing smoke, which grew into an even blacker trail and finally burst out into flame. The pilot parachuted and I remember watching for his parachute to open—it never did. One of the misfortunes of war.

In areas where the Germans had heavy concentrations of anti-aircraft weapons, the flak was so thick it was surprising to see our planes go through it as well as they did.

The city of Kassel was a good example of German air defense. Kassel was divided into two parts—the Old and the New city—both of which were destroyed by our bombers and

artillery weapons. Phosphorus bombs really did their job. A phosphorus bomb landing inside the top story of a building would burn its way through floor after floor, gutting the entire building.

Fighting our way through the city later on, we overran anti-aircraft positions of elaborate construction. Large barracks were built near gun positions that were maintained around the clock. Our cub planes, used to spot enemy artillery positions and troop concentrations, were not able to get over the city because of the flak-filled sky. Concentrated artillery fire, however, did take care of the situation.

Another hazard our bombers had to contend with was the German flak train, which could be moved quickly from one city to the next, until its tracks were destroyed.

What a sight our artillery made of the night: continuous flashes lit up the sky accompanied by ground-shaking rumble.

During the latter part of December and the month of January, I believe the greatest formations of allied bombers winged their way into the heart of Germany. By daylight, they looked like giant silver birds tracking up the sky with their vapor trails until it looked like a well-used ski slope.

At night, while standing guard or crunched in foxholes, I could hear formations passing over that lasted for hours. It was good news indeed to know that our pilots were reaching so far behind the enemy lines with their death-dealing blows.

Occasionally, I saw one of our bombers trailing smoke which grew thicker and finally burst out into flame. Pilots parachuted and I remember seeing one whose parachute failed to open. What a1oss that must have been!

In some areas where the Germans had heavy concentrations of anti-aircraft weapons, the flak was so thick it was surprising to see our planes go through it as they did.

* * *

(The following is taken from "Forward, 80th" whose motto was "*Always Forward*," one of a series of GI Stories of the Ground, Air, and Service Forces in the European Theater of Operations.)

"Paced by 90mm self-propelled guns of the 610th Tank Destroyer Battalion, which shattered more than 13 reinforced pillboxes, Blue Ridgers smashed completely through the Maginot Line, Nov. 26, to stand before the industrial heart of the Saar Basin.

"Overwhelming strongly-held enemy positions, the 80th ploughed forward, capturing Nov. 27, the key city of St. Avold, the one-time German Army Headquarters and a coal center for the Nazi war machine.

Seizure of St. Avold was hailed by New York's Daily News, commenting on Third Army's dash through the Saar, as the place where "Gen. von Rundstedt suffered perhaps his greatest defeat of the present campaign."

The division continued the attack, Dec. 4, steamrolling through Farebersviller, Tenteling, and Cocheren. The important town of Merlebach was liberated Dec. 6.

The drive of more than 40 miles beyond the Seille River was carried out despite swollen rivers, flooded fields, constantly adverse weather conditions. More than 4,000 prisoners were taken in less than a month.

Before they were relieved by the 6th Armored Division, leading elements of the 80th penetrated the German frontier less than five miles from Saarbrucken.

The division enjoyed a rest period Dec. 7, after being in continuous contact with the enemy for 102 days.

Tribute to the 80th's stamina was expressed by the New York Journal-American: "The 80th Division performed a feat as remarkable as any of Stonewall Jackson's foot cavalry. It was ready to go into the fighting line south of Saarbrucken when orders came to go northward, and it went 150 miles swiftly to get into action."

* * *

Dec. 23, 1944. The 317th moved into Schieren, by way of Mondorf. As we moved into the city we caught the full blast of German tankers who succeeded in knocking out five of our tanks before this town would be secured. Infantrymen moved into a pine forest above town and dug in, while our artillery worked it over. About 4 p.m. that evening, we attack again and took the city.

The sky has been full of planes the last few days. I saw one shot down in Schule, where we had retreated to a few days ago. Couldn't distinguish if it was American or German. A steady barrage of artillery and 88s are coming in on us. We dig deeper, Stefanski and I stayed there all night. Must have been the coldest night of the winter—the ground white with snow and frozen hard. No sleeping bags, no rations, no water. Dead tired, but couldn't sleep at all. Someone played "Silent Night" on a mouth organ, a lonely echo of the Christmas spirit. Daybreak at last, but am doubly tired from shivering so violently all night.

Enemy artillery fire still coming at us and on top of it all, I had the GIs and had to go expose myself twice. Am jotting down these notes in the hospital—a field hospital run by the 305th Medical Battalion. The doctor diagnosed it as battle fatigue and traumatic feet. Both of my big toes were numb from frostbite. The place is full of wounded men and they are still coming in, mostly from the 317th Infantry. Main room downstairs is where all the litter cases are placed. Among them, the Porto Rican, Amego, who I had helped off the hill, shot through the ball of his foot. The rest of us sit on benches. Some German wounded here also.

I was evacuated too late to get in on any of the turkey dinner here at the hospital last night, but I did get some Christmas candy from the ambulance driver on the way in.

When I came in, the waiting room and hallway was a mass of wounded men, sitting on chairs, laying on the floor, wherever they could find room. After I was treated and assigned a cot to lay down on, a little brightly decorated Christmas tree sitting in the corner of the room, did it

to me. One look at that tree and tears welled up in my eyes, began to flow, and there was nothing I could do to stop them. How ironic. Just the sight of a little decorated Christmas tree, after all the men I saw get killed on Bloody Knob that day, along with the wounded, Thorne, Perciabosco, and others I helped evacuate before the German counter-attacks—and after seeing our squad leader go so raving mad we had to evacuate him. I was able to remain in control of my faculties, until the sight of that little Christmas tree. It was unbelievable.

My sentiments to Alice were, "You are my guiding star, darling. I think of you always, with most loving thoughts. I hope you are all set for an enjoyable Christmas with your family, as enjoyable as circumstances permit." Here, as a writer for "Stars and Stripes" put it, "The boys will dine and wine on the beautiful Rhine or at the hotel Cologne." What a dreamer.

Morning of the 24th. We are in battlefield position again, in the same foxholes we occupied the night before. Germans were dug-in with machine guns on high ground above the town and fired 88s into the town all night. We attack the high ground, but our men are cut down as soon as they reach the summit. A buddy next to me was hit in the stomach. I thought he was kidding when I went to his assistance, but I found out the truth when I opened his shirt. No medics in sight. We went into battle this morning without food or water. I blamed that on our new C.O., Lt. Payne, a former tank corps officer unfamiliar with infantry men. On this day we lost Lt. Clem, who was wounded badly, and saddest of all, Lt. Torchy, with whom we had the most report as he came up through the ranks with us.

I slept all night, from 8 p.m. to 4:30 the next afternoon, and still felt groggy. All of the guys sleeping on cots near me are still asleep. The sleeping pills they dished out here certainly must have been extra potent.

Back to the battle for the hill known as "Bloody Knob." We found the square heads dug in solidly. L and K Companies spearheaded this drive. Naturally, we had to face the problem of enemy snipers whose telescopic sights picked us up from long distances, plus machine gun nests all over the place. We blasted them with all we had, driving them out of their foxholes and other hideouts, including farm houses, barns, and such. Germans came out with their hands up over their heads; others tried to make a hasty retreat. Some Germans came forward and surrendered on the night before this battle.

My buddy Perciabosco from Omaha, Neb. took a shot through the arm. I bandaged him as best I could to stop the flow of blood, then helped him to a road where he could be picked up and taken to the hospital. Walt Hevessy, one of the original men of our company from boot camp days, met Percy in the hospital and heard him praise me highly for what I did for him (Hevessy) when he was wounded at Farebersviller.

Our hospital is ordered to move forward again… the 80th only moves forward, so we're told. Incredible, how a roomful of GIs, about 20 of us, slept right through chow call.

Coming off the hill with Percy, trying to get him out of the area where lead was flying thick and fast, I met Thompson, from the 2nd Platoon of I Company, also shot thru the hand.

Fortunately we met our medic, Fred Hocke, who re-bandaged Thompson's wound and we got them both to a jeep headed for the hospital.

On my way back up to the fighting front, I met Curley coming out with two German prisoners he was using wisely in carrying out my buddy Amego, who was shot through the ball of his foot. We agreed Curley would go with the prisoners while I stayed with Amego until litter bearers arrived. They never did arrive and it took some time and struggle to get one-legged Amego to where a jeep could pick him up.

We have just moved to another room here at the hospital. It has a large fireplace, tall as the ceiling, and a radio.

I couldn't help but wonder what was happening in L Company now, with our officers—Lt. Clem badly wounded, Lt. Torchy killed, and squad leader, Sgt. Joseph, with a mental problem. From what I was able to learn, L Company passed through town and is dug-in on high ground. Two other companies were ordered to occupy the town while artillery batteries were ordered to bomb the next town.

Radio news just reported that the Germans were gaining with their push.

To finish my story: Struggling with Amego and his mangled foot exhausted me so completely—along with everything else that happened—I was ready for the hospital myself, with my heart acting up and my feet numb and frozen.

Nazi propaganda on the radio claims American GIs are deserting by the thousands, because they thought the war was going to be over before Christmas. Their ploy is to play some popular American music they know GIs will listen to, then they unload their propaganda pitch. It is a damnable thing to listen to. They just announced news from the front, supposedly, claiming they are winning the war!

Gosh! Those 88s they throw at us in battle! How many landed near enough to spray me with mud! But, somehow I remained invulnerable. Familiarity with the shell's sound warned of how close they would land or sail overhead. I lost no time hitting the ground when I heard one coming.

How can one account for the whims and wiles of Fate?

More than anything else, the letters Alice wrote me daily sustained me and renewed my faith in life. She wrote to me every day I was gone, and I tried, as much as was humanly possible under the circumstances, to do the same. I also promised myself that if I came out of this hell alive, I would never let anything bother me. Nothing could be mentally or emotionally disturbing after what happened on the front lines.

Even personal letters which the Germans claim were taken from captured GIs, are broadcast on their radios.

Back in Schule, Ed Stefanski and I ransacked an old mansion filled with splendor and riches, but found nothing we could take. And the biggest disappointment was we found no wine

in the keller. In a town before Schule, I remember entering a joint where I found a bottle of good whiskey. I had my swig before my buddies finished it. Some beer and cider we found in a nearby basement was flat and lousy. Nearest town to Schule is Ettelbruck.

Right on the front line, where life was the most precarious, I overheard an officer, a frontline officer, of all persons, say to our Platoon Sgt. Joseph: "Come on, Joe, I thought you were braver than that." Knowing Joseph well, I could understand how he appreciated that remark. (As I mentioned before, Sgt. Joseph suffered a mental breakdown later, and had to be evacuated).

What a Christmas! Nothing to drink, nothing to eat, just hell on earth. It was difficult to maintain composure, to hold back the tears. Half of my buddies were lost in the battle of Farebersviller; now the same thing repeats here. Just heard for the third time that our kitchen was hit by a bomb, killing two cooks and our mess sergeant. Will find out definitely when I get back to the company. Come to think of it, I have slept in more homes in France, Germany, and Luxembourg than Carter has pills. Army talk one hears: "Ain't that strong? You're not just cracking your teeth. Looking for a thick upper lip? Looking for knowledge bumps? Quit chewing your gums. Go shit in a lake and wipe you ass with a bubble. That sounds better since you had it fixed." I listened to Charlie McCarthy on the radio last evening. First time I heard him since leaving home. The 80th present maneuver is a pincer, intended to cut off the German push.

Our present hospital is set up in a beautiful castle, on a high hill, with an entry road lined with stately pine trees.

Luxembourg people take great pride in their forests. Magnificent pine forests are cut down only for the roads leading through them. There are many signs of replanting, with trees all planted in straight lines.

This hospital-castle, located in the town of Hollenfels, is scheduled to become a replacement depot for the 80th Division. The first detachment of men are coming in today. The rest of us are still here, waiting for transportation back to our companies. What a beautiful view of the surrounding country! And what a place it must be in the summer time, sitting on this huge open patio! The castle is said to belong to the Duchess of Luxembourg.

The first town I passed through after leaving here was Reckingen. Also went through the Service Company at Bern, before returning to L Company.

On Dec. 28, I was right back on the Knob where we tangled with the Germans before. Only three men out of our squad that I know are left. The next night, we pull back into town where artillery shells continue coming in. Hope we can stay here for New Years, since I Company is reliving us. While doing guard duty on the Knob, our company lieutenant brought up some bottles of champagne he confiscated somewhere.

Jan. 3. Still in Niederfeulen, making trips to the hill and alternating with guard duty on a road block in town. Weather continues cold as blazes. Road signs in town read: Ettelbruck 4km, Luxembourg 34km. While in town received Christmas cards and letters from Alice, also a letter from her dad.

Our next move was about 8 miles, in support of the 319th Regiment in an attack. Bastogne is only 18 miles from here. Third Army has retaken and bypassed it, according to a story and maps in Stars and Stripes, "Stars and Gripes," some GIs called it.

Jan. 10. Staying in the basement of a schoolhouse with Milford, a former Platoon Sergeant. who had been busted to a private for going over the hill. "Cash" is acting squad leader now. He also has more time over the hill than in the ranks. Many of the guys can take just so much of this bossing around, pulling rank, and that kind of crap, then they are away and gone, over the hill.

Jan. 14. Moved into some old foxholes to monitor enemy paratroops and patrols infiltrating our artillery positions. I have a good deep hole, with plenty of straw in the bottom and four blankets. Am well supplied with K-rations—my own, along with Milford's.

Sgt. Milford was a wild unpredictable character from Tennessee. He lost his stripes for dropping out, disappearing during battle. He has been evacuated to the hospital for what may prove to be his reward for shacking up. He told me repeatedly about what a swell time he had back there with his Spanish girl.

We also found a full box of C-rations in an unoccupied foxhole, which Cash and Sgt. Johns divided among us. Have plenty of heating units for cooking and heating. Would be perfectly content to stay here for the duration.

Our chow menu continues to be pancakes and bacon for breakfast, C-rations for dinner, and sandwiches for supper. Coffee served with these meals is always cold, but I bring it back to my hole and warm it up. Reason it gets cold is because we are back in the woods, away from the access road, so it has to be carried quite a distance.

C-rations contain meat and vegetable stew, meat and beans, beans and frankfurters, and chopped ham and eggs—these are the heavy cans. We get one heavy and one light can per meal. Light cans contain biscuits, candy, sugar, coffee, smokes, cocoa, lemon or orange juice powder.

The five-in-one rations artillery and anti-aircraft outfits have, contain a more varied selection, and a really good meal can be made from them.

