

Aug 1, 2000

Luke,

Enclosed is a 40 page diary that I developed in 1946 from shorthand notes I kept in a small 3 x 5 German diary which I carried throughout, letters written home, and recollections while they were still fresh in my mind, covering the period from the time the 103rd left for overseas through the end of the war.

Assuming you don't already have access to it, I offer it for whatever use you might make. I was inducted in March 1943; had basic training with the 97th Inf Div at Camp Swift, outside of Bastrop; attended ASTP at Texas A & M for about 9 mos; and was transferred into the 103rd in March 1944.

My full name is Hallett Keith Brown; my highest rank was PFC; ASN-39410746; discharged on 19 Nov. 1945; born 6 March 1923 in Woodland WA; lived in and was inducted from Del Norte County CA; graduated from Univ. of Cincinnati in 1948; received CPA certificate from Oregon in 1950; employed by the Dept. of the Air Force for 27 years; and retired in 1980.

Feel free to use any of the enclosed material, and good luck with your endeavor

Sincerely,

*Hob*

Hallett K. Brown

P.S. The enclosed diary is now available on the Internet in its entirety at the following:

[www.eastmill.com/103rd/](http://www.eastmill.com/103rd/)  
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The 103rd Infantry (Cactus) Division left Camp Howze, Texas during the last half of September 1944. I, Hallet K. Brown, known as H. K., was a member of the 410th Infantry Regiment, 1st Battalion (Company D). Company D, a heavy weapons company, consisted of one mortar (81 mm) and two machine gun (.30 caliber) platoons. I was the first gunner, responsible for carrying the tripod and firing the gun, of the eighth squad (8 members), second section, second platoon.

The night before we left camp we slept in pup tents outside our barracks, since the barracks had been completely cleaned out and padlocked. We had been inspected over and over again and then once again right up to the time of departure. Immediately after lunch, 6 x 6 trucks began picking up our battalion for transport to the railroad. One GI from one of our rifle companies had not changed from his fatigues into his surtans. He was not going overseas, or so he said. He put up quite a struggle, but with the help of several MPs, his fatigues were taken off and he was dressed in his cotton uniform. He then played unconscious. He lay limp the whole time while being carried to the truck, and from there to the train. Finally, at the last minute an ambulance took him off the train and I suppose he never went with us.

We were assigned seats according to number and each seat was occupied by three men. It was a Pullman coach with two men in the lower and one in the upper. I shared my seat with Donald Hudson from Little Rock, Ark. (He was killed Nov. 29, 1944.) and Leonard Seatter from Cleveland, Ohio. Three nights on the road. What a trip. First, we backtracked to Fort Worth and from there northeast toward Arkansas and Tennessee. Next came North Carolina, Virginia, D. C., Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. Once a day we stopped for 20 minutes of calisthenics and close-order drill directly outside of whatever railroad station we were stopped at. Our rations were short and we were prevented from buying anything along the way. We passed through Memphis near J. C. Gentry's home in Shady Valley, Tenn. (He was killed Nov. 29, 1944.) Later we passed through Philadelphia, where William Parcell lived. (He was captured on Nov. 29, 1944.) To occupy ourselves, we played cards—almost every game imaginable, including bridge. TSgt Snyford, our platoon sergeant, Hudson, Lincoln Ng. (He was killed Nov. 29, 1944.) and myself were great domino fans—we played quite often at camp. On through New York City, north for about an hour until finally we arrived at Camp Shanks.

The weather was very cold but the food was excellent. The next 10 days were spent in getting ready for shipping over. Extra winter clothing and new equipment were issued. Everyone spent at least one full day on KP. I spent one night on guard duty with Frank Horejs. (He was killed Nov. 26, 1944.) All sorts of final processing and inspection. Over the side of mockup ships and down rope ladders to simulate submarine attack. During this period, everyone was given at least two 12-hour passes to New York City. The 30th of September was payday—everyone had a chance to spend it on a final pass. It was during my first pass that I stopped a policeman on the street in New York and asked him about a reputable jeweler. He suggested Macy's as both reputable and reasonable. I bought an engagement ring, had it engraved, and mailed it to Miss Marjorie Bouquain at Harrison, Ohio. Then, during my last pass, I telephoned her to find out if she had received it and how she liked it. Both D and C Companies had to furnish KPs aboard ship; therefore, I boarded early on the 3rd of October. The next evening the rest of the units were loaded and on the following morning we pulled out of New York harbor, past the Statue of Liberty, and headed south along the coast.

The troopship, Gen. J. R. Brooks, the flagship of the large convoy, was plowing along through the heavy swells of the Atlantic, somewhere off the coast of North Africa—that much we knew. It was a full two-week cruise. Our ship was flanked by several destroyers that all but disappeared each time they hit a large wave. On our right rear was a small aircraft carrier, upon which could be seen several outlines of planes lashed to the deck. The rest of the troop ships, as well as oil and supply ships, were strung out behind.

The convoy was eleven days out of New York and the monotony remained unbroken except for an occasional gun drill, fire drill, or submarine drill. Once the ship had lagged far behind the convoy for gunnery practice. Several large red balloons had been released and the multiple-barrelled .50 caliber machine guns had succeeded in hitting one. Soon the others were out of range; then the 40 mm antiaircraft guns went into action. Their accuracy looked very poor from my angle; the little puffs of smoke marking the explosion of the timed shells were hundreds of yards from the target. A strong wind soon blew the balloons well out of their range also. The J. R. Brooks then made a few sharp turns and headed back for the retreating convoy at full speed.

In the enlisted men's quarters on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th deck levels the air was stuffy, full of smoke, and reeking with the smell of sweat, garbage, and vomit. Since we were on KP the entire voyage, our quarters were on the 3rd level, directly below the kitchen. We were exempt from calisthenics and had been issued meal tickets which entitled us to early chow. What good were they? I had not eaten for 5 days. Several times I had stood in line, determined to try to get something down, only to get right up to the food being served before I had to quit the line for the main deck and fresh air. I didn't envy the fellows who had to work 6 to 8 hours every second day at the garbage disposal cans. In comparison, my job was easy. I had to help prepare the fresh vegetables every second day. This involved loading potatoes into an electric spud peeler, peeling turnips, cutting carrots or peeling onions. This took only about 4 hours out of every 48. I do remember once that we sort of went to sleep at the spud peeler. Before we thought to check on the potatoes, all we had left were about 20 round marble-sized bits.

Being on the night shift, I was allowed to sleep until 10 o'clock the following morning. Bunks consisted of four canvas affairs stretched on pipes. These bunks were stacked on top of each other. In addition to the person sleeping, the bunk contained a fully loaded duffle bag, full field pack, horseshoe roll, personal belongings, rifle belt, canteen, sidearm, and life jacket. Just like 4 sardines. My bunk was next to the floor and had to be tipped up each morning for cleaning the floor. The ventilation was very poor and the air was unbearably hot and stuffy. After dark the ship was closed tight for blackout reasons. I had received a package of cookies and a carton of Orbit chewing gum from Marj just before leaving New York. Because I was on the verge of seasickness the entire journey, I still associate the smell of Orbit (fruit) gum with that voyage.

Taking a shower was impractical because of the cold salt water. After the first day the Navy disconnected the faucets on the hot water. After that we all became unbearably smelly. One evening we found a pair of pliers among the knives in the kitchen. This we took to the shower room and, unnoticed, unscrewed the hot water faucets. We dared do this only in the early morning because of discovery. Hot salt water, although far from ideal, was one hell of a lot better than cold salt water for showering.

Recreation while on board was confined to card playing and reading. Red Dog in the mess hall was a popular game, before the night patrol ran us out. The classic form of recreation, however, was the old sea-bat in the bucket trick. A pail was filled about 2/3 full of water and covered with a towel. Sgt. Dominick Grusseld had the touch with recruiting participants. The pail was brought to a secluded part of the deck and some curious persons urged to bend over and peek under the towel for a good look at the sea-bat. He always straightened up quickly enough after a resounding whack on the seat of his pants with a flat board. Many officers as well as enlisted men were caught in this manner.