Night before last, the 13th, when we moved up here, will never disappear from my mind. It was one of the worse nights I ever endured out in the field. We moved up here right after darkness set in and could find no previously dug holes to move into. Trench shovels were useless against the solidly frozen ground, so we simply huddled up under spruce trees, under protection of a blanket and froze until daybreak. I don't think anyone got more than a wink of sleep this night. There was about a foot of snow on the ground. It was settled heavily on the spruce boughs, creating a beautiful sight for artists and sightseers, but enhanced neither the purpose nor cause we were fulfilling there.

We are wearing white capes that completely camouflage us in the snow-covered landscape.

Jan. 16. Still up here on ‘‘Bloody Knob” in foxholes. Yesterday, the remainder of our platoon came up to join us. Gibbons, a young guy from Missouri who likes to talk about his trapping episodes, is my foxhole buddy now.

Jan. 18. We moved up over a hill to the city of Diekirch, over a gradual mountain-climbing road reminiscent of Estes Park in Colorado. Equally as steep, winding, and beautiful. Met an American who came over here in 1914. He is from Duluth, Minnesota. Claims this part of the country, Luxembourg, is the most beautiful of all. I’d be inclined to agree with him.

The 319th took this town. It is all blasted and ruined. That regiment moved ahead this morning. We are living in foxholes, changing off one squad at a time, but glad to be getting warm chow, for the first time in a week.

Jan. 19. Still in this town, across the river “Bloody Knob,” and a terrible blizzard is raging. Tholer is another town we passed through. Had the GIs last night during the blizzard, and had to go a number of times—almost got frost-bitten in the process. The cellar of this home in which we are staying is practically a bomb-proof shelter, as most of these German cellars are. Potatoes, turnips, and fruit are stored in them.

Last night we shared a fruit cake that was delivered to Hucks. Before he was killed, long with another of our squad leaders up on the hill, he said jokingly, “If anything happens to me, the squad was to share the cake when it arrived.”

Our new squad leader, “Cash” received a fruit cake last night and I will be looking forward to a piece of it tonight.

We have a few farm boys in our squad at the present time—the caliber of Art Thompson. They are really neat, efficient guys who love to discuss cars, machinery, et cetera.

Our position is only about five miles from Wiltz. “Stars and Stripes” of Jan. 20th issue reports the Russians are now 20 miles inside the Reich. Good news!

We are now in Einsweiler-Heiderscheid.

Smoked a pack of Luxembourg cigarettes called Heintz van Landenyck – hycienische cigaretten. Also smoked some German cigarettes called Waldorf Astoria, and some French called Bet 6. Luxembourg maps refer to Great Britain as Gross Britannien, Greece, as Griechenland, France, as Frankreich, and Vienna, as Wien.

Jan. 22. Today we are on the move again towards Wiltz, which we are to capture and occupy. Marched all night, then dug in, but unable today to get any sleep, as they keep us on constant alert. A so-called “30-minute alert.” Sun is shining for a change. “Cash,” Sgt. Pyles, and I stick together as we are now the three oldest men in the platoon, in length of service.

Passed through a town called Ringo and into Wiltz.

Jan. 23. Stopped by artillery fire six miles outside Wiltz. This is only six miles from the German border. The roadside is strewn with wrecked German war vehicles and equipment. It’s strange to see GIs cut down telephone poles for fire wood, but that’s war. And the tankers push

over stone walls to get a parking spot off the road. We have halted here waiting for our next move.

Jan. 25. Hurray! I have been given a pass to Paris to last from 1300 Jan. 25 to 1300 Jan. 28. Stayed at Union Terminal Club Hotel Terminus, 5 Rue de Strasbourg, Rm. 610. This was a Red Cross-operated hotel. First reported at Red Cross central booking office, 12 boulevard de La Madeleine. A most beautiful hotel. I have my own room, with boule bed and bath. Went to Finance Office at 2 Place Del Opera, to change German marks into French francs, about $25 worth. Managed to sell four cartons of cigarettes to the manager of a bar, for 60 francs ($1.20), per pack. Glad I was able to get the smokes from our mess sergeant before leaving. He saved them out of ten-and-one rations, where a carton of cigarettes was included in every box of rations. The cigarettes along with candy bars, chewing gum, and soap he gave me, brought me an even hundred dollars, which was not bad. Seventeen of us from various companies came on this junket, traveling by army truck through Metz and Verdun, cities I can recall.

Lt. Alkire was along with us.

The day after my departure, the 317th went into an attack, was pinned down for two days, with a lot of casualties. What a break that pass was for me. But then, I was one of about half a dozen of the old survivals in our company and deserving of the pass more so than anyone else, which is the reason it came my way. Upon my return to the ranks, we were dug in for two days before I learned the details.

I recall now that we got the cigarettes and various other selling items at the Service Company in Wiltz, where we hoisted them from barracks bags turned in by new men coming into our regiment.

Stopped in Verdun for coffee and doughnuts at the 95th mess hall. Black sergeants were in charge, working German prisoners in the kitchen and service counters.

Jan. 26. Took a tour around the city of Paris, sent some gifts home. Perfume is what I passed the package off as, but inside was always a German pistol or two. Inspection officers didn't ask too many awkward questions at the post office. Exchanged all of my German and Luxembourg marks into francs and sent a money order home for $100.

Had the unique experience of wearing sergeant stripes that just happened to be on a jacket given to me for the trip by a staff sergeant at the Service Company, as we had nothing but fatigues coming from the front lines. He requested I remove the stipes while in Paris, which I conveniently forgot about, or didn't have the time and convenience.

Jan. 27. Sent more packages home. Went to Opera Comique where I saw "Manon."

Jan. 28. Preparing to leave Paris at 1 pm today. Really had a nice time. On our return trip we stopped in Reims, at a GI Transient Camp where we enjoyed hot chow, good beds, and movies.

Jan. 29. Back in L Company. Everybody wanted to hear about Paris. Went to a dentist and had a molar filled. Casualties of the battle my company fought while I was away left Lt.

White and Sgt. Orr missing and presumed dead. 34 German prisoners were captured. Two squad leaders, Cardosa and Sims were hit and hospitalized. My old buddy "Cash" is also in bad shape. While our company is here in Heffingen recuperating, passes are being issued to Luxembourg, but I am not especially interested. We are located near the city of Diekirch. While I was away, the 317th Regiment took the city of Clerf.

Feb. 1. This month came in with a series of rain storms. It has been raining and thawing intermittently for two days. We are still here in Heffingen resting. Meals are good. We are enjoying movies. Saw "Marriage is a Private Affair" yesterday, with Lana Turner and James Craig.

The Russian advance has all Germany panicky. Mail is now arriving regularly. Had another tooth fixed. Might consider a pass to Luxembourg after all, if we stay here any length of time.

Feb. 2. Still here, not doing much of anything. Had a chance to take a shower at an outdoor bath house constructed by the army, but passed it up as I had baths and a clean change of underwear in Paris.

My big toe on the right foot continues to be numb from the freezing during the Battle of the Bulge. Continue my routine of writing a letter to Alice daily. Julie's letter tells me she and Rudy are shopping together for an engagement ring for his girlfriend from Scranton.

Weather remains mild; snow disappearing from the highways rapidly. Am using a boric acid salve for something that insists on growing on the lower eyelid of my right eye. New men coming in to fill our L Company regularly.

Feb. 4. We are now undertaking sniper training, using an .03 rifle with a Weaver scope. We have been alerted for a move.

Feb. 5. Moving into Diekirch.

Buddies I have known - Smear, a cop from Cincinnati. He froze his feet on "Bloody Knob." Wanat, a coal miner from Wilkes Barre, Pa. who comes from as close to my home town of Forest City as anyone I have met during my time in the service. He also went back with bad feet. Other buddies were "Cash" from the Blue Ridge Country of Kentucky, and his friend Andy Anderson. Milford, who is now in our squad. Huchinson and Corrigan—both killed on the "Knob." Sgt. Pyles and Sgt. Meeks, both of whom have as much time with the 317th as I have. Lt. Tronolone, who just received his bars after serving as our platoon sergeant. Hevessy, who was wounded soon after we were on the front lines and is now in H Company in Paris. Paulsen, now in Intelligence Service Company. Stefanski, a Polish guy from Chicago, who went out of his mind during the fighting on the "Knob." He was shot in the head in the battle Farebersviller and now stationed in England. Signs, a weapons company sergeant. Sgt. Strajewski, our assistant supply sergeant who came into Farebersviller the night of the German counter-attack with warm chow and fresh socks, only to be captured by the Germans. He was also from Chicago. Hocke, a medic who was transferred to I Company. Joe Donofrio, from Brooklyn, N.Y., who helped me handle the mail at Camp Shanks, N.Y. before we set sail for Europe.

We have a nice set-up here in Diekirch, which is a fairly large city on the Sure River. It lies in ruin after being fought over three times before the strong German defense gave in.

We are housed in a Hotel Cafe that is only slightly damaged. What a set-up! Two beer parlors and a large kitchen on the first floor, quite a number of hotel rooms, a large still for making hooch, and a garden full of large vats in which the ingredients are soaking. There is a big supply of potatoes and various fruits in the basement used for making liquor. A large deep-fat fryer in the kitchen used for making French fries, is going full blast, as the guys can't seem to get enough French fries after being away from them so long. The Kentucky mountain boys kept eyeing that still, with visions of what it promised.

We are still in Luxembourg, only a few miles from the German border.

Feb. 7. Still here. Received my combat infantry badge today, along with congratulations from Lt. Carlson (Later killed in a foxhole right next to mine). I congratulated Tronolone on getting his bars. Received Al's Christmas package today, containing candy, tobacco pouch and a bedside edition of Esquire.

Russian soldiers broke across the Oder River, and the general war news continues to be encouraging.

Our Third Army is ploughing through the German Siegfried Line.

Army Buddies:

Steve Perciabosco, Omaha, Neb., who came over with me from Camp Shanks, N.Y., along with Hevessy, Hocke, Stefanski, Gilberti, and Donofrio. He was wounded on "Bloody Knob." I bandaged his arm and helped him off the hill just before the Germans counter-attacked.

Walt Hevessy, who came over with our group, was one of the first to get wounded. I met him in the hospital at the time I brought Percy in for treatment. Hevessy said, "Ol' Percy will never forget you, Joe."

Amego, the Porto Rican who was shot through the ball of his foot on "Bloody Knob." I helped get him back to safety, then we both went to the hospital, he with his foot would and me with frozen feet.

A medic at the hospital removed the bullet—a slug from a burp gun—from his foot and gave it to him for a souvenir. I, in turn, gave him a lieutenant's cigarette case I had taken from the captured German lieutenant's pocket while frisking him. Had a most difficult time assisting Amego down off the hill and to a highway where we could catch a jeep to take us to the hospital.

Feb. 8. Still here in Diekirch on a half hour alert. Have been practicing assembling T.N.T. charges for destroying pillboxes.

Feb. 10. Today ends my tenth month in the army. The rainy, mild weather continues. I received my E.T.O. Badge yesterday. Also a battle star for the "Battle of the Bulge."

Confiscated an oil painting from the hotel here in Diekirch and mailed it home on Feb. 6, 1945. Postage was twenty cents.

Feb. 11. Still in Diekirch. Rumor has it the 318th and 319th Regiments are busting through the Siegfried Line these days. The Ninth Army is said to have pushed off in what is considered to be the main push at present.

Feb. 13. Tomorrow will be Valentine's Day. We are still in Diekirch, pulling some guard duty on roadblocks. Met Hevessy yesterday. He is now a PFC - a runner for K Company. Told him all about Paris. Said he is in for a pass also.

We are enjoying movies every night in a regular theatre. Saw "Sweet and Lowdown" recently, with Benny Goodman and his orchestra. Also "Babes from Swing Street." This is the best and longest rest we have had. Set up nicely in this hotel kitchen makes it feel like a little bit of home. Sure will dislike our departure, which must come any day now. All the guys here believe we have a better setup than most of our company platoons have.

''Our gang" now consists of "Cash", Andy, Milford, Steve, myself and "Pop" of the Aleutians. We keep kidding him about the two years of army service he put in up in that God-forsaken island country.

Wilwerwiltz is the name of the town our company battled in while I was in Paris.

Feb. 14. We left Diekirch, crossing the Sure River behind the 318th and 319th Regiments and the 5th Armored. Dug in on high ground above Bollendorf.

Feb. 17. Still here in foxholes while artillery is shelling the town. Received Alice's leather case yesterday. Eating I will enjoy when back home—cereals in the morning… hotdogs, sauerkraut, tea with scotch.

We have had two days of beautiful sunshine here, warmer seemingly than I ever remember in the States at this time of the year. Crossing the Sure River put us on German soil for the first time. Our boys are sparing no ammunition while passing through this land. Can't say I blame them, either the armored outfits or the ordinary rifleman.

Feb. 15. We are in a battle, centered in and around the town of Enzen. One German soldier walked up to me with his hands up and surrendered to me.

Feb. 20. While Pounds and I were escorting three German prisoners back to our CP, maneuvering through what was still enemy territory, we captured three more Germans who came by along a brush-lined path in which we were temporarily hidden.

Our company is dug-in on high ground where it is difficult for our kitchen to reach us with food or water, both of which we need badly.

While I was away yesterday, running prisoners back to our CP, our company took a terrific artillery shelling from the enemy.

Feb. 23. Still dug-in up here on high ground above Enzen. We crossed the Enz River. The Heinies are throwing plenty at us, including direct fire from tanks. This morning, our own planes strafed us evidently mistaking us for the enemy as we are far ahead of our objective. It was one of the saddest sights of the entire war for me to see our Company Commander Lt. Paul Carlson, who was in a foxhole about a hundred feet from mine, get hit and killed by 50-caliber machine gun fire, along with two other men. More on this later.

(I contacted his parents later in response to a request they had published in Stars and Stripes, for anyone knowing him and the circumstances of his death, to write to them.)

We are short of food and water most of the time. I am not sure anymore of the date—must be about the 24th or 25th. Still holding the high ground above Enzen. The 5th Division pushed off today ahead of us. Current weather is fairly nice. Gilberti and I have arranged our foxhole comfortably, if such is possible. It is deep with a straw-covered bottom. Our field kitchen is furnishing a warm breakfast to us again. However, it's K-rations at noon and sandwiches for supper.

Quite a few of our old company men have returned from the hospital in recent days.

Third Army is driving hard with six divisions on the line, supported by two armored division and artillery outfits. We are taking gangs of prisoners. Many, realizing the hopelessness of their situation, simply walk out of the woods or homes and surrender to us. Ungodly shelling of the towns and countryside is more than they can take. The Germans lost vast amounts of equipment in the town of Enzen, which we just finished mopping-up.

Feb. 25 - We made a five-mile advance on this day, crossing the Prum River, 5th Division and the 4th Armored are driving along with us. Confiscated some Cognac while passing through the town of Nach.