KPs were allowed on the stern of the ship to wash clothes. Twice I tied my dirty fatigues to ropes and dangled them in the water behind the propellers. I doubt if it ever did much cleaning but it was more or less a popular pastime. I read the book, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, one night between 9:00 PM and the following 5:00 AM. Pocket books were plentiful. My \$2 American green, the only money allowed upon boarding the ship, went to the Navy for a gallon of ice cream one evening while on KP.

The stairways (ladders) from one deck to the next were very hard to navigate during a rough sea. In going up, it was impossible to lift one's foot to the next step while the ship was being lifted out of the water by a large wave. One would literally be glued to the floor. As soon as the ship went down into the trough of a wave, a person would shoot up several steps at a time, then stop and wait until the ship went down again before gaining more ground. Going down stairs was entirely different. When the ship would rise, the steps seemed to come up and meet you. I could go down one whole flight of stairs while the ship was rising on the crest of a wave. When it started down, I couldn't seem to reach my foot far enough for the next step.

Our platoon leader (officer), Lt. Harry Geckler, seemed OK compared to the other officers. Company H was in charge of cleaning the decks. In one instance I remember Sgt. Brass, an ex-boxer, who was in charge of the detail, grabbing a medic from near the head of the chow line and threatening to hit him if he didn't grab a broom and help sweep. This effort was always preceded by the PA system blaring: "Now hear this; now hear this. Sweepers start your brooms; sweep fore and aft." It seemed that our air raid alerts always ended up with everyone on the top deck and our submarine alerts with everyone below deck; I would have thought just the opposite to be preferable.

On October 18 I was below deck when we passed through the Strait of Gibraltar. I did not see the coast of North Africa (French Morocco) when land was first sighted late in the afternoon. Several fellows said that the Rock could not be recognized since it was getting so dark. The evening before, two oil tankers had collided and one could be seen smoking.

The first evidence that we were in the Mediterranean Sea was the perfect calmness and smoothness of the water. The 19th of October was a beautiful day and we followed the African coast eastward before turning north. For a time the ship was plowing through absolutely smooth water as far as the eye could see—not a ripple or a wave—just like a mirror—completely smooth. The whole scene reminded me of the song "Rolling Down to Rio" although I don't know why. It seemed we were sailing on a sea of glass.

It must have been the calm before the storm. Sometime late that afternoon after we had turned more due-north, the sky clouded up and we hit our worst storm. It was terrible—everyone who didn't get seasick before, then got sick. Everyone was vomiting; the motion of the ship made eating, sleeping, reading or anything else impossible. The storm lasted until midmorning of the 20th of October. Rumors were flying; we were supposed to land late in the afternoon. When we sighted the coast of southern France, everyone was ready and willing to leave the ship.

We first sighted land east of Marseilles and after several hours of cruising west along the coast we were ordered below because of the blackout. We left the ship about 10:00 PM down the rope ladders into LCTs. These craft put us ashore on Callahan Beach west of Marseilles. Each man carried every bit of equipment except the duffle bag. That meant full field pack, horseshoe roll, gas mask, weapons and food. I carried a pistol, .45 cal., but no ammunition, and 3 K rations. Original instructions were to walk inland about 9 miles and camp for the night. We walked, mostly uphill, sometimes through villages, but mostly following high-power electric lines. At the first real stop I started eating the new breakfast K ration. The fruit bar was good. To make a long story short, we walked about 10 miles, part of the time in the rain. There were many large bonfires as far as one could see along the cleared area under the lines. My back was aching; several fellows dropped out. About 2:00 AM we dropped exhausted and curled up in our blankets. No one paid any attention to the rain. We weren't allowed to build fires; the enemy might see them! I slept soundly until daylight before shaken awake and told to get packed as we had quite a ways to go yet.

Our total walk was about 18 miles. About 10:00 AM on the 21st, we had been assigned our camp site. It was located on a bulldozed, wind-swept plateau outside of Marseilles. Orders were to line up pup tents and dig foxholes. I was soon to learn that a true foxhole was very rare. Actually it is a square hole about 4 or 5 feet deep and perhaps 2 to 3 feet on each side. Any hole big enough to get the better part of your body in was referred to as a foxhole; however, a slit trench, a shallow trench about 18 inches deep and long enough to accommodate the body was the usual thing. So we dug slit trenches in the clay alongside our tents. Also they had to be lined up straight; a beautiful setup for a strafing job. Sunny France! What a gross misstatement. The days were cool and the nights were downright freezing. I shared a tent with Pfc. Charles F. Carroll, my squad leader. We had 6 woolen blankets between us and the cold. We buttoned both ends of the pup tent and by neatly arranging everything inside the tent, managed to get inside and button ourselves in. There was only one problem; each of us on the average of 3 times a night had to get up and go to the latrine—the combination of the cold and sleeping on the ground did something to our bladders. What a mess, trying to get up, put shoes on and stumble the full length of the street in the dark to go to the bathroom—just a hole in the ground.

Guard had to be pulled on the kitchen and along the company street. Food was valuable because there was a shortage and everyone was hungry. The only guard I pulled was in the kitchen one night between 10:00 and 12:00. I ate bread and raisins because that's all I could find. Some days we had C rations—meat and vegetable stew, meat and beans, or hash. Gradually we began receiving B rations, still in cans, but a little more variety.

Our battalion was ordered to Marseilles to help unload ammunition from the ships. We loaded into trucks before daylight and traveled to town, arriving at the port just as it was light enough to see. My first contact

with the local population. Cigarettes were rare to the local economy and brought a good price in French Francs. Other supply ships were being unloaded. The French longshoremen would purposely drop a case of canned goods and there would be a scramble for the cans. I brought back a tin of corned beef, which incidentally I never got to eat, and 2 cans of peaches. I worked in the hold of an ammo ship, unloading 106 mm howitzer ammunition. We would load about 6 crates onto a platform and then attach a cable around it with the eye of the cable fastened to a hook, which in turn was pulled by a donkey engine. The cable slipped tight up around the load and the whole thing was hoisted out of the hold of the ship and directly into a DUWK on the dock. Larger, 155 mm ammo was handled a bit differently; 3-round clusters each were lifted by a nose ring. These rounds were somewhat larger than the standard 105 mm rounds which were fuel for the work horse of the field artillery. There were plenty of barrage balloons above the docks and although the whole area was one large mass, having been bombed several times by the Germans, 80 of the 120 berths were to be operational within the next 2 weeks.

Marseilles streets were full of outdoor latrines with a small sheet iron screen about waist high. In other words, about all that was screened was from the belly button to the knees. Urine ran into a small trough, down to the gutter, along the street, and from there to the sea. The GIs who served in the Port Battalion worked 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, and were subject to ambushing and hijacking.

Back at the staging area life went on much the same. We did go out to the firing range one day but there was no ammunition except pistol, so we had to walk all the way back. It was about a 6 mile round trip and with full combat equipment. I saved 7 pistol rounds just in case, although it was not allowed. I saw Carmen Carilli, a fellow who I went to school with at Texas A & M, along the road that day; he was attached to the Engineers. I did not attend any of the outdoor theaters, but rather spent much time writing letters. We were allotted one candle per tent, but this soon gave out. In order to get some light, we siphoned some kerosene from the stoves and made a makeshift lamp. It gave some light but soon blackened the inside of the tent so bad that we had to give up—it smoked us right out. I got a pass to Marseilles the Saturday after payday. Each man was allowed 250 Francs. Tucker (from Sherman, Texas) and I took several pictures but I was unable to get them developed. We ate doughnuts and coffee at the Red Cross for 5 Francs. I got a shave and haircut from a local French barber, but the shave was dry and felt like the hair was being pulled out. One cup of ersatz coffee was enough—roasted grain of some kind. And I had a taste of wine. I liked neither. I did not shave again until January. From November 4, 1944 to January 7, 1945 I shaved only under my neck and around my face enough to leave me an Abe Lincoln appearance. I saw Russ (Marj's brother who was in the Cannon Co. attached to the 411th) several times while we were in the staging area. Also I had a tooth filled.

We had two night problems also. Both were relieving a unit under cover of darkness. We did the relieving the first time and the two battalion commanders had a few hot words about who was making the most noise right at the time we were doing the relieving. "Get your unit the hell out of my way." was heard very loud and clear. Everything went OK except that Hudson dropped his helmet on a rock while unshouldering the machine gun. The umpire said, "You won't last two seconds in combat if you keep that up." During the other problem we had to dig the positions and be relieved. That had some compensation—we got back to camp earlier.

Then came the day to unpack and uncrate the equipment. I cut my finger rather badly on the machete and had to go to the field dispensary for bandaging. Everything had to be unwrapped from the waterproofing and cleaned. The T/O called for the 1st gunner to carry a .46 cal. automatic pistol. Attached to my pistol belt was supposed to be: a pistol in a holster, an ammunition pouch with two clips of ammunition, a wire cutter and case (for what I don't know), a machete (for what I don't know, except to cut my finger), a shovel (I was soon to find out what for), and a first-aid pouch. The bulk and weight were too much.

Before we left, it rained very hard. The whole camp was a washout. The lucky ones were on high ground. The bare clay soil soon became sticky and slippery. The slit trenches filled with water, as did all the elaborate drain ditches around each tent. Soon every bit of clothing and equipment was soaked. One whole day was spent in drying out the clothing and blankets. And then came Nov. 6, 1944 when the units began moving out. A funny thing—stateside we had to get rid of all white underclothes, handkerchiefs, and the like—too easy to spot by the enemy. However, most of the officers were conspicuously drying white undershirts, etc. The day was one of road marches, exercises or in some manner programmed and planned, "something to keep busy." Most of the other units had been issued shoe-paks—we still had shoes and leggings. Rumors were flying thick and fast. We were going to Brest or Bordeaux or one of the other seaports which were still occupied by the Germans. Since we had

On the evening of the 6th of December we were trucked north again to the town of Pfaffenhofen. We departed from the trucks at the square in the center of town and immediately were walking in the direction of the largest town in the area, Merzwiller. It had started to drizzle by that time, and about 30 minutes later we had relieved the unit that had been watching the town. They had attacked the town earlier but had been driven back. We dug in as best we could in the marshy ground, and even though there was no sign of snow on the ground, the temperature wasn't very high. It was cold enough for the rain to turn to sleet. No one got any sleep that night.

Dec. 7 and 8, 1944: Just before dawn we pulled back about 30 yards onto a drier piece of ground, but still in the woods, and dug in again. I dug in with Harrington. E. A. Brown was now the new squad leader. That day and the next were spent in receiving mail, eating C rations and in general improving the holes. In the meantime, artillery was being brought up for the general assault on Merzwiller, just across the Zintzel River. We were to have Corps Artillery support, 48 pieces. It made itself noticeable about noon of the 8th. A short round, just skimming the tree tops, crashed into the top of one of them. The tree burst sent everyone hunting for a hole, and the artillery received a good GI cussing. It was during the evening of the 8th of December that Harrington began to talk about his home. McCarthy had brought the mail up early that evening together with orders to attack Merzwiller early the next morning. We were to give supporting fire to the assault troops crossing the river. We even had a .50 cal. machine gun in position manned by some of our unit.

Harrington and I had crawled into our hole which was covered with logs, dirt and shelter-half. We lit a candle and read our mail. He had received a "Dear John" letter from his 18 year old wife. Harrington had married young--he at 18 and she at 14. He had been drafted early, sent to Alaska, and from there to the 103rd in Texas. He had not seen his wife except for 5 days in California since he was drafted. Soon after he was sent to Alaska, she moved to California and got a job. His letter that night said she was getting a divorce and marrying her boss. Harrington acted very blue and discouraged--he said he didn't care what happened to him.

Dec. 9, 1944: We were up about 4:00 AM following the river bank to positions protecting the railway bridge across which the troops were to go. Seatter was carrying the gun to my tripod and during one of our 5 minute stops, got lost from the column. The artillery barrage was supposed to begin at 4:50 and last until 5:15. By the time Seatter was located in the dark and our position established, the zero hour was fast approaching. We had to set up our gun in a shallow trench, already dug, which was covered by a few logs and evergreen boughs. Haley and Seatter crawled under the logs covering the trench while I put the finishing touches on the gun position. Immediately the Corps Artillery opened up--all 48 artillery pieces, plus heavy mortars and 4.2 in. chemical mortars. It was terrific--for the next 20 minutes or so the exploding artillery rounds traversing up and down the opposite bank, the town, the rail yard, the hills and woods, seemed to light up the whole area. As the barrage began to slacken, the rifle troops began to start across the railroad bridge. All went well for about two minutes until sporadic German artillery fire started to land in the very same area that our own artillery had previously swept. A few of the rounds came as far as our side of the river. One landed near an overturned half-track behind which Spurr and Mike, our runner, were lying.

There were several tree bursts. The three of us were lying just below the level of the ground, with one layer of logs over us for protection. One 88 mm round landed about 2 yards from the hole, blowing the roof off and covering us with dirt and rocks. About two minutes later another round exploded about 6 feet from one corner of the hole, bouncing us around a bit. The fire was too accurate to be guess work. By this time the Merzwiller battle was in full swing. We could hear the fire fight intensify. As it was daylight by this time, we started across what was left of the railroad bridge. At the far end, lying near a shell crater, was one dead GI, a victim of a 105 mm short round.

It was all of their unit that was left.

Nov. 11-18, 1944: We were on the front line. This was our position for the next 8 days. The house was located near the village of St. Michel, Rue La Muerthe. The only toilet was the outdoor variety. There were two ways to go—hold it all day and go only after dark—or climb out the back window and crawl some 20 yards to it. Three Frenchmen and a woman lived in the house, but they stayed in the cellar (a trapdoor in the living room floor, down a ladder, into a hole under the house, fully dirt-lined) about 95% of the time. I slept on some straw in a room facing the front lines. There were two rooms upstairs, but no one stayed there except to scan the enemy lines with field glasses.

The house was a stone affair, whitewashed, with the only source of heat a wood stove in the kitchen. The fact that it was located at an intersection of three roads also made it stand out. Built on the end of the house, so all you had to do was step outside the dining room, was the barn and hayloft, all enclosed. There were two cows, two goats, and several chickens, all shut up inside the barn. Part of A Company and our section of D Company had to put a guard at the door, and a guard at the window, during the day. At night, we posted two roving guards and two guards in a shed near the house, in addition to the door guards. I was one of the two men who stood guard with the machine gun in the shed near the house.

My first night at guard duty in the shed was with Seatter. The foxhole, dug in the dirt floor of the shed, by the gun was very small and full of water, so we stood up in the shed and watched the gun flashes through the door, as our artillery was trading rounds with Jerry. There was a thin covering of snow on the ground, but the night wasn't too cold. Seatter and I had been there for about 15 minutes of our 2-hour shift when we heard a rustling in the part of the shed on the other side of the machine gun. Neither of us had been in the shed in the daytime so didn't really know the layout of it. The noise sounded like someone was crawling in straw. After sweating for about 3 minutes to see if the noise would stop, I started crawling toward it with pistol drawn. It didn't take me long to find out—first, I crawled into the hole and got my foot and leg wet—next, I felt a wire and cage and could tell that it was full of little animals—rabbits.

We found 6 cans of Argentine beef that the Germans had left and the occupants of the house had tried to hide. With this we made stew, using all sorts of canned meat from packages, carrots and cabbages that the Frenchwoman went outside for, and potatoes and cow turnips stored in the barn. This was topped off with hot lemonade from the K rations. Harrington and I served it with part of a 5-in-1 ration we had. Everyone, including the French civilians, joined in.

One night I volunteered to walk back to our vehicles and order supplies, and also get our squad burner. I started back just after dark with Doc Thome, the medic from the 1st Platoon. He was going as far as the Aid Station and I would continue on from there. While we were at the Aid Station, a fellow from one of the rifle companies was brought in. He had been wounded that afternoon by artillery fire. He had a small cut running into his eye, not too serious, and a large gash in his back just below his shoulder. It looked as if someone had scraped a large chunk out of his back. There had been little bleeding because of the high temperature of the shrapnel. It was the first casualty I had seen. He wanted a cigarette and said he couldn't wait to get fixed up and get back with the rest of his outfit. I then went up the road a little further to the Company CP. There, I saw Capt. Lincoln, Lt. Barnes, Thomas, Girard, McGuire and the cook, all taking it easy. Lincoln persuaded me to turn around and go back, so I took some candles and magazines and started back. I picked up Thome at the Aid Station and, after almost losing our way, made it back just before daylight.