We captured high ground out of Enzen employing a new tactic: marching abreast in the woods, about twenty feet apart, and firing continuously straight ahead. The sound of such fire power was enough to scare the devil himself out of the area. Unfortunately, one of our men was shot by our own fire. Outstanding advantage of capturing this hill was that we were able to move in along with our artillery observers who directed artillery fire from their outfits into the woods where Germans with four tanks were preparing to counter-attack. Our artillery fire also smashed the town that night enabling our infantrymen to move in at daybreak, clean out the last of the enemy and make a five mile advance in pursuit. This was one of the best pieces of strategy in which I was a participant of my entire battlefield days.

The war news continues to be good.

We moved into a town the name of which I do not know. On the way we had to wade knee deep in water of the ice cold Enz River to take the town of Enzen I mentioned above.

March 1. We are in town after two weeks in the field. Shaved off a two weeks growth of beard yesterday down by a stream with half a dozen of our boys from our squad - Gilberti, Steve, and others.

On the move, passed within a few miles of Bitburg, a rather large city.

The 4th Armored is driving through here like a house on fire. We moved up three miles today. The 4th Armored has paused, marking time up ahead of us, until more troops and supplies move up. We are now within 12 miles of the Rhine River. Our "Long Toms," are dropping heavy shells across the river.

March 4. In a little town 8 km from Bitburg.

March 6. We put up in the town of Mettendorf where, of all things, I was able to take the first shower in I don't remember how long it's been.

One of "Cash's" expressions: "She could make a freight train jump the track." And his Kentucky mountain buddy, Andy, had this one: "Great gobs of bullshit!"

Steve and I worked on zeroing in our rifles today.

Still on a deserved rest here in this town. The 4th Armored is driving on ahead of us to a distance of 27 miles, we heard this morning. Met an old buddy, Paulsen, yesterday who is now connected with the C. I. C. He believed the 80th would either be squeezed out or replaced in the remaining dash across Germany. He naturally hope either event transpires, as we have done more than our share of fighting.

We are in Wiesam, near Bickendorf.

March 12. Moved down to our old sector near Remich, Luxembourg.

March 13. Advancing by day and night, following our tanks and sometimes riding on them. Passed through Mondorf, which is vineyard country. Traversed many small towns such as Lockweiler, etc.

March 15. Today we destroyed a strong German battalion of SS troops that was made up of various Panzer outfits, and we have been on the move ever since.

March 19. We are practically motorized now, riding tanks, trucks, and armored vehicles, for many miles of advancement each day. Some of the last Germans we captured wore metal replicas of the Edelweiss on their caps. These are mountain troops, presumably. I have confiscated a few of the emblems for my collection.

I had to drop out and go to the field hospital in a town we passed through, the name of which escapes me. Just so exhausted I could not take another step. I received what is probably the standard treatment: they filled me with sleeping pills and let me sleep for 24 hours.

This is a list of cities we passed through as the field hospital was compelled to move almost daily, to keep up with the rapidly advancing front: Dorsdorf, Hasborn, Tholey, Alsweiler, Winterbach, and St. Wendel. We covered 17 miles in one move.

March 20. Still in the hospital. It is a German general hospital quite large, with about fifty buildings ln all. There are about 900 wounded German soldiers left here by their army. Also

about 300 Russian and Polish people, probably captured troops and civilians, brought here to work in the hospital.

March 2l. Our field hospital has now moved ahead to the large city of Kaiserslautern. We passed through Bubach and Wensweiller on the way.

Yesterday, back at the large German hospital I found a Luger, a P.38, and a .32 cal. pistol in the basement of the hospital building we were occupying. The only logica1 explanation I have is that they were hidden there in a concrete tunnel that carried steam and water lines by German soldiers fearful of getting caught by our army with weapons on them.

While I was at supper yesterday, of all things, someone lifted my Luger. The Major to whom I reported it is very upset about it. Said the lowest act possible is some rear echelon man stealing from a wounded or sick front line man. He said to the Major and Lieutenant in charge of the medical ward, "The pistol had better be found." Also added if he located the thief, he will be court-martialed and given a little present besides, like a stint on the front lines. Personally, I suspect one of the orderlies took it. As soon I missed it, I let the orderly know, to which he replied, "I know who has it. Will you sell it to me when you get it back?" I warned him last night it had better be returned or he will have some explaining to do to the Major. Today, the Major came by to talk to me, followed soon afterwards by a captain who produced a Luger and asked if it was mine. His story was that it was found out on the trash heap, sans holster.

It is not my original one, but I accepted it which they wanted me to do in order to settle an unpleasant situation. For the world of me, I cannot figure out who the thief really was.

German Lugers of this category were selling for about $100 in Paris and, even here in the rear echelon, the artillery boys were sure on the lookout for them.

Some outfits are moving out today. It will probably be our turn tomorrow. The fighting is sure advancing rapidly now. Ever since the 80th Division moved down here and destroyed a pocket of crack German SS troops, we have been advancing 20 to 25 miles a day.

Roads are literally cluttered with refugees—men and women from many countries who were enslaved by the Germans to keep their plants and factories running, now trying to find their way back home. Carrying huge packs on their backs, riding in wagons or on bicycles, or on horseback—any means of locomotion to move along their meager personal possessions. One can identify Italians, Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Greeks, and Yugoslavs in Saarbrucken, which was captured yesterday. It is located about 30 km from here.

I am able to exchange a few words with Russian refugees, the Poles, and a Serb I met yesterday. How glad they are to hear me exchange a few words in their language!

The German hospital I stayed in was located in St. Wendel.

A cure for my rash, which was issued at the hospital, was ammoniated mercury ointment.

March 22. We moved up again to the city of Dirkhind. The road along the way was absolutely littered with German vehicles and dead soldiers. Can't recall seeing anything like it

anywhere in France, except one scene in a woods strewn with bomb craters, each one of which was splattered with the remains of a half dozen or so Germans.

This morning, here at another hospital we have moved to, an orderly came to me and said, “I heard you got your weapon back.” Then he meekly inquired if I thought one of the orderlies stole it. I told him I didn’t know for sure—it was a very peculiar situation—some thief throwing it out on the trash heap after he got frightened. Perhaps, and more probably, it wasn’t thrown out on the trash heap after all. Most of these orderlies, I observed, are picking up all kinds of loot end bringing it in to the Major who, I understand, already has half of an ambulance truck filled with boxes and duffle bags, ready to ship home. I can vouch for the fact, as I had to help move the stuff as he transferred from one hospital to another.

This German hospital along with the previous one, are really quite nice establishments. There seems to be more German soldiers coming in for treatment then GIs. The Ward Major claims however, that this has been the quietest periods—the least patients coming in—at any time during the war. All German hospitals are filled up with civilian patients who were victims of American bombing of these towns last December.

March 22. Have been evacuated about 80 miles, passing through the city of Frankenstein.

March 24. I am still here at a Replacement Station. Everything is quiet and peaceful. A lot of rookies just arriving from the states are being sent up every day to fill up companies like ours that have been practically depleted in the fighting. A bridge building outfit rolled by today. We receive no news here, but I believe the Third Army must have crossed the Rhine River.

What a pitiful sight these refugees make streaming through here. They seem to be representative of all nationalities, with all their earthly possessions heaped on carts or wagons, if they are fortunate enough to have one. Many are on bicycles. All have huge packs strapped to their backs. Some have horse-drawn wagons in which the entire family rides. In some cases, a group of men, women, and children are traveling together. In other instances, just a few men or women are teamed up.

March 25. Moved forward again today - through Limbach, Alsweiler, Winterbach, St. Wendel, Kusel, and some other towns.

March 26. Moved up to Headquarters Company in Nesbottom, by way of Rudokpkaren.

March 25 - We were near the city of Worms.

March 27 - We are now in Neider-Saulhiem, near Mainz. The front is across the Rhine River, at Rundstedt Manheim. We are preparing to cross the Rhine in assault boats.

Crossed safely without getting hit by German artillery coming in here. I remember someone kidding us that the Navy will be up there to take us across the river when we get there and sure enough, that joke turned into reality. A pontoon bridge is completed, allowing vehicles and light tanks to cross. What a relief that is to riflemen like myself who need this support if the Germans should mount a counter-attack.

My buddy, “Dad” Gilberti, showed me a pocket pencil he picked up somewhere with mechanism that can fire a .22 caliber cartridge. Deadly at close range. Another German idea.

We liberated five Norwegians and 23 Frenchmen in this town who had been slave laborers for the past seven years in German munition plants and are now looking over maps and wondering how soon the C.I.C. will get them back home. These prisoners stated they worked 14 to 16 hours a day and were paid 6 marks a week.

March 28. This is the day we actually crossed the Rhine in landing barges against insignificant ground fire, but some artillery coming in. Moved up to within 3 km of Wiesbaden.

March 29. Still here in this little town 3 km from Wiesbaden. There seems to be little German resistance left; just prisoners streaming in, surrendering in droves. Yesterday, while walking through town with a buddy, two German soldiers came out of a building and surrendered to us. And so it goes now.

March 30. Moved by truck to Frielendorf. We are now 60 km from Kassel. The road is clogged with refugees all the way. Beginning to see some Moroccans who we have seen for the first time. I did see many of them back in Paris. In fact, they were the most active black-marketers. One generally had to deal with them when selling clothes, cigarettes, or other items such as gold. How glad they are to see us, their liberators. They are all smiles and salutes.

Homberg is 9 km from here.

Sgt. Troney’s favorite expression: “Let’s hit the prone; Let’s hit the vertical.”

Many Poles, Hungarians, and Russians working in the mines around here. Again, slave laborers.

April 3. We are now in the outskirts of the city of Kassel, a large city, where the Germans counter-attacked with about 20 Tiger tanks and knocked out quite a few of our tanks.

April 5. Moving through Kassel, mopping up in both the old and new part of the city. All of which is in complete ruins. There was much industry in this city, including a factory manufacturing German tanks. I guess that one was well taken care of.

April 7. We have been relieved by the 69th Division. Don’t know yet where we will be assigned. Sure glad to see them come up.

April 8. We traveled by truck to Erfurt. This is only about 300 km from Berlin.

April 9. Near the city of Eisenach where the 89th Division Medical Field Hospital is located. Again, completely exhausted, I had to drop out of the march and stayed overnight in the 89th Aid Station. Perry Ronan was with me as his feet gave out.

April 10. Passed through Gotha and on the fighting front again around Erfurt.

April 14. We made a long move to Jena.

April 15. We are on the outskirts of Leipzig. Road signs read: Werdau 11 km, Neukirchen 3 km, Glauchau 12 km and Gablenz 2.5 km.

April 16. Staying in the city of Crimmitschau, where we had to pull guard duty on some large warehouses filled with meat and cheese the D.P.s were raiding like mad. We had all the fresh meat, cheese, and drinks we cared for in this town. Almost everyone in our squad had now picked up an automobile from the German civilians. We'll do anything we can get away with now, but it won't last long.

April 18. Still in Crimmitschau. These German people we stay with and have cooking for us sure can eat. Double portions of everything. We bring in plenty of meat from the warehouse for all.

April 20. We moved back through Erfurt, then south through Coburg, which is near Bamberg. Learning new German words right along now as we have the opportunity to practice on civilians.

April 24. Moved to Nurnberg. Not doing much of anything except some training sessions in the mornings. Last night a few of us went to visit a Russian D.P. camp we heard about, located 7 km from here, and, believe it or not, met five Slovene girls from Gorica. It appeared they all bad Italian boyfriends.

April 29. We crossed the Danube River at Regensburg, on the German-Austrian border.

Passed by a prisoner compound, an open-air, wire-enclosed area that held about 3,000 German prisoners.

All large towns we pass through have been completely ruined by artillery shells and tank and vehicle mounted weapons our boys unload as they go by for good measure.

April 30. Our squad now consists of Andy, who is on pass to the French Rivera, Phil Wolf, our acting squad leader, me, as assistant squad leader, Hinton, "Dad" Gilberti, who was up in the Aleutian Islands, Cash, Kelly, Granthan and Gipalo, the lisping Serbian.

May 5. It snowed today, the ground is white. We are in a town about 30 km south of Regensburg, on our way to Munich. In the last few days, we heard of Hitler's and Mussolini's deaths.

May 7 - Guarding prisoners in Vocklabruck. Thousands of them, all part of three German armies that surrendered in Austria. We came here from Landshut in one long trip.

A letter from my army buddy, Phil Wolf, to Alice.

Erie, Pa.
April, 30, 1946

Dear Friend:

I pray that this letter finds you in the best of health, along with same very good news from Joe. I wrote to him the second day after I reached home, but I was too late, as he has changed his address. I pray it is the last time, and that he is on his way home.

The letter was returned so I am sending it on to you. Perhaps it is possible that you can still send word to him. Joe sent mail to Weilheim for me when he was stationed in Munich.

It sure is nice to be back home. I can imagine how you feel, with Joe on his way.

Let's say a prayer for him, and his fellow buddies, on their voyage across the Atlantic, as some are going to be very sick boys when they reach New York. I believe Joe took it good coming over, so, no doubt he will be in good shape when the boat docks. It is a much nicer trip going back to the States than going over.

The boys have a lot more to look forward to on this trip. I have never met you in person, but I know just how you are going to look when you meet him, after his 2-year job for good old Uncle Sam and the good people of good old U.S.A.

Alice, he looks very good, or rather, he did the last time I saw him. Joe took very good care of himself after the war ended. Joe and I used to walk anywhere from 1½ miles to 3 miles to go fishing. That would only be one way, then we would walk another mile following the stream. He sure is some fisherman. He taught me how to catch trout. Joe used to have six or eight before I had caught my first one. But as the days passed by, I did a little better. Joe caught as many as twenty-eight in two hours. He would have caught more, but I no doubt scared them away, as I just had to be up where I could see them. Joe used to stand back from the bank, throw the line over the bank and in a couple of seconds he would have a beautiful fish on his line. I used to tell him he was just lucky, but after he caught them day after day that we went fishing, well, then he used to say: "looks like I had another lucky day." I believe he caught more fish in that time we went fishing in Stotten, Bavaria, than all the German people in Stotten did in five years. Once in a while we had a fish fry, the other times Joe would give them to families with children.

He was a very good hunter also. Did he ever tell you about the deer he shot in Stotten? He killed 4 or 5, I just don't remember. He told me that you liked to go fishing also. There wasn't one hour that passed by without him mentioning your name. Yes, he showed me your pictures, and most every time he would write a letter to you, he would have your pictures out in front of him. I remember when he sent the large one of you home, as he was afraid it would become soiled. How did you like the stories that he wrote and sent to you? They were swell, weren't they? You sure did a good job re-writing them. Joe let me read them.

I am sure you and Joe will always get along together. I know you are the girl for him, and I am sure you couldn't of met a nicer boy as they don't came any nicer than Joe Drasler. I am

sending along with this letter the letter I wrote to him. It came back. Maybe it is possible that you can send it on to him. I finish this letter wishing you folks all the happiness in the world. Also sending my love and all my good luck. Please forgive me for all my mistakes; Joe and the dictionary used to help me out.