All went well until Friday evening, Nov. 17. We palled guard, ate rations, wrote letters, talked and argued. Things got to be dull. However, on this particular Friday evening, conditions changed. Seatter and I had the midnight shift in the rabbit shed. The other shift had done a little work on the foxhole—enlarged, deepened and put some boards in the bottom. It now could protect one person fairly well. About 45 minutes after we had relieved the guard, as we were standing in the doorway of the rabbit shed, Jerry started to wake us up. I could plainly hear 3 distinct "pops" which seemed to come from somewhere in front of us. About 5 seconds later these 88 mm rounds came in. There was a steadily increasing hissing and swishing sound that ended in a long drawn-out whistle and a deafening explosion. All 3 rounds landed about 75 yards

to our left as we faced the lines and slightly behind us. I didn't remember trying to dodge live artillery shells as part of our training. At any rate I told Seatter that I was going out and talk with one of the A Company guards and see what he thought, since the foxhole wasn't big enough for two. I had no more gotten within whispering distance of the two guards when I heard 3 more popping noises. The two guards started for a place of possible shelter and so did I. I hit the ground hugging a large manure pile near the shed. The pile was about 6 ft. high by 8 ft. long and 4 ft. wide. I had to almost forcibly prevent myself from running toward the sound of the artillery, thinking that the closer I got to the guns, the better chance I would have of the shells going over my head. My position was to the right of the rabbit shed and as I lay there I could tell by the noise of the shells that these were going to come much closer. These 3 rounds landed within the space of 4 seconds. I was lying in a mixture of manure, mud and snow and as the first round exploded behind the shed I could hear the shrapnel going through the shed and striking the barn or stable part of the house. The next round seemed to come right for me as it landed just to the right of the manure pile—between it and the house. I was literally covered with the whole top of the manure pile.

The third round hit the near corner of the roof of the stable, making a terrific noise. I could smell the nauseating odor of the gunpowder used by the German Army, afterwards referred to as "dead Germans," as I lay there with my ears ringing. As I clung to the ground, I could hear the trickle of particles hitting the roof of the rabbit shed. I knew where there was another foxhole and all I could think of was getting into it. It lay near the .50 cal. machine-gun position in front of and near the extreme right end of the house. In order to get there I had to run across the face of the whole building, and that is exactly what I did. But there was someone in the hole—Paikz of the 1st Platoon. I landed on top of him just as 3 more rounds started on their way. These landed on the house, blasting a large hole in the stable and in the corridor between the stable and the house, killing one cow, and doing much damage to the building. I had just run across the opening not 10 yards from where the rounds landed. We lay, scared, in the foxhole as 3 more rounds came in. These went over the house and landed to the right of it, but beyond the crossroads. One, I learned later, landed in a foxhole, killing a rifleman. After laying there for about 5 minutes, I went back to the rabbit shed and there was Seatter, safely in the foxhole, but the shed was full of shrapnel holes.

Everyone inside the house had made for the cellar just after the first 3 rounds came in. Two men were wounded. One, in the finger—one of the guards who I had started to talk to. One, in the leg—a fellow who had been sleeping in the corridor. But, Mendez, a Mexican-American from A Company had been hit by the last round that landed near the crossroads. It had hit almost squarely in his foxhole. That was the only shelling we got there during the 8 days. The reason we later heard was that one of our units was to have marched up the road and taken the road to the extreme right at about 1:00 AM, but at the last minute had canceled the movement.

Nov. 19, 1944: The company was ordered back to Corps Reserve, an assignment we later came to dread. We withdrew to the Spider and I slept in my blankets under some evergreen trees in the snow. I had received one package from home but had distributed the contents among my several pockets. I still had my overcoat, too. So far, it wasn't so bad, and we were going back of the lines.

Nov. 20, 1944: We were taken that morning to an assembly area where we built fires and cooked rations. We were told to get rid of everything that we didn't want to carry. It began to rain around noon and the roads soon became very muddy. As we started out walking in two columns, we noticed a Piper Cub (artillery observation plane) bottom-up in a nearby field. We kept walking until dark—and the rain came down. Shortly after dark, we passed by a battery of 105s which opened up just as we drew alongside. The muzzle blasts almost blew us off our feet and the sky seemed to light up as bright as day. Around 8:00 PM we stopped to rest and have hot (?) chow brought up to us. By this time I had decided to get rid of much of my excess equipment. While we were waiting for chow, several of us cut down our packs in the dark and made suspenders out of them. It was hard to keep track of everyone and everything, dispersed as they were and dark as it was among the trees and in the rain. Finally, when the chow did arrive, it was cold. Cold mashed potatoes, cold string beans, cold roast beef, and cold coffee. To top it off, we had burnt cold chocolate pudding with bread. The rain soon diluted everything we ate anyhow.

Immediately after chow, we unpacked our weapons from the vehicles. I left all my extra equipment, including shaving gear that I had just received in a package, with Bill Purcell, our jeep driver by now. Then we loaded up and took off down the road in the darkness. I was carrying the 45 pound tripod for the



machine gun. It wasn't too bad until we approached the Meurthe River. For almost 4 hours we advanced a few yards at a time. I had to sling the tripod on my shoulder, take a few steps, then take it down again. One had to stay close to the man in front of him or lose him in the darkness. The problem was that the bridge over the river was blown up. We had to veer to the left, down an embankment, across some railroad tracks to a temporary foot bridge (some logs and a hand cable). The rain continued to come down. Saddle up—stop, wait, etc., all over again—4 hours of that. Finally, I got across the foot bridge, with one hand on the rail and the other holding on to the tripod. A perilous trip across the river as the water was rushing by just under foot (we later learned that the foot bridge had washed out about 30 minutes after we crossed over). We walked along the bank of the river, up the embankment, to the main road again. About a half mile further on we came to a small town. We crawled into the first barn we came to, pulled the dry hay over us and as it was 4:00 in the morning immediately went to sleep.

Nov. 21, 1944: -Only to have to get up at 5:00 AM. It was very hard getting up that morning, the first day of offensive combat. We had been herded into a position of relieving a unit of the 3rd Division that had established a bridgehead and there we were in no-man's land with nothing to do but go on. We had been soaking wet, having stood in the rain for about 16 hours, so we were pleasantly warm when we emerged from the hay. And very hungry—but there was nothing to eat.

We organized as best we could and together with C Company started two columns cross-country out of town. Our objective, the high ground east of St. Die, inside of three days. We filed up the street and climbed through a fence and across an open field. The two columns were separated by about 35 yards and each man had about a 10 yard interval. I had just entered the first field and was following an old fence line when one mortar round exploded between two men on the column to my left. Everyone hit the ground and soon there was a cry for "Medic" (mortar rounds make no warning noise; the only evidence is the explosion upon contact with something firm). Maurice Plourd, our Medic, was hesitating about going forward but soon another round landed with a loud explosion and much smoke very near another man in the same column, and only after we had moved about 20 yards. Everyone hit the ground again, but the head of the column kept moving so the followers had to keep up. I was running with the tripod on my back and when I went past two wounded men, I could hear one of the Medics say that one was hit pretty badly in the stomach and the other was hit slightly in the leg. The action was over for those two and several of us expressed our willingness to trade places with them.

We continued on, winding our way up and down the hills and valleys. We went comparatively slow because as yet we had not contacted the enemy. I soon ate the K ration that was issued for noon. Several times we had to lie low in order for our artillery to throw a few rounds in a wooded area ahead of us. Finally, about 2:00 that afternoon we came to a rise overlooking a small village near the river. Our riflemen fired a few rounds into the town and only two Germans could be seen running out. We walked through the town and proceeded to climb the steep, cone-shaped hill directly behind it. About two-thirds of the way up, a small road wound around it. There, rifle fire held us up. The enemy commanded the heights and kept us from advancing.