Always, Joe's buddy, Phil Wolf

Many prisoners along the road, waiting to be taken in to the compound.

May 8. Still guarding prisoners that are coming in by the thousands every day. Many are Austrians, who our army is using as military police of the Austrian territory.

Heard Churchill's speech today. Hostilities cease tonight, one minute past 12 a.m. We are shooting flares and firing our guns in celebration tonight.

Weather here in Vocklabruck is getting warm. I met three Slovene families here who related their hardships in obtaining food and clothing. I led them to a store on main street which was locked up but soon opened the door to my banging with my rifle butt, and told them to help themselves to all the clothes they need. The owner stood by, observing, which was all he could do, but I imagine he was pulling a few hair out of his head also.

May 9.- Still here in Vocklabruck listening to the world celebrate V-c Day, which makes me so homesick I'd just as soon not listen to the news. Hoping to get back to the company, which moved out yesterday, and get some mail and summer underwear, as it is getting hot as hell.

Phil Wolf and I spent the last few evening visiting a musical family from Vienna. They gave me a locket for Alice, which I will take home.

May 10. Still in Vocklabruck. Phil and I are doing some trout fishing in a local stream, using bamboo fishing rods we got from a farmer. Have initiated Phil into trout fishing which he enjoys very much. We also have a motorcycle confiscated from a German prisoner, which we ride around. Still waiting to join our company. Another German army has moved through here, retreating from Yugoslavia.

May 12 or thereabouts. We are back with our company and moving into Austria—a maneuver our Company Commander explained to us as a warning to Marshal Tito, who is making a claim on Trieste. We camped out last night by a beautiful river which we enjoyed very much as the weather is now warm. Moving through the Alps where SS troops withdrew with large amounts of equipment then abandoned it along the mountain roads which our tankers had to push over the mountainsides in order to clear the roads. Camping alongside one of these areas, we simply put a match to the vehicles in order to have a warm fire. German prisoners are camped here by the thousands, waiting to be repatriated.

May 13. We have chased the last of the German SS troops across the Austrian Alps, all the way to the city of Windischgarsten, where we met up with part of the British Army and learned of the end of hostilities with the Germans.

May 14. Still in this town where there is now talk of going into a training schedule to keep the men busy. We have learned that 89 points is the minimum on which the first men will be discharged. No one except the oldest men in our squad had that many points. The current rumor is that anyone with less than 29 points is scheduled for the C.B.I. - the Pacific. I am meeting quite a few Slovenes and Serbs here. The climate is beautiful here in the mountains.

May 15. Getting ready to leave again. Beautiful weather with sunshine all day. At least half of each day is devoted to fishing, swimming, baseball, and horseback riding.

May 16. We arrived in Micheldorf.

May 19. We moved down closer to the Yugoslav border where Tito is still holding out regarding Trieste. Passed through the city of Steinach.

May 20. Crossed the Alps to a town called Mauterndorf where we met the British Third Army. We are about 160 km from Trieste. Snow banks are still six to ten feet deep on the mountains and the rivers are running wild with melting snow. Many beautiful waterfalls coming down the mountain sides. I assume there are plenty of deer and elk in this area, as most of the homes have mounted antlers. The highway is very steep and difficult for the hordes of refugees climbing on their homeward journey. Most of them returning to Yugoslavia. They appear weary worn, which do doubt they are.

Soldiers from the British Army we met here told about the suffering of the brave Yugoslav people. They told of how the Germans blinded old people and young children. I could believe it, as the Germans were capable of anything.

Phil and I got acquainted with a nice family back in Micheldorf we plan to visit again if we return by that route. Right now, waiting for orders to either bypass British Third Army we met here, or return to Micheldorf. Apparently, it all depends on what Tito does. This family we met has a nice apartment where they served us all the liquor we wanted. They come from Vienna, along with a lot of the people we meet in these mountains. They all talk about their beautiful Vienna and how sad it is that a lot of it is bombed and in ruins.

May 24. Still up here in the Alps camping outdoors. Some of the guys brought in a deer last night which we roasted over an outdoor fire. We heard a radio report stating that Tito has agreed to a temporary settlement of the Trieste question.

May 26. I sent my diary home to Alice.

We passed through the city of Spital, a town whose fame dates back to Roman times. We are on the outskirts of Mauterndorf, 34 km from Radstadt.

While we were in the Austrian mountains, the German Army that was moving out of Yugoslavia passed through town. Much of this German Army was cavalry so a number of us decided it was a good opportunity to get some fine riding horses. We yanked the officers off of about 34 mounts then rode them up into the high mountains, as the German officers complained to our officers. I almost got badly hurt by my horse as he slipped on some slate and rolled down hill. Luckily, I was able to jump clear of him.

Have heard of the German surrender and Hitler’s death.

The situation in Trieste is still unsettled. We are enjoying beer parties and barbeques on weekends.

June 6. Received a letter from my old Denver buddy, Will Holford today. He is in the Air Corps working in a supply room in Heidelberg, Germany.

June 8. Left by truck to Radstadt where we loaded into railroad box cars and started in the direction of Mandolin, 10 km from Radstadt. We passed through Bad Aussee, Bad Ischl-Ebensee and Gmunden. This is my first experience traveling in boxcars. We passed by a few beautiful lakes, one near the city of Gmunden. Salzburg is 73 km from Radstadt. We also passed through Pinsdorf and Lambach.

June 13. Still traveling by railroad yesterday and today, from Micheldorf to Stotten. Went through Wartburg, Wels, Lambach, Vocklabruck, Steindorf, Salzburg and Teinsendorf.

June 16. It appears that we are here, in garrison, to stay for a while. An educational program is being set up. Everyone wondering if we are scheduled to go to the Pacific and fight the Japs.

The Southern boys call their liquor "Mountain Dew" or, "Block and Tackle."

June 19 - One of my old buddies, Perry Ronan, has returned to our squad from the hospital. Phil Wolf is still on pass. I have been enjoying some fine trout fishing here in Steinbach, one day catching ten nice brookies in about half an hour. Our Company Commander is getting "chicken" however, trying to keep us busy on a schedule of sports, organized sports, like baseball- but not wandering off fishing, as Phil and I enjoy doing.

We have two men in the company from Denver that I know of: Pendlen and Thoras, a Mexican. Drummer is from Binghamton, N.Y.

June 26. We are in Stotten where Phil and I are having a lot of fun fishing a stream that is full of trout. Even though it meanders through a farmer's private property he is not allowed to fish it.

How I acquired my pistol collection:

My German Luger, P.38 and a Belgic pistol I found in the basement of the hospital where I stayed. A P.38 of mine was lost by the old drunk, Hinton, a regular army soldier, after I loaned it to him to replace the M-1 rifle he lost somewhere on a drunken spree. The P.38 I now have I acquired through trading for another Luger I acquired in Vocklabruck from a Pole. My .32 came out of a suitcase full of weapons our company had confiscated. My Walter pistol was a trade with a German civilian in Stotten for five packs of cigarettes. My Polish pistol and a .32, I acquired from a Pole in Vocklabruck. One old .32 caliber I got from "Cash." And another old .32 came in a trade with Wise for a wrist watch. The two old muzzle loaders I found in an old castle. And one French rifle I took out of a coal mine office, where it was evidently used by coal company guards.

The air is full of rumors about our outfit returning to the states on furlough and then redeployment to the Pacific.

Have been here in Stotten for a long time it seems.

July 10. We were in Fussen on guard duty for the 318th Regiment. Our platoon was selected as the best close-order drill platoon in the entire 80th Division and we have been selected to parade for Gen Geo. Patton this coming Saturday.

July 4. Ronan, Wolf, and I were out deer hunting today. I shot a small roebuck I surprised in an open field as I came out of the woods. When these little deer are feeding in a wheat field, one can just make out their front shoulders as they raise up their head above the wheat sheaves to listen. We prepared the meat here at the house and enjoyed some good dining. Have been having good luck trout fishing also.

July 13. We went to Kaufbeuren to participate in a parade for Gen. Patton, but he never showed up. Big deal!

Our financial account, according to Alice's letter: $825 in U.S. Saving Bonds; $1,300, my postal Savings; $2,500, Alice's postal Savings; $100 in bank account; and $198 in Building and loan, for a total of $4,923.

Battle stars received for Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland, and Central Europe.

July 25: Arrived at Lake View Rest Camp, about a mile out of Fussen, on a three-day pass. Having a fun time swimming and boating.

Practicing shooting the bazooka in Niederfeulen, where we were firing against frozen ground and missing a lot of shots because of the angle.

July 31, 1945. My army pay was made up as follows: $50, regular; $10, for overseas; $10 for combat infantry; and $4.80 for PFC rating, for a total of $74.80. Deductions were: $22, allotment; $7.25 for U.S. Bonds; $7.30 for GI Insurance, for a total of $36.55.

Two dueling pistols I got from a repair shop. A Mauser pistol from a German in Crimmitschau, along with my submarine jacket.

Spital, Austria was the city in which the 317th Infantry Regiment discovered the total Hungarian gold reserve (4 million pengos, or $130 million at the current rate of exchange) and much of Hungary's national art treasury.

Aug. 10. A few men are traveling to Fussen each day this week to clean up the mess D.P.s left in some buildings we are scheduled to occupy.

Aug. 20. The situation regarding our move to Fussen is still undecided. Fussen is a Bavarian city with beautiful castles built on some of its high mountain tops. We have moved instead, to Biessenhofen, about 15 km from Stotten, on the outskirts of Kaufbeuren, where we are guarding a compound of about 800 German SS and regular troops, along with a group of Luftwaffe WACs.

Phil and I had our picture taken with our captured pistols. We are living in a schoolhouse. Our dining room, a former restaurant, is very nice and we have German waiters to serve us.

Phil's answer to "Who are you? or What's your name?" is, Fritz Kuntz, brother-in-law of Lizzie Funstein. His invariable reply to "Where you going?" is, Punxsutawney.

Aug. 29. There is now a rumor making the rounds that we may go to Menengin instead of Czechoslovakia. That is the town where these women prisoners are being sent—about 80 of them, including, we hear, one American girl.

Andy's wise remark, "Immediately, if not sooner." Regarding the German prisoners: "Watching these Jaspers."

"Cveeble," I won't forget, means onion, in German. Phil and I had a hard time trying to inveigle some fresh new onions from a lady's garden, simply because we didn't know the correct word. Have moved from the schoolhouse to the last house on the left of road leaving Biessenhofen, towards Kaufbeuren. We have a nice room on the third floor, but it's quite a walk to the chow hall. Went fishing again today, but caught only one brown trout.

A few new German words are added to my vocabulary each day talking to the locals. There is now some static in the air that we may move to Garmisch.

Two dates that meant so much to all GIs: May 8, German surrender and August 14, Japan surrender.

High-point men from the 65th Division are joining our regiment. Graffiti in the men's room: "4 U 2 P."

Sept. 7. I received the sad news about our good friend Art Thompson, from Atalissa, Iowa, on whose parent's farm Alice and I enjoyed all that good rabbit and pheasant hunting before the war. Art was reported missing on the *USS Indianapolis*, which was torpedoed and sunk by the Japs. He was home on leave in May while his ship was in San Francisco harbor for repairs. The *USS Indianapolis* was hit by a Jap suicide plane off Okinawa on March 31. It had left on the fatal trip to Guam on July 16. About 100 men were lost.

Only once during my six months on the front lines did I have to discard any of Alice's letters. The rest remain among my souvenirs.

L Company has now relocated to Weilheim, which turned out, eventually, to be the best set-up we ever had.

Phil was wounded quite badly in a skirmish with the enemy, in the area of Wilholz-Pintsche.

Went to Garmisch, about 40 miles from here, to see the Radio City Musical revue, the "Rockettes," a chorus of about 40 girls. It was a very enjoyable show. Had some pictures taken today at one of the local studios. My "model ship in a bottle" sent home, is a souvenir from Diekirch.

Sept. 23. We are still in Weilheim doing practically nothing. High point men are leaving for the States every day. Men with under 37 points are now on alert to leave the division, and I

am one of them. Numerous GIs from a number of different regiments, are now being incorporated into the 317th, to bring it up to full strength for the return home.

An old buddy, Perry Ronan, from Garden, Los Angeles, and I are lucky recipients of passes to Paris. I turned in my rifle on the 26th–for good, I hope.

Oct. 6. Still in this same location: Weilheim. Andy, Steve, and some other of the old buddies, are leaving for the States today.

Oct. 4, 1945. Enjoying a one-week pass to Paris. My companion on this trip was an old stateside buddy Perry Ronan, out of L.A. We overstayed our pass by a day, but will make it up traveling by plane on the return trip. We had a little trouble making plane connections as we did not have air travel authorization on our passes. I made about $300 while in Paris, mostly maneuvering extra ration cards I was able to bring along. A full ration could be sold for about $20.

Villacoublay was the Paris airfield from which we flew, in a C-47, back to Munich in less than three hours.

Going there, we traveled by truck, through Stuttgart, Munster, Ludwigsburg, Karlsruhe (dinner stop), Strasburg and Saarburg (supper stop).

After the war ended, I availed myself of a pass to Switzerland, Italy, and the French Riviera, where I had the pleasure of swinging a golf club for the first time in my life.

Oct. 6. It is still raining here in Weilheim, the 17th day in succession. Some of the 65- to 70-point men are leaving for the States. I enjoy spending some time in a German guesthouse, listening to the German conversation. Received a letter from brother Rudy today. He was home on a 15-day furlough and is now serving on the ship "Europa," which just completed a sailing to New York, returning 4,500 American troops home.

I am receiving my Proletarian articles from Alice, as they are being published, and admire the great job she is doing in preparing them for publication. I intend to continue writing now that the weather is turning cooler. It is fun telling the local farm people all about America. They are all ears for such news. Bavarians like to claim they are more akin to Americans than they are to the Germans. It is their opinion America should take over their Bavarian country.

Alex Weise is the painter from whom I bought three paintings, paying him with cigarettes, food, clothing, or whatever I had and he needed. He is quite a distinguished-looking old man, tall, thin, grey-haired and a grey goatee, and had a studio above the local movie theatre. He painted a scene for me which I had to turn down because he asked a thousand marks for it, which I did not have at the time. It was a beautiful winter mountain scene, much like one I had purchased from him previously. Phil was also dickering with him for a few paintings, but old Alex wanted "viel geld"—a lot of money, or the equivalent in food or cigarettes.

I am still waiting for my bronze star, which will add another five points to my total making my present 43 into 48. My name was turned in for this award while we were in Austria,

so it should be coming through any day now. Many of us are still waiting for our Good Conduct Ribbons.

My army IQ was 113.

Oct. 12. Made a trip to Zugspitze, the high mountain in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Phil and I, and we really had a nice day of it.