There I saw my first action. I was told to set up my machine gun in the road and fire indirectly over the rise into a group of evergreen trees keeping a steady rate of fire. I fired about one and a half belts of ammunition, which probably did not cause any harm other than to scare the several German soldiers lying in holes among the trees. The bullets were glancing off the trees and rocks at a tremendous rate. Everyone seemed to be firing at once. Never again was I to hear so much American small arms fire at one time—we were always short of ammunition later on. Cease fire was called out and the riflemen moved forward.

The top of the hill was flat with a small open meadow on one side with a thickly wooded section on the other side running down to the base of it. The riflemen were advancing up a fairly steep slope, running with M-1s leveled. They were following trails because of the thick underbrush. The first rifleman flushed a young German soldier out of a foxhole near the trail and as he was standing with his hands raised, the rifleman walked toward him to search him for weapons. The German was very young, about 16, dressed in the German uniform with overcoat and cap. Several of the riflemen were motioning him to come on down the trail and apparently he thought that since he was captured and everyone was trying to talk to him, he would lower his hands. This was unfortunate, since he had a potato masher, a German hand grenade

with a long wooden handle for throwing, resembling a potato masher, on his belt. The second rifleman didn't give him a chance; two quick shots in the stomach and he fell to the ground to die within a few seconds. He was dead when I passed him about 30 seconds later.

The riflemen were advancing with rifles firing—a tremendous waste of ammunition, but as there were no targets, the method was very effective. Capt. Neely, C Company Commander, was in charge of operations. We were going to make one last effort to storm the mountain top before dark. We could hear a burp gun spitting every so often and we wanted to hunt it out before it got dark. C Company was given the orders to cut loose with everything and storm the last level. There was very little opposition; occasionally a round or two from enemy artillery would whistle through the trees. The enemy must have sensed what we were attempting because 6 of them surrendered before we went over the top. Then we jumped off with very good success. The riflemen quickly cleared the area, except for the wooded section. There was a log dugout with a machine gun blocking them. I was given the mission to either silence the gun or keep it occupied while riflemen could sneak around and throw a grenade in. I hoisted my tripod and with Hudson following with the gun, ran across the open space into a ditch just inside the woods. There, I set up and lined up the sights on the dugout. Everyone took cover and just as soon as the riflemen were ready I opened fire, firing in short bursts for about two minutes. Two grenades went off but no one was in there. The enemy had escaped before we had surrounded them. By that time it was dark and I had lost the water hose to the gun. (The .30 cal water-cooled machine gun is complicated. It is slow firing and takes many men just to get it operating. The first gunner carries the 45 pound tripod; the second gunner carries the gun proper, which has water in the water jacket, and a can of ammunition; the third gunner carries a two gallon can of water, a water hose and an ammunition can. The purpose of the water is to keep the barrel cool during firing and allow the steam to condense back into water.) Probably losing the hose in the dark was the best thing that happened, as we soon threw away the water can and never fired the gun long enough at one time to get it too hot, after that.

We were led to the far side of the plateau and were told to dig holes in preparation for a counterattack in the morning. It was very dark but we scraped at the rocks and dirt trying to dig a gun emplacement. We were sleepy and hungry and long before we had a suitable hole, we decided to crawl in, cover ourselves with branches and go to sleep. Carroll, Hudson and I crawled into the hole, but as we had no watch among us, and as we were so tired, we immediately went to sleep, without thinking of setting up a guard. Even so, I awoke quite early; we were wedged in so tightly and my shoe-paks were resting on the trail leg of the machine gun—my feet were freezing because of the conduction of cold through the metal to my feet.

Nov. 22, 1944: So, we were up and prepared for anything long before dawn. The night had been extremely quiet except for the noise of digging near us. When dawn finally did break, nothing happened. We were overlooking a bend in the Meurthe River and could see St. Die located next to it. There was not a sight of the enemy. We stayed hidden among the trees at the edge of the forest until we felt sure that no action was to be expected. Several of the fellows were sent back for rations and water, but before noon we packed up our equipment and walked back down the mountain to the town he had just passed through. There I changed woolen socks and started to prepare something to eat. But the order came to move out in support of an attack on the outskirts of St. Die. We shouldered our equipment and marched down the road only to find after an hour's walk that there was no resistance and so back we went to the first town. Our stay was short because we were ordered to the top of the mountain to continue our advance. So we carried all our equipment up the mountain after replenishing our K rations, water and ammunition.

It was early in the afternoon when we continued our advance toward the edge of St. Die. Several anti-personnel mines were seen on the trail leading to the edge of town. The tips of the trip release could be plainly seen sticking up through the mud along the side of the trail. The other units had not been contacted so we stayed in an abandoned school house, a very modern brick building, with nothing but straw on the cement floor. We moved out at dusk, trying to outflank St. Die and block the road leading to the East. We stopped at a small barn and woodshed about dark. Some .30 cal. machine guns opened up with tracers in the valley. Although the tracers were going away from us, almost everyone hit the ground and started to crawl toward the shelter of the buildings. I slept in the hay and got a very good sleep for a change.

Nov. 23, 1944: We were up before dawn that morning. Somehow we managed to scramble around in the dark and find all our equipment and get assembled. Off in a single column along the hillside. We were supposed to attack a small town which A Company was trying to outflank. We kept shifting positions in the column but, as the town was already taken, were assigned to another town further on. Toward noon it started to rain. We dug in along a hillside road, ate K rations and tried to keep dry under the trees. No soap—the rain came through. Finally, late in the afternoon, the flanking company got in the village. One doorway was booby-trapped and we found a house to rest in for a while. Inside were 12 Kraut rifles minus bolts, standing in a closet. A closer inspection revealed the missing bolts in a drawer of a chest. We played German and French records on an old phonograph. Late in the afternoon we started out again, staying away from the roads and taking to the hillside. I packed the tripod almost all the way up and down very steep hills, a real rat race. Along toward dusk we came out to some level fields. In the distance we could see a small village. I carefully set up the machine gun to cover the approach and give the riflemen support. The men started to move out. All of a sudden dozens of men seemed to pour out of the town, running toward us with hands up, hollering and shouting. We felt elated; we had captured a company of Germans without firing a shot—or so we thought. We were wary, however, and kept them covered. They turned out to be men, women, and children running to greet us. Several of the fellows were hugged and kissed before they could escape.

We wanted to know where the enemy was and how long since they had left the town. Here was a good chance to polish up my German. I approached one of the civilians and was going to ask him, "How many hours since the Germans had left?" Now the German expression for "What time is it?" is "Wie viel Uhr ist es?" Instead of asking "Wie viel Stunden (hours).....", I just got out "Wie viel," forgot that "hours" was "Stunden" and said "Uhr". That was all that was necessary. The fellow quickly pulled up his sleeve displaying 6 or 8 wristwatches on his arm. He was quick to tell me and show me the time—just as quick were several riflemen who relieved him of every watch. So much for my exercise in German grammar.

We finally found out that the enemy had left about two hours before in a few wagons. We were hot on their trail. Across mere fields we went; it was really getting dark. We were all sweating, but Capt. Neely was determined to try to enter the next town situated on the river. Some of the little Alsatian boys were carrying our ammunition. When we finally reached the river road, it was quite dark, so it was decided to spend the night in the first house we saw. It was right next to a bridge (demolished). We could see gun fire flashes and reports on the other side of the river. D Company bedded down in a garage. I was so sleepy and tired that I didn't wait to clear the wagon from the shed or bring in hay, but instead, crawled on top of a pile of small logs, laid two chicken wire screens down and went to sleep. I first removed my shoe pads and as I was so warm, my wet feet stayed warm all night. I missed pulling guard completely. I got down and went outside once. I was lucky—Seattar, that night had to throw his long-johns away.

Nov. 24, 1944: We were up before dawn that morning. It had rained the whole night and as it became daylight we approached a bombed-out railroad crossing. The underpass was blocked with the wreckage so we had to climb over the embankment. Our ammunition jeeps had caught up with us the previous night, but had to be left at the underpass. We were walking along the road in double column toward the town of Lusse when burp guns could be heard to our rear. We entered Lusse and stayed under cover of a farm house while some of us returned to the jeeps for ammunition and food. I was in the carrying party. The jeeps were being sniped at, so we had to double-time over the embankment and down the other side. There was nothing to do but return by the same route. After sneaking up the embankment we zigzagged down the other side and at a fast walk hurried back to Lusse. Among the equipment brought were new lightweight bed rolls. These we assembled and rolled as compactly as possible. Our unit then split up, half going up the main road and half climbing the steep hill and flanking the next town. I was among those who climbed the hill. After two hours of maneuvering without meeting opposition, we came out upon an open hillside overlooking the town.

From there we could see dozens of prisoners being marched toward the rear. Our other unit had met and captured the opposition and had also been fired upon by the 3rd Battalion on the left. The two men wounded in C Company had been mistaken for enemy troops by riflemen. By this time an effective detour had been made and our vehicles were once again with us. In addition, we had 4 tank destroyers, tank type vehicles with a 90 mm gun each but no cover hatch on the tank. We were at the foot of one of the highest peaks of the Vosges Mountains. The next day meant climbing straight up. Roadblocks were established, machine guns set up and two-hour guard duty was the order. Seattar and I, Hudson and Harrington, Carroll and someone from the other squad manned our gun. We slept in a haymow in our new sleeping bags.

Nov. 25, 1944: We started walking early that morning behind the 4 tank destroyers. We were loaded down with walnuts and apples from the town. As the road became steeper, much of our heavier equipment was put on the TDs. Around noon we came to the summit of the Vosges; there we met the other two battalions. Ahead of me I saw our Regimental Commander and two other officers. One was our Battalion Commander; the other was apparently the commander of another battalion. Just as I walked by the three of them, I heard our Battalion Commander say, "Colonel, let my battalion take the lead; we're fresher." I thought to myself, "How does he know how fresh I am?" He must have won, because our battalion took the lead and started down the steep slope into the Rhine Valley. The scenery was Alpine in nature, with the steep slopes covered with a thick carpet of grass. I hopped a ride on a jeep trailer near the bottom of the slope. It was dusk as we approached the outskirts of Grubbe. (Note: After the war, the local people changed the name of this village to Fouchy)

Our point was met by machine gun fire. Immediately the vehicles were abandoned by everyone. The lead tank destroyer with fifty-calibers firing eased toward the first roadblock. We were held up about 15 minutes before the roadblock was cleared and we entered town. Our section was billeted in a bakery at the extreme eastern end of the town. A huge pile of logs lay stacked up between the two end buildings, effectively blocking all entrance or exit from the town. From this pile ran an electric wire, indicating an explosive charge under the roadblock. I set up the machine gun beyond the roadblock right next to the road and alongside a half-finished stone wall (about 2 ft high). I sighted the machine gun down the road and locked the traversing mechanism just where the road took its first bend (about 100 yards). I put the gun at half-cock and as it was already 8:00 PM by this time, Seatter and I took the first shift at guard.

So—the stage was set for one of the many strange incidents of war. Behind us was a rifleman and in the doorway of the house across the street from us was another rifleman. Seatter, who usually carried a carbine, had tentatively been assigned as a jeep driver and had left his carbine in the jeep. About 10 minutes before 10:00 PM I asked Seatter to go in and wake up our relief. He told me to go in instead, as he had gone in early in the past. I went inside the bakery where the warmth and smell of baking bread was sweet. I went through the first room into the second where the ovens were located. I had no more than just closed the second door when I heard the sound of a jeep coming up the road full speed from the direction of the enemy lines. Seatter later told me what happened. Down the road coming very fast appeared a vehicle, just its blackout lights visible. It stopped short of the roadblock in a skid and a German officer got out and began to spout German. Seatter tried to swing the machine gun around to cover the vehicle (one of those right hand Austin-type touring cars). But the gun was locked in position covering the bend in the road 100 yards away. He then tried to lift the whole gun, tripod and all, but couldn't. He didn't have a pistol or rifle, so he yelled "Jawohl!" and "Fire—they're Germans!" That little car did a double-time about face and took off in a cloud of mud with the two riflemen opening fire. Seatter immediately ducked down behind the stone wall, but as the vehicle disappeared, he went back to the machine gun thinking he would start firing as soon as it approached the bend in the road. He forgot that it was on half-cock; it wouldn't fire unless the bolt was pulled back one more time. I got back to the outside door just as the driver shifted into second gear. I never saw anything happen with so much of a coincidence. That it should come when we only had one man on the gun; that the enemy was more confused than we were to come tearing down the road into our lines; that it was our first experience of that kind; that Seatter didn't have a hand gun; that he didn't react fast enough to unlock the machine gun to cover the vehicle; that he wasn't able to put the gun in a full-fire position; and maybe best of all that I wasn't the one who had to face the situation. I've often thought since just exactly what I would have done under the same circumstances.

Nov. 26, 1944: Sunday. We cleaned up and wrote letters and about 11:00 AM had a turkey sandwich (I guess this was our Thanksgiving dinner). We pulled guard all day until we left at 3:00 that afternoon. Everyone was quite aware that the enemy knew where we were and was expecting us—he had checked us out personally the night before. Grubbe was being shelled off and on all day by German 88s. In one instance while Hudson was pulling guard on the steps of the bakery, an artillery round landed on the roof showering him with bits of broken tile. We took off in a two-column formation down the road and across a small river. The next town, Ville, was only about 2 miles away. German artillery began to fall in an increasing quantity in Grubbe and along the road. One unit tried to outflank Ville from the left by climbing a small hill, while our section supported the frontal attack of C Company. The 4 TDs were firing at the outer defenses of Ville while riflemen were following the ditch along the road in order to find cover before our expected artillery barrage. The air was full of small arms fire. Bullets seemed to be flying everywhere. Three of the TDs were behind a cover of the curve of the road while the lead vehicle was firing from a position at

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a crossroad in front of the first road block.

My squad was ordered to give covering fire to the riflemen by peppering all buildings facing our front. We ducked into a small courtyard and while Lt. Geckler was knocking the door down we attempted to stay clear of the ricocheting lead and shrapnel. Plourd, our Medic, was extremely nervous. He grabbed my arm and pointed to an upstairs window of an adjoining house, shouting for me to fire at something he had seen in the window. With the tripod on my back, I pulled my .45 pistol and fired three rounds into the window. The frame window was open from the bottom and white curtains were waving. I never saw where my three shots went; there was no broken glass and no evidence of a hit on the outside of the house. I like to think that, at about 60 feet, I put all three shots right through that window. By this time the door had been broken down and we carried our equipment up to the second floor. The window facing the town of Ville was too high for using the tripod, so we set the gun down on the window sill and fired about one belt. Hudson wanted to fire the gun so we put in another belt and he fired at the church steeple, just in case it was being used for a German artillery observation post.

The town of Ville was being softened up by our artillery. Our section was pulled out of the house and ordered to positions near the front of the lead rifle platoon in order to give support to the riflemen. Our squad was first. Carroll took off, following the embankment of the road around to where the first tank destroyer was positioned. We had to run crouched low to stay below the hail of lead going both ways. I followed next, running across a little open space where the embankment was open to allow for drainage. Hudson followed with the gun and then came the ammo bearers. Next came our section's 7th squad, with Tucker carrying the tripod. Tucker slipped in crossing the open space, fell and cut his knee wide open on a broken bottle lying in the grass. That was all for him for the duration. Plourd went back to help him, while someone grabbed his tripod. Our artillery was coming in (105s). A short round landed about 20 yards to our rear in the open field, and a piece of the shrapnel tore a chunk out of a rifleman's arm and back, the third man from me along the bank.