Oct. 14. We are all ready to leave for Czechoslovakia today. The 7lst Infantry Division will take over here. We will be going to Pilsen. None of our boys are happy about leaving Weilheim as this has been the best set-up we have had anywhere. We had the horses taken from the German officers in Austria along with us for our riding enjoyment.

The title to my large painting purchased from Alex Weise is “Winkelmoos Alm Mit”.

Oct. 16 - We arrived in the little town of Stankov, near Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, where we are settled down. Purpose of this move is to quiet down the disputes between the Germans and Czechs, who hate each other’s guts.

Oct. 24. I bought a beautiful Czech blouse for Alice, from a lawyer’s wife in exchange for one of our army field jackets.

Starting to learn some Czech words now Sledno - miss; panja - wife; zena - women; p razchovat - work; hersky - nice; spotno - no good; horosko - o.k.; depewji - thanks; nasledenu - good bye; etc.

Oct. 28. Traveled about 50 miles to Marienbad by truck to see a football game in which the 80th Division team beat the XXII Corps team.

“Peace came to ‘Lucky’ the 80th Division at Regensburg, on the Danube, in the center of Third Army’s 185-mile front, extending from Karlsbad, Czechoslovakia, to the Enns River, in the center of Austria.”

From the book, “Lucky Forward,” - Patton and the staff felt deeply that they merited a Pacific assignment on the basis of their peerless battle record. But the outlook was not promising.

Under ECLIPSE, the occupational plan, Third Army was earmarked for occupational duty. Also, HQ First Army was being redeployed for Pacific service, a fact bitterly resented at Lucky, and attributed to topside bias against Patton.

Oct. 30. Traded one of my Belgium .32s for a P.38. Made the trade with buddy Wise.

Nov. 1 and 2. These two days are Memorial Days for the Czechs. Yesterday and today they have been occupied with carrying huge amounts of flowers to their cemeteries. An American soldier who was killed in a jeep accident in this town, is buried here.

Nov. 4. Phil and I are guarding a huge ammo dump located about five miles out of Stankov. Germans sure had plenty of ammo left in these storage dumps. Large rabbits make a

good target, as well as a good meal, roasted over a fire in our guard shack. So we do have plenty of company—guys who are not on any duty, but lonesome.

Nov. 11. This is Armistice Day. It is supposed to be a holiday in the E.T.O., but we are pulling 24 hour guard duty in a little town called Krise, on the border of the Russian occupation zone.

Went out through a field to try for a shot at one of three large rabbits, but no luck.

"Lumpy" was the nickname of the Bozina family dog. Stayed in their home in Stankov.

Nov. 8. A truckload of us made a one-day trip to Prague. This was in the Russian zone where they refused us an overnight stay and we had to return the same day to Stankov.

Czech hospitality was tops. Too bad our stay wasn't longer. Changed my German mark wrist band into new Czech money that had just been instituted and had plenty of cash to spend.

Met the writer Jarmila Stenglova, who sent us the fine cut-glass vase and other items to America. She wrote three books, one of which I have, entitled "Slunce svitir na mesticko," (The Sun Shines on the Village).

Nov. 15. Made a trip from Pilsen where we are now staying, back to Stankov in regards to the blouse the "lady of the golden fingers" is making for Alice, but not ready yet, so she will send it to us when it is ready.

Nov. 21. Enjoyed our turkey dinner today - one day early - because we are moving tomorrow back to Germany. While here in Czechoslovakia, we did guard duty in Pilsen, at a brewery switchboard, on the Russian zone border; also at the railroad station in Tremosna, and at the ammunition dump near our barracks, where we did the rabbit hunting and roasting. We lived for a time in barracks at the airport.

Nov. 22. Our division arrived in "Lucky Tent City," located about 1.5 miles from Frankfurt. It is rumored we will get ready to go home from here. High-point men will go out and low-pointers will fill in. High-pointers now are men with 60 or over.

All kinds of rumors are afloat as to where the low-point men will be sent.

Nov. 27. Traded a wrist watch with Torez, of Denver, for a Czech pistol. Followed his with another similar trade.

Dec. 3. We moved to Munich, by way of Wurzburg, Nurnberg, and Augsburg.

I am now with the 778th AAA. This is the best set-up I ever had.

Dec. 5 - Leaving on pass to the French Riviera. Have been on this train for 24 hours and still have a distance to go. Bought two gifts for Alice: jewel boxes, for 610 and 760 francs. Also a scarf, ear rings, and a negligee. Sent a cablegram to Alice today. Went to Monte Carlo by boat.

Dec. 8, 1945. This is my second day at the Riviera—what a place. Nothing has been destroyed here. The Red Cross Casino Club is located right on the water front. A large patio

overlooks the water. Many civilians and soldiers living it up in the sun. GIs bathing beach is right in front of the Casino. Sun is so bright sunglasses are a must. A trip like this from the states in peacetime would cost thousands. These French people lounging around in the sun, remind me of Jews.

It is too cold for swimming, so the women sit around knitting. The sun is always shining, however. Red Cross Theatre presents a variety show regularly.

Feb. 9. Have a ticket for the opera "La Boehme" tonight.

The Red Cross Casino Club was built by an American millionaire Frank Goul, who spent five million for its construction, it is claimed. He also built a large casino in Cannes, along with a private home.

Played my first nine holes of golf with buddy G. Cur; scores were - Joe, 76, G., 88.

We left Nice on Dec. 17. Our tour included Rome and Switzerland, all by rail, crossing some pretty shaky, temporarily repaired bridges along the way.

Dec. 25. Christmas in Munich; not a very merry one, to be sure. There is nothing to do,

Dec. 27. Saw the play "Blithe Spirit" at the Munich Opera House last night.

Jan. 15, 1946. Have visited the Yugoslav D.P. camp in Munich regularly and met many of their officers, all the way up to colonels. January 14 was the Serbian New Year. I ate Serbian "potica" and drank sour milk at the officers' quarters of the camp.

C. I. C. - Counter Intelligence Corps.

It was claimed 236,000 people were put to death in Dachau Concentration Camp.

Bergaubrau keller was the beer joint where an attempt was made to kill Hitler.

The Serbian, Radich, was my agent in Munich selling all the clothes I furnished from railroad cars, where all our seconds and excess clothes were kept. He lived in the Yugoslav D.P. Camp and worked in our kitchen in Munich. Munich was the quartermaster headquarters for all our supplies in southern Germany. It was a tremendous set-up, employing thousands of D.P.s and German, Polish, and other troops. Radich and his assistants rounded up a lot of German marks for me. On the other hand, I furnished a lot of clothes, GI clothes, for the men in the Yugoslav Camp, all gratis. They were publishing a newspaper there also, in which they tried to interest me, but I did not have the time to figure out their connections with the Yugoslav government, or with Tito.

Jan. 16. I was in the hospital with a bad chest cold. Have been issued cough syrup and A.S.A. pills.

Jan. 24. Got a flu inoculation shot today.

Jan. 27. Pulling guard duty, two hours on, eight hours off, at the Quartermaster depot in Munich.

This clothes-selling operation with Radich, particularly GI blankets, furnished me enough German marks to commission a studio of three artists working on paintings just for me. However, I had to furnish the paints and brushes, which I bought while on pass to Rome-Switzerland-French Riviera.

German calibers – 6.35 is equivalent to our .25 caliber; 7.65 to our .32; 9 mm to our 380 A.C.P.

"An April day, smiling cold and grey."

Feb. 8. Still in Munich. Our 50-point men have moved out, bound for home. I had some more paintings made at Vogel's Studio.

American bombers hit Munich in June, 1944, and bombed it incessantly for ten days. Some parts of the city look it, too.

Feb. 16. This is the day on which I left on my pass to Rome-Switzerland-French Riviera.

Feb. 18. I was in Bucks, Switzerland, at 7 a.m., in Zurich at 11 a.m., and in Lugano at 5:30 p.m. Bought a brooch in Bucks for Alice, 20 francs, or $5. A clock for 40 francs. A music box for 25 franc. Two women's watches for 68 francs. each. A man's watch for 88 francs. and another for 18 francs. Three aprons, three hankies, oil colors, earrings. In Italy it was a table cloth, mosaics, vanity case, brooch, cameo—mother of pearl—alabaster set, table piece, powder box, ash tray and a round jewel box.

Money I was allowed to take to Switzerland: 100 francs ($23.30). To Italy- 7,200 lira ($32). 100 lira = $1.00. One Swiss franc = 23 cents. Most of my money was in German francs, which were easily converted.

Feb. 26. In Milan, touring the city. We had a five-hour stop here on our return trip.

Feb. 27. Returning from Lugano, Italy, to Munich. Traveled through the following towns: Zug, Thalwil, Pavia, Chiavori, Sesiri, Levanto, Pisa, St. Vincenzo, Kaserne, Milan, Follonica, Civitavecchia, Santa Marinella and Ponte Galeria.

Am now working as a clerk in the Adjutant's Office.

March 19. We arrived in Bad Aibling, a summer resort city, located southeast of Munich. Traveled about 30 miles. It is rumored we will stay here for about a month to fill up the 778th with 33 and 34-point men, and stragglers with 45 points. Also, men with over 28 months of overseas duty.

On March 3, 1946. I was promoted to Corporal. My name was included on the first list of promotions turned in here at the personnel office since I began working here. I guess the officer in charge took a liking to me after I assembled a new mimeographing machine for him, and cut stencils for circulars that had to be distributed daily to the various squads scattered throughout the town and its environs. I had a company jeep and driver at my disposal to expedite the work. My office job could have provided quick promotion, as the nature of the work-typing stencils,

layout, compiling reports, etc. appealed to me. Unlike frontline promotions, here, dodging bullets was not part of the scenario.

March 12. This Friday we are scheduled to move out of the "Flak Kaserne" on our first step homeward bound. Hurray!

I have read that the 317th Infantry Regiment's L Company had 1,875 men pass through its ranks from August 5, 1944, to the end of the war.

March 28. It is now rumored we will leave Bad Aibling about April 8.

Last night I bought a bottle of American liquor from buddy Vic Bergstrom for $25. He is leaving us to take up a job in the Army of Occupation.

March 31. Sgt. Dudley Sobol, a top promoter from Chicago, Vic Bergstrom, Keith Watkins, from San Bernardino, Calif., and I, went on a trip to Hitler's hideout, Berchtesgaden, today, chauffeured by a German civilian, in his private car, hired by Sgt Sobol. Other outfits that will be going home with us are – 398th AAA, 482th AAA, and 473th AAA.

April 3. Still in Bad Aibling, scheduled to leave on the 8th or 10th. Sent home pictures of the Berchtesgaden trip, most of which were taken by Sobol, with his Leica camera equipment, which he acquired when his unit overran the main Leica factory an $85 million uncompleted wonder.

April 8. Made a journey to Garmisch and Eibsee which included a trip the top of Zugspitze Mountain by train. While in Czechoslovakia, I tried one of their famous mud baths.

Latest report from higher echelon is that we will be in Bremerhaven on the 12th. Two days later, we left Bad Aibling for Bremerhaven, by way of Rosenheim, Munich, Nurnberg, Hamburg, Fulda, Eichenberg, and Hanover. We are finally headed for the port and the ship that will take us back to the good old U.S.A. and our waiting families.

April 14. Arrived in Bremen at 5 a.m. and were put up in converted airplane hangars. The chow is good. No duties, just passing the time.

Now scheduled to leave on the *Alhambra*, on the 21st.

My salary, as Battalion. S. O. Clerk, was $54.

April 17. Last night at a bingo game, I won a large cake with which we had a little party later in the barracks.

April 19. Tomorrow we board ship for the sail home. What a day!

April 20. At 4 p.m. we began loading on the *Fayetteville* for the trip home.

"Sentimental Journey" and "This Love of Ours" were two movies we saw while on board, both dealing with precocious children.

April 30. Arrived in New York Harbor.

May 1. We departed for Camp Kilmer.

May 3. Arrived at Leavenworth, 7:30 a.m., passing through Towanda, Sayre, Rochester, New York, Valparaiso, Ind., Chicago, Kewanee, and Galesburg, Ill., St. Joseph, Mo. and Camp Leavenworth, the discharge station, at 7:30 a.m.

May 4, 1946. Received my honorable discharge from the US Army.

May 5. Arrived home in Denver at 7:30 a.m. Happy Day!

OCCUPATIONAL DUTY IN MUNICH

A short time after the war ended, the 80th Division of the US Third Army moved into Munich, home of the Quartermaster Corps, which was supplying food, clothing, and other necessities to American troops scattered all over Germany. Also located in Munich was the Luitpold Kaserne (Yugoslav Refugee Camp), on Rifer Sehvere Strasse, in which seven Yugoslav guard companies comprising about 800 men, along with an even larger number of Polish refugees, were billeted. All of these displaced persons (D.P.s) and former soldiers were employed by our Army to perform general guard duty, for kitchen and warehouse help, and for some category of repair work.

They were classified as "stateless" displaced persons, due to the fact they had not indicated their desire to return to their home country by Dee. 15, 1945. That was the situation I encountered on my first visit to the camp.

On following occasions, when I visited there of an evening, it never ceased to amaze me the amount of Yugoslav Army brass I encountered. Off hand, I recall a Lt. Colonel Tomitch, a Colonel Zivorad Bogdanovic, and a Colonel Boja Mihailovich. In Room 21, Barack 4, I visited with Wrcelj Risto, Vule Petrovich, Selo Kizadak, and Sev Palanka—all Serbian D.P.s. Nada Steanova was a newspaper reporter who worked on a news bulletin that was prepared and published by the above-mentioned officers.

Soon after my 317th Infantry Regiment was assigned to occupational duty, while I was sweating out redeployment to the Pacific, all troops coming off the front lines were issued new clothing and footgear. The Yugoslav and Polish troops, along with large numbers of German civilians who, by virtue of the fact they were the handiest people available, were assigned the job, or breaking down and preparing for distribution this huge amount of clothing and foodstuffs that arrived literally by the trainloads.

Truck convoys hauling material to the various divisions scattered throughout the area would return to Munich loaded with second-hand clothing and footgear that was dumped into open railroad cars parked in the railyard labelled "useless" and written off as a loss by our Army. These worn items, consisting of blankets, shirts, trousers, shoes, etc., were extremely attractive to the D.P.s, as well as to the German civilians.

As could be expected, D.P.s began appearing openly, dressed in GI shirts, trousers, and in some instances, in full GI attire. Any item of GI clothing, regardless of how badly worn, was attractive to these people, many of whom were dressed in tattered, worn-out clothes. German civilians, on the other band, sought GI blankets, overcoats, and wool scarfs that could be remade into useful dress wear.

Being that closely associated with the foodstuff and clothing naturally led to pilfering on a large scale. Some of the women devised rather ingenious methods of carrying food out of the area, especially items like sugar, salt, and cereals. Improvised cloth belts worn underneath their outer garments, was the favorite means of hijacking food. Tightly fit to certain parts of the body,

including between their legs, the belt would be filled with one of the afore-mentioned materials. Since all workers had to be frisked before leaving through the main gates, occasionally their rues would be detected by GI guards, causing some very hilarious moments.