Capt. Neely was calling for the heavies (our .30 cal. machine guns). I set up my gun among some logs a little to the rear and to one side of the TD. I had to keep firing at the roadblock, windows, doorways—anything to keep the enemy from firing back, while our troops circled the first two streets and tried to outflank the roadblock strong point. I must have fired 2 or 3 belts, intermittently, because the gun was starting to steam. The last of the riflemen started to move up and so did our section. We had to run, first behind the TD, then dart around it and run for the shelter of several buildings near the roadblock. We were ready to move into the main part of town when we discovered that the 2nd Section was nowhere to be found. I was sent back to contact them and to tell them to hurry up, that they were holding up operations. By that time it was getting dusk. I dropped my tripod on the ground and Hudson set the gun in the mount with the muzzle pointing toward the ground (a temporary position, since we were going to pick them up very soon and move out). I got as far as the TD when I saw Sgt. Stanley Panoske and told him to hurry up. When we were all together, I stooped over to pick up the tripod, waiting for Hudson to first lift the gun, when a loud explosion nearly took my helmet off. My ears rang. The machine gun had not been cleared—there was still one round in the chamber—I had been too excited and had forgotten a very important basic safety precaution, that is to always clear the gun if you don't expect to be firing it. Just as my head was level with the gun, it had gone off into the dirt, since Hudson had picked up the gun by the trigger grip. I hoisted the tripod with my ears still ringing, both from the explosion and from a few choice words from Lt. Geckler.

One German soldier was flushed out near the roadblock. Half way through town we met up with B Company who had circled it. We then returned to find billets for the night. We decided upon a large 3-story building near the main square. Lt. Geckler, after knocking twice, shot the lock and pushed the door in. All occupants were in the cellar. It was an apartment house, very modern, clean, and attractive. We decided to let the people stay in the cellar and we occupied the two top floors. We set up a machine gun in a little balcony facing the square and proceeded to find something to eat. I acted as interpreter—made one trip to the cellar and finally got the landlady to scramble us some eggs. While there, a young woman

accosted me, wanting someone to accompany her to her apartment down the block and bring back some of her possessions. She told me that the soldiers there wouldn't let her back in. I told Capt. Lincoln and the three of us went to her apartment which was occupied by C Company. She started collecting silverware under the bed and odds and ends including the radio. Her bedroom, a beautiful display, was showered with wood and plaster because of a large hole in the ceiling caused by an artillery shell. This woman later put a claim in to the U. S. Government for two expensive cameras which she said were missing from her apartment. I later found out that her name was Frau Fischer. We all returned to our billets where I bedded down in one of the kitchens.

Nov. 27, 1944: Up early that morning, cleaned our weapons and lazed around in general. From the balcony we could see PWs by the hundreds marching back toward Grubbe. Richard Winik took pictures of them with his 16 mm movie camera. The German artillery was getting the range. Every so often a round or two would land in the town. We loaded our equipment on jeeps early in the afternoon and started off again. One fellow had several million Marks piled on a jeep. Several of the store buildings were still being looted by GIs. Our battalion radio section was set up in a kindergarten. The town was the cleanest and the nicest looking I had yet seen, even in its dismantled condition. East of town someone thought he saw a movement near an old barn about 350 yards across the valley to our right. Immediately someone ordered a gun set up and the barn was peppered—nothing ever came out—certainly the dead cows didn't show themselves. We still had our 4 TDs with us as we came into the town of Weller. The inhabitants were very friendly and there were plenty of offers of wine. The town ended in a dead-end street. There were no good roads leading over the last little range of mountains. It was decided to stay in Weller for the night and send the TDs around back through Ville and over the good road. When we received supplies from our jeep that night, we learned that the Germans were using heavy rockets on Ville and Grubbe. We slept in a haymow, but ate hot milk and home made bread with a family in one of the houses.

Nov. 28, 1944: We were up before dawn. With no breakfast, we formed two columns and started off over the mountain directly back of the town. We were following a trail made by ox-drawn wagons. The morning was cool and very foggy—observation was good for only about 15 yards. We were directly behind C Company who was leading the advance. We here held up several times by sharp outbursts of gunfire a few hundred yards ahead, and a couple of times prisoners were relayed toward the rear. The cry of "Medic up front" was frequently heard. Finally, after the fog cleared and the sun came out, the opposition seemed to melt away. We began walking at a very fast rate—the tripod was getting heavy. The mountain road seemed not to have been used for a long time. We had come to the main road linking the two valleys and our TDs were once again with us. That didn't last long because we came to places where trees had been felled across the road, making passage with vehicles impossible. We moved right along still carrying our equipment. Several of the roadblocks were covered by German artillery because we could hear an occasional round winging over our heads. Finally, we came to a road junction where the enemy had just recently left—still steaming pots of cereal were sitting in German field kitchens—huge pots on wheels. Everything seemed to indicate that the enemy had left in a hurry. We were spurred by the thought of eventually finding the enemy in unorganized flight. Another main junction of the paved road. Tracks indicated that the enemy had taken off across the fields. Our 2nd Battalion was assigned the trail, while we were to stay on the surfaced road and continue down the last slope on to the Rhine plain.

Going around a curve in the descending road, our lead scout saw a German Volkswagen (German Army issue) coming up the hill toward us. He immediately dropped to one knee and began firing into the vehicle. It stopped and two men leaped out—one ran for cover of the brush and trees on the lower side of the road, while the other came running up the road with his hands up. He was the driver—the officer with him had escaped. We were rapidly descending onto the plain. There were two houses on the hill to our right and at the bottom of the grade was another farmhouse located right at the junction of our road and another road coming from the other side of the hill to our left. Our lead platoon had come abreast of and had passed this house when German artillery and mortar rounds started to come in. I was almost even with the house when this happened. Everyone threw down their equipment and forward progress was halted. The cry for a medic was heard from the rear. Just before this happened our lead rifleman had taken two prisoners and had sent them back along our column. Someone later told me that both had been shot while being taken back.

I left my tripod on the left side of the road near the entrance to the house and stooped down behind the cover of a woodpile on the right side of the road. A light mortar crew was busy firing from behind the woodpile. Shrapnel was flying everywhere. At the next lull, I ran for the house. There, in the cellar, were gathered the inhabitants, a man and his wife. A rifleman, very seriously wounded in the arm, was being cared for. Our section

was ordered to ascend the slope of the hill immediately behind the house. There I set up the machine gun and Grusecki spotted several of the enemy to our left with his field glasses. I could see a truck and several men trying to get it started. It appeared that the Germans were not aware that we were in the vicinity. Grusecki fired a belt into the scene. The two men soon disappeared. It wasn't long before an 88 mm barrage was laid down again by the Germans. They couldn't find our position. Because our hill was small, in order to miss the larger hill near their guns, they had to elevate too much, and so overshot our hill. From our position atop the knoll we could see the effect of our own artillery barrages. These sprayed the hillside with phosphorous shells and high explosives. San Martin and someone else went down and drove the German truck back to the road junction. We still had nothing to eat.

It was getting along toward dusk and Hudson was at the gun while the rest of us were waiting around for orders where to dig in. All of a sudden we heard the grinding, creaking and groaning of a tank—a German tank. A self-propelled 88 mm had come around the bend of the road and began firing point blank into the farmhouse just below us. The house was only about 40 yards from where we were standing. The high velocity shells penetrated the house, going into, through, and out of the house and exploding harmlessly in the hillside right below us. After firing about 6 rounds the tank withdrew, making a lot of noise. Our 4 TDs sitting just around the bend in the road didn't move a muscle or make a noise. One couldn't move because of engine trouble, but Capt. Neely cursed the rest of them out.

After dark, some of us raided the beehives located in a little shed near the house close to where the shells from the SP gun had landed. The honeycombs were mostly dried up—nothing there. I then went down to the house to get some straw and try to find something to eat. The first floor of the house was in shambles. Wilkes had been in the house when the SP gun had opened fire. Just as soon as the first shell exploded, he, being in the kitchen, dove for the window and ran up the hill toward us. As he lay there winded, he told us how it felt being fired at point blank by a German 88 mm SP gun. There was nobody in either the first floor or the attic. After about a half hour of exploring both floors with a flashlight, I found a pint of strained honey in a can and about two dozen walnuts. I then went outside to the stable and bam and carried some straw to line my foxhole. The hole I dug was very shallow, since it was between two trees. The roots and the rocks together with the fact that I had to borrow a shovel made me give up easily. We were short handed, so it was decided that I was to sleep next to the gun while the rest were pulling guard, one at a time. I stood watch for an hour and then went to sleep. It rained slightly around midnight but the new sleeping bag was perfect. We had lost two men, both from the 2nd Section, Nick Pogmich had been peppered in the shoulder and Richard Hoffman had received powder burns from the same shell—both while walking down the road. On my trip to the farmhouse I had gone into the cellar; there an aid station had been set up; each medical officer had a huge wire barrel, with one end removed, for a bed.