With thousands of D.P.s employed as guards in the rail yards and around the entire perimeter of the vast Quartermaster fenced-in area, we GIs were saddled daily with Sergeant-of-the-Guard duty, with responsibility for keeping a crew of generally 40 or 50 people "on the ball." Lax attitude the higher echelon subscribed to the guard operation, however, left it wide open for the sharpy promoters, both GIs and the D.P.s.

US Army authorities said that Yugoslav and Polish displaced persons working for the American Army in Germany were being worked in return for their keep, and that there was no evidence, as charged by the Yugoslav government, that they had made any attempt to organize against the established governments of Yugoslavia or Poland.

Army authorities further claimed there were many thousands of Poles and Yugoslavs in the zone, who did not wish to go home and who must be fed on American rations for which the Army did not think it unreasonable to get some return in labor.

It was also pointed out that under a Yugoslav law, all Yugoslav nationals who were in the US zone of Germany as displaced persons, were not eligible to return home.

Following an unfortunate street incident in which a Yugoslav worker who had been forcibly deported to Germany during the war, was assaulted by members of an illegal military group when he applied for permission to return to his homeland, a raid was made on Luitpold Barracks by units or the Third US Army.

In the aftermath, it was claimed that a Royal Yugoslav Army of Bavaria was uncovered in the raid, and some 30 small arms were confiscated. This angered Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Commander of the US Eastern Zone of Germany, to state, "The only army in Bavaria is the one I command."

When orders came from Washington stating that the nearly 800 Yugoslavs employed as guards at displaced persons camps in the US zone would be dismissed as the need for them decrease, and they would be returned to D.P. assembly centers for repatriation, the street incident involving a Yugoslav worker may have become a convenient mitigating circumstance. But obviously, it was not the deciding factor leading to disbandment of the Yugoslav Refugee Camp.

Discovery of a few small arms among such a large group of ragtag displaced persons surely did not an army make. In no way was there any significance in the US charge. Actually a situation had arrived in which repatriation of US troops, governed by the point system, was well underway, and our Army deemed it an appropriate time to disband all of its D.P. camps and let these people return home to find their niche in the post-war world.

IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

As soon as the war ended, the Czechs began forcing German civilians out of their country, in most cases with nothing more than the few clothes on their backs—a repeat of what the Germans did to Czech civilians when they forced them out of the Sudetenland.

To avoid new trouble developing, members of the 317th packed up on October 15, 1945, and moved out of Bavaria to a new center of operations in Czechoslovakia.

We spent a month in that pleasant country during which the Czech people went out of their way to make us welcome. It was the first time we entered the territory of an ally where there was no restriction whatsoever on fraternization.

L Company bivouacked in the little town of Stankou, near Domazlice. We were located about twenty miles from Pilsen, the larger city we moved into later. In Stankou, we lived with local families, in their beautiful homes, two or three men assigned to a family, while in Pilsen it was a barracks setup, near an airfield.

The US Army oil and gas supply dump, serving all our troops in this country, was located near the same airfield.

After experiencing German cities like Munich, Nurnberg, Mainz, Kassel, and others, where streets and sidewalks were clogged with rubble, the two large Czech cities of Prague and Pilsen appeared to be relatively undamaged by the war. Czech people, however, informed us otherwise, as large sections of both Czech cities were indeed heavily damaged.

Following six years of German subjugation, during which their country was systematically and thoroughly plundered, naturally the main subject of conversation was Germany and the atrocities that country committed against the Czech people.

Anything with a German connotation to it was hated with a passion, and with good reason.

During their occupation, German soldiers searched every Czech home, and confiscated everything of value to them, for which they paid the families with fake money printed on German presses, we were told. Literally, it wasn't worth the paper it was printed on, yet the Germans used it to pay for items they hauled away. When our troops arrived in the country we found it flooded with worthless currency. Czech banks were forced to call in all old currency and then instituted a new money system in which the old money was worth only ten percent of its former value. Their new currency, by the way, was printed in the U.S.

Many of the Czech civilians who were taken off to concentration camps were never heard from again. Every form of torture and brutality devised by the cruel German mind was practiced upon the citizens.

Phil and I stayed with a family whose home was near the railroad tracks. These people often told of instances where they had offered part of their own meager bread ration to starving

Poles passing through on the trains. For such humanitarian efforts, they were fired upon by German police and beaten with clubs.

When the American troops entered Stankou, a German Commissar who had been in charge of the town, shot first his wife and child, then turned his pistol on himself. All three are buried in an unmarked grave pointed out to us in a corner of the Stankou Cemetery. He simply preempted local people in an act they would have performed for him.

Czech people were identified by the color of their arm bands worn in public. Families in which either the husband or wife were German, wore a certain color; Sudeten Germans, another color, and so on.

On celebration days people hung out their national flag, and alongside it a regional flag. Since the regional flag was very similar to the Polish national flag, curiosity of my Polish buddies was aroused and they would ask, "What the hell they hanging our flag out for?"

When Germans were being expelled from this land, everything but the clothes on their backs was taken away from them. This was a kind of evening-up process from which the Czechs undoubtedly derived much pleasure.

Many of the German families tried to get out of Czechoslovakia ahead of the Russian army. Our guards posted on roadblocks had strict orders to turn them back, which they did. At times we had a caravan of ox-drawn wagons half a mile long, lined up and waiting.

Local people naturally were still living on very short rations. Protest rallies were a common sight. Their beer, I would venture to say, did not rate more than one percent of alcohol. Their clothes were in tatters. They were enjoying the first taste of freedom in many years. Sokol groups were carrying out their sport activities. Dances were held on Saturday and Sunday nights. Polkas they danced were the same Slovenes love so well.

A two-day memorial service was held during the time we were in the country. As it was the first event of this nature after their liberation, the Czechs turned it into a most impressive affair. For about a week, one could observe a constant procession of flower bearers going to the cemetery.

When Phil and I went up there to visit the grave of a Russian employed by our army and later killed in a jeep accident, graves were practically buried with flowers. And during the night, each grave was lit up with candles.

I was able to go to the capital city of Prague for one day on a pass. A truckload of Gls drove to the city one morning and returned the same night. No overnight passes were allowed.

We crossed the Russian debarkation line after undergoing quite a thorough investigation. Russian guards were really "on the ball."

Our tour of the city included a trip through the famous old palaces where royalty once resided. President Benes had his administrative offices in the palace. Many various types of

architecture could be observed in the buildings, dating back to the 13th century. Succeeding families of royalty added their bit to the palaces, each in a different style of architecture.

As in France, with its Palace of Versailles; Germany, with its Bavarian palaces; and in other countries, down through the centuries fabulous amounts of money were consumed by ruling cliques to maintain their lavish style of living.

One of Czechoslovakia's oldest cathedrals, St. Vitus, took over 600 years to complete. It is a structure of breath-taking beauty, in which practically all the royalty that ruled this land, now the Czech Republic, is buried.

From the tower of the cathedral, one has a perfect view of all sections of the city. Vestiges of an ancient wall built around the city, similar to the Wall of China, can still be seen. It is believed to have been a project sponsored to put the masses of unemployed to work.

We also had the opportunity to visit the oldest Jewish synagogue in the world, located in the city.

One afternoon was devoted to a shopping tour conducted by young attractive Czech girls all of whom spoke perfect English.

Precious little genuine gold or silver jewelry was available in the shops of Prague, or in any other city.

In German occupied countries, all gold and silver, from both the national and civilian treasuries was soon confiscated.

Handiwork, for which the Czechs are famous, like hand-sewn handkerchiefs, table cloths, etc., were available in the stores. Hand-painted pottery and cut glass could also be found, while clothing and food items, understandably, remained on the scarce list.

A farewell dance held at a very nice hotel capped off our stay in this friendly land and its pleasant people. It was reminiscent of life back home: a cocktail lounge, drinks served, an orchestra playing American tunes, and English-speaking girls to serve us. What more could one ask for?

Russian troops were in the process of moving out of Prague; in fact, moving out of all Czechoslovakia. And about a week later, our Army moved out also. Russian troops were popular as liberators, but the longer they stayed, the less they were appreciated. They evidently overdid the "com zee, com zaw" bit.

Stories were legend about German atrocities committed in Prague, particularly during the revolt staged by Czechs in the city during closing days of the war. The revolt succeeded in holding the Germans within the city until the Russian Army was able to encircle them and take them prisoners.

As in many another countries, young people were restlessly seeking change in their lives. Probably no other time in modern history has seen so many desperate young people. They were no longer satisfied with life as personified in their country. Their dream was of America, where

they hoped to land someday. Young girls employed all their wily charms on American soldiers, longing to marry one and become an American citizen.

All one could do was to pity them.

UNFORTUNATE DEATH OF OUR COMPANY COMMANDER LT. PAUL J. CARLSON

L Company was advancing rapidly against slight resistance from enemy troops on the morning of Feb. 24, 1945. We had the Germans on the run and by midday, we had moved deep into enemy territory around Enzen, Germany. Since our forward progress was far greater than originally planned, we were dug in well within bombing range of German planes, as well as our own bombers ranging into the enemy-held territory.

Our dug-in position was on a high wooded ridge overlooking an open valley. All of a sudden, in an instantaneous flash that lasted no longer than the blink of an eye, bombers were over our heads, with their machine guns blazing—four, possibly six planes, flying in close formation.

Before I had time to realize what was happening, a glob of mud landed in my lap, kicked up by the line of machine gun bullets that passed just alongside of my foxhole, and crossed the next one, from which I heard a low, moaning cry.

I was aware of the fact our Company Commander, Lt. Paul J. Carlson and his First Sergeant, occupied that position, and it was the Lt. who took a direct hit, killing him almost instantly.

Whenever death struck that close, which, by the way, was quite often, as I saw men squirming in death throes next to me, men killed by flying shrapnel, or saw them blown into the air by exploding shells, with their bodies torn asunder, I had to wonder about the wiles of Fate and what seemed to be protecting me.

The air attack was so sudden it left me uncertain if it was German or American planes that strafed us. Consensus of opinion later established that it was definitely our own planes whose pilots mistook us for the enemy, because of our over-extended position.

Dug in on the high ridge, so far advanced into enemy territory made us fair targets for either country's bombers. Sometime later, after the war ended, I answered an appeal published in "Stars and Stripes" that listed Lt. Carlson under "Deaths in the ETO," and requested officers or enlisted men who knew the Lt. to contact his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Carlson, in Stratford, Conn.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention that during this particular stage of the war, C.O.s commanding rifle companies on the front lines appeared and disappeared quite rapidly, and there was not time nor the opportunity to develop the kind of comradery with Lt. Carlson we were accustomed to with previous C.O.s, like our long-time Commander, Lt. Miles W. Smith, "Smitty" to most of us, an officer and leader we could tease and joke with, and one you could expect to laugh and joke in return.

It became my sad mission, through correspondence, to describe to Lt. Carlson's parents the unfortunate circumstances surrounding his death.

MY FIRST TRIP TO PARIS

Any of the men who went into Wilwerwiltz with the 317th Infantry Regiment will tell you it was plenty hot up there. We were moving towards town along the main highway and had just crossed some high ground when all hell broke loose. The Germans had the hill zeroed in with 88s—an advantage a retreating army always has—and threw everything at us, except Hitler's sink. Our mission was to move into town and clean it out, as the entire battalion was on the move behind us.

We dug in as best we could while our Tiger Patrol, along with the Battalion "Iron R Patrol," felt out the enemy's strength and exact location. These two patrols were honest-to-gosh daredevil outfits that penetrated behind enemy lines to carry out scouting work. The moon was shining brightly on new fallen snow. Our patrols, dressed in white snow capes, would slip by us unnoticed, unless one was on a sharp lookout for them. Dressed to blend in with the snow allowed them to penetrate enemy territory. Throughout the night, one patrol would relieve another, sometimes with conflicting reports, as enemy troops shifted positions in preparing for the attack.

Phil and I took cover alongside a disabled tank, on the crest of a hill, while the Heinies dropped mortars and Screaming Meemies at us. Orders were to hold the hill. And since L Company provided the lead point of this attack, we were catching the brunt of the artillery fire, which proved so intense throughout the next 24 hours no one could reach us with hot food or water while rations we had soon began to run out. Under such circumstances, cold weather, the usual subject for bitching, was soon forgotten.

The next morning, just as we were preparing to jump off into an attack, of all the unexpected things to happen, I was called back by a runner from headquarters who said, "Sarge wants to see you."

"What for?" I asked.

"You're going to Paris on pass," he replied.

You could have knocked me over with a wet noodle. How could the course of events change so suddenly, from one extreme of bitter suffering to one of promised enjoyment?

What a contrast and how unexpectedly it occurred.

I started to work my way down the line, from one company to another. Casualties and the wreckage of battle, both men and the farm animals, could be seen everywhere. Medics were assisting men along the road waiting for ambulances that were busy transporting wounded men back to the Aid Station.

Back at the Clearing Station, where scattered artillery fire was still landing and reducing to rubble what our own planes and artillery left untouched, I ate my first warm meal of the week. And what a meal it was, for I was literally famished.

I went through the chow line three times, taking a full helping of everything available, then finished off the meal with a piece of bread and marmalade. I believe that was the biggest meal I ate in all my army days.

At the Clearing Station, I met fifteen other lucky men from various outfits who were also headed for Paris. We all were issued the first change of clothing we had in months, took showers, shaved and prepared for the truck scheduled to pick us up at midnight.

The ride to Paris, by way of Metz and Verdun, was the coldest ride I ever endured in all my life. Each of us took along two blankets to help ward off the cold, but nevertheless, the 13-hour ride was nothing short of uncomfortable.

Along our route we traveled on some of the roads over which Patton's armored units chased the Germans across France, and it sure looked like the aftermath of a gigantic rout. Both sides of the roads were strewn with the wreckage of every conceivable type of vehicle the Germans used in hastening their retreat.

Upon arrival in the grand city, we were assigned to one of the nicest hotels in the entire city, located only about six blocks from the famous Opera House.

"Great gobs of horse manure!" as my Kentucky ridge-runner buddy Andy would say, "What a sight!" There were bright lights, beds with white sheets, and perfumes in the bathroom. Peace and quiet was still a way of life here.

We were paired off two men to a room, with steam heat, warm water, elevator service and delicious meals, served in a mirror-walled dining room. There were pretty waitresses, an orchestra during the midday meal, and a string ensemble at suppertime. Throughout the evening and night time, coffee and doughnuts were available at all times. And to a tired doughboy, the lounge was a dream.

The only means of transportation in Paris available to GIs was the subway, or "Metro," as it was commonly known; and you can imagine how crowded it could be in wartime.

Every second station had been eliminated in order to speed up the trains, which made the stations that were operating twice as crowded. If I went into the subway during the hours four to six p.m. when Parisians were returning home from work, I would find the passageways leading to the trains jammed solid all the way back to the exits, and the operator at the gate would let just enough people through to fill the cars as they arrived. Sweating out one of these jams was enough to make a saint curse.

French names, I discovered, are deceiving at best. They may sound simple to remember when first heard, but they are just as easily forgotten. The most reliable way to get where I wanted to go was to write down the names of the stations at which I would change trains, then check the wall map in the car immediately upon entering to be sure of traveling in the right direction.

Facilities provided for our convenience in the city included "Rainbow Corner," a soldier's day-room duked out in magnificent style. Here, in addition to a lounging area with food

and drinks served, information of all kinds, and a GI orchestra for dancing. One could obtain free tickets for practically any current entertainment in the city, except for the opera and Follies. Special arrangements had to be made to secure tickets for those two events.

At the Finance Office, one could exchange money. Windows at which German marks and French francs could be exchanged were always busy, since most visiting doughboys had beaucoups of German marks relieved from captured prisoners.

At the American Express Company a bevy of smiling French girls, each speaking fairly good English, wrapped our souvenirs and gifts to send home. I had brought along, of all things, but nevertheless, a souvenir I prized highly, an elephant tusk about two feet long, with hand-carved Egyptian figures all over it, which represented a tremendous effort on the part of some artist's skill and patience.

Some of my co-patriots brought along their captured Lugers and P.38s which could be sold to rear echelon troops for as much as $100 each. My own collection of German, Italian, French, and Belgium pistols was one of my prized war possessions, consisting of 23 pistols and 13 rifles of various origin, sent home by means of special techniques available only to front line soldiers. Included in my collection are one Yugoslav pistol, German dueling pistols and army weapons, a matched set of old muzzle loaders, and a German pistol so old it appears to be all handmade. My collection also has a number of German and French daggers and swords; some ancient, some modern.

At the Paris PX, one could buy perfumes and other gifts for reasonable prices, compared to the outrageous prices asked in Paris stores. Shopping districts were overrun with stores dealing exclusively in perfumes. I entered one in which the saleslady began spraying different brands at me, in hopes of making a sale.

How could I possibly draw a comparison between this kind of life and what I had just been experiencing up on the lines? It was downright laughable.

Wherever I turned, black market operators hounded me for cigarettes, clothing, gold, or anything a soldier on pass had to sell. My biggest surprise was the number of Moroccan black marketers operating on Paris streets. It was easy to comprehend why there were also so many US Army AWOLs. Rackets of all kinds flourished profusely. Parisians had plenty of money and were willing to pay high prices for whatever they wanted, food and cigarettes especially.

Scarcity of coal and other fuels in the city had people freezing in their homes and workplaces. I noticed previously that around the coal mining district of Metz, the railroads were being repaired before anything else, in order to get coal into the city.

In one store where I shopped, which, like all the others, was cold as an icebox, the saleslady dressed as if she was prepared to board a ski train for some far off winter sport resort, displayed knit and crochet goods over her ice cold glass counter all day long.

Fortunately, I was able to enjoy an evening at the opera. Another afternoon, I went on a tour of the city in an old coal-powered bus.

No one was allowed a ride to the top of the Eifel Tower, since our army had taken it over for broadcasting purposes.

Many of the most famous paintings and works of art were missing from the museums, but have probably been repossessed by now from German looters.

Paris, in general, did not show much sign of war damage. Many of the outlying sections, however, were totally destroyed.

My short, but pleasant interlude, ended all too quickly, and a few days later I was back on the fighting front, immersed in the worst kind of hell on earth imaginable.

ON THE FRENCH RIVIERA

Early in Dec. 1945, I drew a pass to the French Riviera—land of warmth and sunshine it really is.

During my ten days on the Riviera, rarely could a cloud be found in the sky. The evenings however, were quite cool. Anything remotely resembling a freeze is unknown here. Groves of orange trees were heavily laden with ripe fruit. What a beautiful sight to behold! Even one of the main boulevards was lined with orange trees sparkling with ripe oranges.

Traveling along the Corniche Road, on the way to Monte Carlo—once an old Roman highway—we passed through a small town located on an inland bay that was even warmer than the surrounding country. It is known as "Little Africa." Bananas ripen in this town.

In another area we observed an old olive tree growing along the highway, reputed to be 1000 years old and still bearing fruit.

Most GIs fortunate to be visiting the Riviera stayed in Nice, where our Army was using about a dozen of the larger hotels for housing. A Red Cross Casino Club was operating in a four million dollar building, said to be owned by a rich American.

Every type of service a soldier might desire was available at the Club, including an ice cream and pop bar and a cablegram office for sending messages home.

Stateside entertainment groups invariably included the French Riviera on their playbill. Each hotel housing GIs had its own orchestra and floor show performing nightly. There was probably more variety of entertainment here than anywhere in Europe.

Tennis courts were available to us, with a famous American tennis star on hand to instruct. Bicycling along the wide promenade was a pleasant pastime. Football games were featured on Saturdays, and a golf course beckoned just outside city limits.

During the course of my stay, I made two trips to Monte Carlo, one by boat and one by bus. The highway leading to this gambling haven skirts steep mountain cliffs, affording a beautiful view of the Mediterranean Sea and its picturesque bays and harbors all along the route.

No visitors were allowed in the gambling rooms, nor were American soldiers allowed to gamble there. We made up it however, gambling on the boat that took us there. Crap games were going hot and heavy in every corner of the boat, while beautiful dance music went to waste.

La France Boating Club was our destination one day, where we enjoyed an afternoon of volleyball and maneuvering along the seacoast in paddle boats.

GI tours were conducted daily to all points of interest within a radius of about fifty miles of Nice. A tour of the city and the mountains along the coastline was outstanding. We stopped to sample wine in a quaint little village that thrived on its wind industry. Vineyards surrounding this town reminded me of the Moselle Valley in Germany, where they stretched over the mountains far as the eye could reach.

Choice vantage points along the coast, offering the most spectacular views, were taken over by American movie stars and millionaires from many countries, on which they built their villas.

In Grasse, we toured two of their main perfume factories and observed the process of perfume manufacturing. Most perfume was being made from rose and orange petals that grew abundantly in the surrounding country.

It takes thousands of pounds of petals to produce a small amount of "essence'' from which perfume is made, we were informed.

Anyone shopping for perfume to send home had a better chance of latching onto the real McCoy here than in Paris, where the market was flooded with all kinds of blends and imitations.

Despite occupation of this coastline by both the German and Italian armies during various periods of the war, damage was surprisingly minimal, both in the town and along the coast. Only one large building on the waterfront, the gambling casino, built off shore, was completely leveled. A few iron posts reaching above the water line was all that remained.

What reason the Germans had for destroying this beautiful casino is just another of the mysteries of the cruel German mind.

As most everywhere in Europe, food here was at a premium. Gift items in the shops were priced four or five times above their normal value.

Ritzy hotels and apartments along the seashore were filled with old people accustomed to a life of ease. When it warmed up in the morning, one could observe them winding their way slowly to the seafront benches where they would while away the time, reading or knitting, until the sun began to fade and it cooled again. A few days were warm enough to entice swimmers into the water.

After ten days of fun and relaxation here, returning to the rain, snow, and chill winds of Munich was anything but appealing.

GERMAN WAR PROPAGANDA

Much could be written about the German propaganda machine. The full gambit, from Goebbels' preaching to the German people to what we actually encountered on the battlefield.

The picture presented by this top Nazi was as weird as it was false. Actual truths were so deliberately falsified that when we read what was alleged to be an accurate portrait, we simply laughed or got mad. But twelve years of incessant pounding on the same theme succeeded in instilling in the German mind a thoroughly warped and dangerous picture.

We were said to be "mongrels of all races," employing Negroes and Indians to do our fighting.

We were supposed to be "gangsters with daggers, bibles, and colts under our armpits, and fake money in our pockets, brutal against defenseless people, and cowardly when encountering equal strength."

According to German propaganda, we were "lacking in courage and physical stamina."

We were "arrogant, brutal, drunkards."

We were "immoral and mercenary, and had no regard for European culture or International Law."

Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung of Oct. 14, 1944, wrote: "The Americans are the kind to storm, attacking into machine gun fire out of a sense of duty, and moved by inner convictions. They are tank-shy and cannot stand drum fire. Taken individually, we Germans are sky-high superior to them. Under German defense barrage, they need the superabundance of their material at each step. The Infantryman will not attack without being covered by tanks. Tanks do not like to advance without being covered by infantry and fighter planes. And it is the artillery which has first of all, for both of them, to create the conditions for their success. Without artillery backing, sacrifice of a single man seems senseless to them. This makes the difference between their attack and our struggle which is dominated by the determination to defend our home."

The Germans may not have known it, but this strategy was definitely the best way to attack them. I know from personal experience that two of the worse defeats our company absorbed were due to lack of artillery support when we needed it. With artillery support to call upon to soften up position its known the enemy is occupying, you have it made in the shade, so to speak. And the forward artillery observer is the best man to have on the team.

PROPAGANDA LEAFLETS

German planes often showered propaganda leaflets along the battle lines. I remember picking up one with a picture on it showing a large cemetery where American soldiers are buried. The inscription read, “Is it better to surrender or join your buddies here?”

Another one showed a list of figures indicating the big money war workers were making in the States, compared to a soldier’s pay.

“Is it worth fighting for?” it asked in big bold type. This particular leaflet came in a series of ten, and when held up to a light each showed a picture of a man fondling a bare-breasted woman.

Though German propaganda leaflets were many and varied, most of them propounded this same theme, aimed apparently at breaking the morale of our soldiers.

During the night, if we were dug in close to their lines, they resorted to another trick—serenading us over loud speakers, with music and songs about “who is sleeping with your wife tonight?” and similar insinuating remarks.

Loud speakers would respond with orders to the Germans to “disarm and surrender—you will not be shot.”

Success was generally on our side.

SLOVENE REFUGEES IN GERMANY

One of the worse crimes Germany committed against people from subjugated countries, was to force hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children into slave labor camps.

Along the way, I became acquainted with many of the Yugoslavs, Poles, Jews, and even Moroccans—fleetingly, in most instances, as we fought through the towns.

In every German town whose factories were grinding out war goods, one could spot the poorly-constructed barracks of the workers, enclosed by barbed wire fences.

In the city of Nurnberg, barracks were located about seven kilometers from the factories. About a half dozen Slovene women refugee workers from Gorica I met here told me they had to get up at 3:30 a.m. to get to work on time. Tardiness was severely punished. Sickness, except in extreme cases, was not an acceptable excuse. Seven days a week, twelve hours a day, these unfortunate people had to toe the line for their German captors, existing on a diet you wouldn't feed your dog. Their living quarters were miserable beyond description. Drinking water came from a single tap, located outdoors. Toilet facilities consisted of nothing more than the common outhouse.

I enjoyed an evening visit with the Slovenes from Gorica before we moved out of the city. Their names and addresses remain listed in my diary. As it has often been stated, it's an ill wind that blows no good. In this instance, living on the outskirts of town, they escaped the terrific bombing that made rubble of much of the city.

It took a great deal of maneuvering for our Army vehicles to find a passage through Nurnberg. Slovene refugees told me that the day the Americans took Nurnberg was the happiest day of their lives—their Day of Liberation.

"We had been waiting and waiting for you Americans," they kept reiterating joyfully. "You were our only hope."

As we moved from city to city, town to town, time permitting, I made it a point to visit these camps, or "logars" as they were called, to talk to Slovenes, Croatians, and Serbs I found living there, among Russian, Ukrainian, and Polish refugees.

It was surprising how quickly one versed in the Slovene language acquired enough Russian or Polish words to enable carrying on a somewhat disjointed conversation with them. I learned a smattering of German as the war progressed, particularly after hostilities ceased. And it may have a strange ring to it now, but one of the first phrases most of us I earned was "Kommen sie out!" which we used when clearing out houses, immediately after we took a town. Moving alongside of the houses, we could shout the phrase as loud as we could and, if we didn't hear the word, "Comrade!" and no one marched out with hands overhead, we would toss a grenade inside, just to make sure we were not leaving a sniper behind to pick us off as we dashed from house to house. Every house had to be checked before we could feel safe in the town.

Just about every farmer in Germany had two or three confiscated laborers working for him. Observing farmlands across the country, it became apparent all land was well cultivated, despite the raging war and its demands on all available German manpower.

Whereas factory workers were paid one mark per day, farm workers were forced to work mainly for their keep. However, farm workers had an added advantage in that they at least had access to more food than the factory worker.

Noticeably, in the larger cities, the better looking Polish, Russian, and Slovene girls worked as domestics. From them, I generally learned of the locations of the "kaserne." If it was too far to walk, a bicycle would do.

I recall a strange tale told by my father-in-law about a strong wine he and his Sunday afternoon colleagues drank, somewhere along the Mediterranean coast, that was so strong it colored the perspiration oozing from their backs as they peddled their bicycles back home. Well, I thought, some of the wine these Russian refugees offered us could easily produce the same reaction. How they could drink the stuff and still be alive was beyond my comprehension.

On our eastward advance across France, Germany, and Austria, we raided dozens of wine cellars, but nothing was as potent as the Russian's offering.

Some of the German wine cellars were located three stories underground. In one town, our kitchen was set up on the first floor of a building, just above a well-stocked wine cellar, convenient as a mechanical waiter, and as handy to get a slug.

In Bavaria and Austria, some of the homes we entered were well-stocked with liquors and preserved foods German soldiers looted in Holland, Belgium, and other countries and sent home.

I met a Slovene man in the town of Erfurt one afternoon as we were cleaning out the last of the snipers in town. He told me he was from Ljubljana, which was all I could find out about him under the circumstances. Enemy guns were blasting from the factories where these refugees were employed. We finally silenced them, along with others firing from underground passageways connecting the factories and, as we marched the captured troops down the street to our command headquarters, the workers went wild with joy. We could not constrain them from throwing rocks at the prisoners, or sneaking up behind them and presenting their former bosses with a kick in the pants.

During the next twenty-four hours, while we were busy cleaning out the rest of the town, the half-starved refugees went on a wild rampage in search of food. They broke into some large warehouses stocked with food intended for the German army. All afternoon and into the night, they hauled food out of the warehouses. What a liberation party they made of it! Every available cart and wagon was pressed into service. A man would be pulling a cart loaded with boxes of preserves, while carrying a half-hog carcass on his shoulder. Another would be rolling along a huge wheel of cheese, as large as an automobile tire. Everyone, it seemed, in their haste was carrying more than they could handle, and kept dropping the food along the road.

It was really a tragi-comedy to behold.

About the time our Company Commander decided to post a guard on the place, most of the food had been carted away and hid in refugee quarters. In my mind's eye, I could visualize them dining as they hadn't been able to during the past four years.

The Slovene from Ljubljana was caught up in the madness at the warehouse and, under the circumstances, it would have been inconsiderate to detain him any longer than I did, even though we both had much to say to each other.

We moved on before I was able to visit him at the barracks.

Whenever I met people of Slovene extraction and addressed them in their native tongue, their response was ecstatic and filled with joy and happiness to meet me. They would follow me around to savor my every word.

In Vocklabruck, I went into their barracks located near a factory where conscripted laborers were manufacturing leather jackets for German submariners. On the main wall of their dining hall hung a huge color portrait of Hitler. Following my first impulse, I sent it crashing to the floor with one full swipe of a metal chair, then reduced it to smithereens with the butt of my rifle.

Pandemonium broke loose among the refugees. Whooping, cheering, and trying to shake the hand of their new-found American hero. All of their pent-up emotions suddenly broke loose in unbelievable joy and happiness.

Underlying their overwhelming emotions expressed at the scene they had just witnessed however, I could detect emotions of fear and disbelief this could have happened in their barracks.

One of the leather jackets the refugees offered me still hangs on a peg in my garage, right where it landed the day it arrived. Another wartime souvenir.

LAST DAYS IN THE ARMY

My last days in the Army had to do with performing duties in the Adjutant's Office of our regiment, preparing it for repatriation to the States. GIs with enough points earned to return home were coming in from all areas of Germany as the regiment was being brought to full strength.

Naturally, all this activity entailed a mountain of paper work on the part of the Adjutant's Office, so the call for help was broadcast. Anyone with typing or clerical experience was requested to come forward.

The old saying was, don't volunteer for anything in the army. It was considered a grave error, but in this case, notwithstanding the above, I did volunteer, because I really enjoyed this type of work and was glad to get back to it.

Typing, along with general office work and bookkeeping, was my forte, dating back to the time I was editing the English page of the Slovene Labor newspaper "Proletarian" and assisting in managing the publication. Therefore, preparing copy, cutting stencils, and running copies off on a mimeograph machine was old sock for me. In those times, the present day copying machines were not even invented yet.

For rapid distribution of the latest communiques to all company headquarters—some located in our base city while others were scattered throughout surrounding villages—I had a jeep and driver at my disposal on instant command.

On evenings when there was no great excitement in town, I found myself working in the office. Particularly during a time when the office was struggling with an unruly mimeograph machine while a brand new machine was idling in its crate, simply because no one was willing to tackle the job of assembling it and getting it into operation. This was another category of work that came to me quite naturally, and I soon had it in working shape, to the delight of everyone in the crew.

I'm quite sure the officer in charge fully appreciated my ability and willingness to get on with the busy work schedule, as he had my name on top of the very first list that was sent out for promotions. And I had a very positive feeling more of the same would come my way had we remained in the area very long.

EPILOGUE

Our company crossed the Rhine River in landing barges at Mainz. I shall never forget the night before we crossed. We were billeted in a section of the city farthest from the river, with shells landing around us all night. I don't believe anyone slept a wink, for every time we heard a burst of shells, we thought of some group of our buddies getting blasted as they attempted the crossing.

In the morning, we made a quick march through town, down to the river where the Navy did a terrific job of getting us across in record time.

Theirs was a grim, sad task, returning with casualties and wounded after each crossing.

Through three major battles I survived every eventuality: in the Battle of the Bulge, Farebersviller, and at "Bloody Knob," near Ettelbruck, Luxembourg.

In Farebersviller 21 of us—about all that was left of our company—just barely escaped being captured in a counter-attack by the Germans at night, after we had battled all day and finally took the town. We were hidden in a keller where, at one time, it seemed this last remnant of us was also doomed. Enemy troops tossed concussion grenades into the building on the ground floor, then proceeded to capture what was left of our C.P. But in their haste to get out of town, overlooked us hid in the basement.

In another chapter I have described this event in greater detail.

My 1945 Christmas Day was spent on "Bloody Knob," a day I shall never forget. My squad leader, a swell guy and an indefatigable leader, and I were the only two left out of a squad of twenty men, which turned out to be about the average loss for the entire company. During this battle, we were wearing camouflage white uniforms and had finally been provided with waterproof overshoes. Without them, it was impossible to keep our feet dry. We wore our wet socks to bed, hoping they would dry out under covers.

What a beastly way to live—comparable to the forest animals, except that animals were more comfortable in their burrows than we were in our foxholes.

Any semblance of cleanliness was virtually impossible. At times, I felt so grimy with accumulated dirt, beard, and long hair I could have easily been mistaken for a black man.

On a bleak winter day, a jeep appeared in front of our dug-in position loaded with fresh clothing, including underwear, socks, shirts, and blankets. It was one of a number of occasions when I froze my butt off changing underwear in a foxhole. But change I did, since what I was wearing had been on my body for a month.

Sloshing through a sea of ankle-deep gooey mud that covered Omaha Beach practically ruined our footwear in the week we were camped there, before we issued water-proof overshoes.

Sometimes we were able to dig a fairly cozy foxhole or occupy one the German had abandoned. It could be up to four feet deep, depending on the length of time we had, and the

hardness of the ground. If we stayed in the same hole for a day or two, a roof of twigs and branches was added, along with a layer of dry grass or straw under our blankets. And incredible as it may sound, it was a good feeling to be dug in, out of reach of the howling blizzards.

At times, one could not avoid dropping off into periods of depression… a feeling of being overwhelmed by all the shooting and killing… the incredible sensation that civilized people could become so efficient at destroying each other… the hardships, suffering and atrocities. Sometimes one felt incapable of taking any more of the carnage, and didn't care if there was any future, until one remembered loved ones at home.

The most experienced soldier cannot recreate a true picture of the horrors of war. Instead, phony TV productions hold center stage.

Those who experienced it would rather forget it. Describing it chokes one up inside and words seem inadequate.

In the final analysis, were any problems settled with all the blood-letting, horror and carnage? Or did it just add new wounds and hatred to man's overburdened suffering?

ARMY SERVICE RECORD AND FRONT LINE DUTY
of
Joseph Drasler

Induction - April 8, 1944, at Fort Logan, Colorado.
Separation - May 4, 1946, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.
Basic Training - camp Fannin, Tyler, Texas.
Overseas service - 18 months.

During six months on the front lines as an infantryman in the 317th Infantry Regiment, L Company, 80th Division, Third US Army, extending from November 8, 1944 to May 20, 1945, I fought in three major campaigns across the countries of France, Germany, and Austria.

The three campaigns were:

1. ARDENNES. Which included the capture of the key city of Metz, France, and the drive through the Saar basin towards the Siegfried Line - November 8 to December 18, 1944.

When this operation ended, Third Army had made extensive preparations and stood ready for an all-out attack to pierce the Siegfried Line, after having made penetrations into the Line at several points. This planned offensive never materialized because of the enemy's large-scale ARDENNES offensive in First US Army's zone.

The Bastogne-St. Vith campaign and the Battle of the Bulge followed on December 19, 1944 to January 28, 1945.

2. RHINELAND. Eifel to the Rhine and the capture of Trier, January 29 to March 12, 1945.

3. CENTRAL EUROPE. The capture of Koblenz and the Palatinate campaign March 13 to March 21, 1945. Crossing the Rhine, Frankfurt on Mainz, and crossing the Mulde, March 22 to April 21, 1945. Crossing the Danube and entering Austria, April 22 to May 20, 1945.

Which Campaign Was The Worse - If There Could Be Such?

Of the three, the Bastogne-St. Vith, also known as the ARDENNES Campaign, was by far the bloodiest.

Just before the Battle of the Bulge began, we were undergoing practice maneuvers; special training, really, for attacking and destroying pillboxes, combining artillery, rifle and machine gun fire for cover, enabling men carrying flame throwers and explosives, to get in position to do their jobs.

The 317th was ready for an all-out attack to pierce the Siegfried Line after having made penetration into the Line at several points. This planned offensive never materialized because of the enemy large-scale ARDENNES offensive in First US Army's zone.

Tribute to the 80th's stamina was expressed by a leading newspaper in these words: "The 80th Division performed a feat as remarkable as any of Stonewall Jackson's foot cavalry. It was ready to go into the fighting line south of Saarbrucken when orders came to go northward, and it went 150 miles swiftly to get into action."

This campaign, known popularly as the "ARDENNES Campaign", or as the "Battle of the Bulge," was without doubt the most concentrated and bloodiest operation of the Third US Army during the European War. The full weight of both the American First and Third US Armies, plus a good deal of the strength of the British Second Army were thrown into the fighting which was highlighted by the historic stand of the 101st Airborne Division and its attached armored units in the city of Bastogne.

Much has been written on the tactics and heroism which comprised this operation. No short summarization is possible. Every inch of ground was seriously contested. Third US Army's change of zone and lightning troop movements form one of the most important parts of the campaign. Losses of the Army which were the highest of any operation in which the Army participated, consisted of 4,796 killed, 22,109 wounded and 5,319 missing.

The enemy lost an estimated 32,000 killed and 88,600 wounded, while 23,218 prisoners were taken.

Nazis had been ordered to die at their posts. Men of the 80th did everything possible to help them fulfill their order.

During the month of August 1944, the 80th Infantry Division had gone through a period of terrific battle, smashing the enemy back in one successful operation after another. It seized Chalons-sur-Marne and Bar-le-Duc, routing the Germans from their stronghold west and north of the Moselle from Toul to Pont-a-Mousson, and then crossed and established a vital bridgehead over the Moselle River, which it had secured, defended, and enlarged against vigorous enemy counter-attacks.

When I joined its 317th Infantry Regiment as a rifleman, sporting a sharpshooter's badge earned on the practice field at Camp Fannin, Texas, the 80th was holding a defensive position west of the Seille River and preparing for the great Third Army sweep into the industrially vital Saar Basin. Supplies, ammunition, and gasoline were all massed for the mighty drive.

A bombardment of savage intensity by all available weapons, including captured German 81mm and 120mm mortars repaired by the 780th Ordinance Co., heralded the jump-off of Blue Ridge men on Nov. 8. The enemy was caught off-balance, not expecting the doughs would attack in such unfavorable weather, with the Seille River at flood stage.

On the following day, the 80th pushed forward, stampeding all opposition in an attempt to secure Delme Ridge, a bald plateau 1,380 feet above sea level, approximately four miles long and sitting squarely across the pathway to the Saar Basin. Capture of Delme Ridge was one of the most important objectives of Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's attack and just had to be taken if the Metz-Nancy line were to be straightened.

By the middle of the day, the 319th Infantry Regiment, supported by tanks and a devastating artillery barrage, had swept over the bitterly resisting Nazis entrenched on the forward slopes and were storming up the critical heights of the ridge.

Despite the arrival of German SS troops to stem the advance, the 318th cleared the remainder of the ridge the following morning. The 80th continued the drive to the northeast, and the German rout shifted into high gear.

On Nov. 11, a battalion of the 317th rushed the bridge across the Nied-Francaise River, seized it intact, allowing the 317 Regiment and the 6th Armored Division to outflank the great fortress of Metz and open the way for its capture.

Despite heavy artillery and mortar fire, demolitions and road blocks, the 80th plunged across the Nied-Allemande River to roll back a badly shaken enemy from the important mining town of Faulquemont.

Before the Blue Ridge men lay the “invincible” Maginot Line. Its forts were being used as CPs, supply centers and troop shelters by defending Germans. Field fortifications were prepared around these strongpoints.

Early Nov. 25, men of the 80th, under cover of an artillery barrage, ripped into the attack. Using 90mm self-propelled guns to shatter the reinforced pillboxes, men of the 80th smashed completely through the Maginot Line and ploughed forward to capture the key city of St. Avold, a one-time German Army Headquarters and a coal center for the Nazi war machine.

Farebersviller, Tenteling, and Cocheren were next to fall.

The drive of more than 40 miles beyond the Seille River was carried out despite swollen rivers, flooded fields, constantly adverse weather conditions. More than 4000 prisoners were taken in less than a month.

Before they were relieved by the 6th Armored Division, leading elements of the 80th penetrated the German frontier less than five miles from Saarbrucken before going into a rest period and after being in continuous contact with the enemy for 102 days.

The race to the rescue at Bastogne and the final overwhelming of the enemy was to follow.

I served as rifleman in three major campaigns, namely: Ardennes, Rhineland, and Central Europe. All my war time was with the Third Army, 80th Infantry Division, 317th Regiment, L Company.

My first initiation into the front lines happened at Nancy, France. From thence on, we continued the fighting through France, Germany, and Bavaria, first experiencing the unfortunate tides of war in the loss of half of our company in the battle of Farebersviller. And then getting absorbed into the Battle of the Bulge, defending the area around Niederfeulen, just south of Bastogne, again encountering misfortune, when our company was wiped out almost to a man.

I was one of the fortunate five men left in our company when that fierce battle ended. And although my six months on the front lines with Gen. Patton was a constant scenario of battles and skirmishes, these two battles, Farebersviller and Bastogne, will forever remain inscribed in my memory as “struggles to the death.”

At the end of the war, the 317th Regiment was deep into the Austrian Alps, in hot pursuit of the last German SS troopers escaping into that area.

We were in Spital when we heard the good news.

Throughout my army days, despite the rigors of frontline duty, through thick and thin, I always managed time to jot a few words down in my diary.

And I am now glad I did.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Drasler was born in Forest City, Pennsylvania and now resides in Denver, Colorado. Fourth in a family of eight children, he worked in the area coal mines during school vacations and after graduating from High School.

His first short stories dealing with hunting, fishing and trapping adventures, were published in sports magazines such as Fur-Fish-Game, and Outdoors.

In 1941, he left his hometown to accept a position as assistant editor of *Proletarec* (Proletarian), a Slovene labor newspaper published in Chicago, Ill. After serving overseas in the Army during World War II, he joined the machine trades and worked as a millwright until retirement.

Millwright occupation attracted him to such distant lands as Greenland and Alaska.

Throughout his life, he has been a regular contributor to *Prosveta* (Enlightenment), a Slovene fraternal society newspaper and to magazines such as "Voice of Youth" (S.N.P.J.) and "Homeland" (Rodna Gruda). Delving into the rich store of literary works of American-Slovene authors, he has found numerous stories, legends, folklore and historical writings suitable for translation into English.

Rummaging through old Slovene books, magazines, and newspapers, has been a very satisfying and enjoyable pastime. The enormous amount and variety of prose and poetry that flowed from the pens of Slovene writers following their arrival in America at the turn of the century and ever since, never ceased to amaze him.

His book, "Yugoslav People in Colorado," appeared in 1980, followed by "Yugoslav Fatalities in Colorado Coal Mines" in 1981. Two translations, "History of the Slovene National Benefit Society - 1904-23" and "Recollections of a Slovene-American Coal Miner," were published in the same period.

"Battlefield Diary" was published in 1987.

INDEX