Nov. 29, 1944: And so dawned the fateful day of Wednesday, November 29, 1944— but I don't remember the dawn. I was awake about 4 AM and had my bed rolled and was waiting for something to happen. Nothing to eat except walnuts. Without changing positions, we waited until 9:00. Orders finally came through. C Company was to take the hill on the right side of the road and B Company was to take the hill on the left. Our platoon was assigned to support C Company, which was just fine with us. C Company, led by Capt. Neely, was noted for being a crack outfit, for having fewer casualties. It was well-disciplined and its leaders were primarily interested in the welfare and safety of their men. B Company, on the other hand, was noted for poor leadership, poor morale and bad luck (heavy casualties). We had to cross the road and assemble near a small creek in the lowest part of the small valley. We lined up expecting to follow C Company to the right. A last minute change reversed the positions of the two rifle companies. We did not change—much to our displeasure, we stayed to the right, but were attached to B Company.

Sgt. Styford, somewhere, had gotten hold of a loaf of GI white bread and was handing out slices with his trench knife just before we were to move out. I opened my can of honey and was pouring some on each slice (whoever wanted any). Maurice L. Plourd, our medic, wanted some honey on his bread, but each time he would get near me a German shell would come in and land nearby on the hillside. As soon as he would hear the whine, he would run—try to get away from everyone else. He must have tried to put honey on his bread three times, but never succeeded. By this time most of us could tell by the sound of the whine just how close the round was going to land and would duck in relation to our sense of danger. B Company was lined up on the right side of the creek and was already moving into the trees on that side of the valley. Our platoon hadn't crossed to the other side of the stream yet but as the line was moving, we prepared to follow. Just then, a stream of bullets from a burp gun chewed up the grass between us and the creek. We were forced to run for it. One and two at a time, we had to

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cross the bare path of grass and the creek. Eventually everyone made it without getting hit. That was a warning—the enemy was close.

There wasn't much heavy artillery in action (from either side) as we wound our way among the trees and brush, going slowly, sometimes stopping for 5 or 10 minutes as a brisk fire-fight erupted ahead. Our 1st section (5th and 6th squads) was ahead of us supporting the lead rifle platoon. The hillside was steep and covered with tall fir trees and low brush. It wasn't long before the cry of "Medic up front" was heard. Soon the cry for litter bearers was also heard. We were going much slower now. It was there that I saw my first dead GI—a B Company rifleman lying on the trail, a waxy white, not over 15 minutes dead. I saw two more dead GIs and several walking wounded before we came to a complete halt.

Artillery and mortar rounds swept our positions at an ever-increasing volume. The real problem was tree bursts, where the shell would detonate on a tree limb or branch overhead and literally spray lethal shrapnel fragments downward on everything below. Foxholes were of little value without overhead protection. We could tell that the GIs up front of us were taking a terrible beating. Here we were, a machine gun section (2 guns) with both weapons unassembled, our men scattered out among the low brush, unable to see the enemy, waiting for orders to do something. I had no shovel, in fact, had had no shovel since the second evening of the jump off. The slope of the hill was fairly steep and I was lying flat with my feet downhill and my hand on the tripod. Then came a close one—an 81 mm round landed uphill and to my right. I hugged the dirt and covered my face with my right arm. The shrapnel was whizzing and bouncing off rocks and trees.

All of a sudden I felt a terrific blow on my right forearm. It felt as though I had been hit with a sledgehammer. I knew I had been hit, but did not know how badly. I immediately slid down the hill about 20 yards from the tripod. Carroll asked me if I had been hit and I answered, "Yes." Upon examination, I found that a piece of ricocheting shrapnel had hit my forearm cutting through my field jacket shirt, and woolen undershirt, causing the blood to flow slightly, but doing no damage other than making my whole arm sting. I refused to go back for aid, partly because I wasn't wounded badly and partly because a good percentage of the rounds coming in were landing to our rear, along our supply lines.

Hudson put the gun on the tripod and sat behind it in readiness. He appeared very casual and unconcerned as some rounds came fairly close. The barrage began to become more intense—it seemed to sweep our line from one end to the other. I crawled about 40 yards to my left and by borrowing a different person's shovel for a few minutes at a time, was able to dig a hole about big enough for my head and shoulders. I was digging with my canteen cup by this time—had laid my belt, bed roll, canteen and pistol near me and was frantically digging. About that time one round in particular was whining for a target—it was going to be very close—I could sense that it was going to land down the back of my neck. I shoved my head and shoulders into the hole and held my breath. The ground shook—but nothing happened. It had been a dud and had landed in the pile of soft dirt nearby that 3 riflemen had thrown up in digging their holes.

Soon I had a hole I could get below the level of the ground in. Only the tops of my shoe-paks stuck out. Off and on for about 3 hours we were subjected to artillery fire. Finally, as it was nearing dusk, we were told to move out. Firing had ceased except for an occasional round from our own batteries of 105s. We began to move a little faster now. I passed several dead Germans, most of them wearing bandoliers of machine gun ammunition. We were to set up a perimeter defense; our gun was to be set up just over the crest of the hill. Our squad climbed the hill and Hudson and I went crawling over the top and set up the gun at the left end of a small rotten log. Seatter and Harrington dug in near Carroll and Grusack just on the back side of the hill. Hudson and I were alone, or so it seemed.

I knew there were riflemen scattered along the top of the hill also. Hudson dug his hole a little to the left of the gun position. By this time it was almost dark among the trees. I couldn't see much over 20 feet in front of me. As I had no shovel, I sat behind the gun, cracking walnuts into the now half-full can of honey. About that time, a Corporal from B Company, a friend of Hudson's, came over the hill and told us that B Company and our 1st section had taken a terrific beating. He said that practically everyone was hit and that about half were dead. Among the names he mentioned as being dead was Mike Colacarro, a fellow from Seattle, our platoon runner. (This was since proved to be in error) It was hard to believe—I couldn't picture it, but we were much too busy to reflect at that time.



Seatter was ordered back to contact the Company CP and help bring up litters, supplies and water. I asked Hudson if I could borrow his shovel, and after he had his hole about 2/3 dug, he handed it to me. He reminded me that I should have taken one from one of the bodies along the trail. I started digging while he sat up in his hole. I told him to keep a sharp eye peeled for anything moving down the hill. The brush was very thick and it was getting dark. I sat on my heels to the right of the gun, facing it. I dug around near the trail leg, cutting roots with my trench knife and digging among the rocks with the shovel. I then turned around with my back to the gun and Hudson, and started digging in the other direction, making a trench long enough to lie in.

I had dug several inches down when, without warning, a loud explosion was heard to our right—it was close and I could hear the shrapnel whining among the trees and bushes. Without hesitation, I immediately hit the dirt, lying flat on my face, with my shoe-paks up against the trail leg of the gun. I heard someone cry out in pain about 30 yards to right of the gun. It was a mortar round—and we hadn't even heard the slight "pop" as it left the mortar tube—no warning at all. I must have lain there about 15 seconds, not wanting to raise up, in case more were on their way. That was the only thing that saved me, because just then—a tremendous explosion—very close—my ears rang and I could smell the nauseating smell of German gunpowder. That one had been meant for us I knew. I lay there perhaps another 30 or 40 seconds before lifting my head up. There, before me, within arms reach, lay a helmet with several holes in it, and closer, slightly to my front-right lay a woolen knit cap—bloody—and full of holes. Someone had gotten it, I knew.

I don't remember what I did first, but I think I called to Hudson—3 times. I crawled close enough to see that he had been sitting up in his hole and that the mortar round had landed practically in his lap. It had landed slightly to his left and in front of him. I looked at the machine gun. The cover latch had been thrown open, the belt was twisted and shredded in many places, the bolt handle was gone and the whole receiver was sprung. My bed roll, lying against a tree, was full of holes. And I hadn't received a scratch. That was enough for me—I grabbed my equipment and crawled over the top of the ridge and called down to Carroll—I could see him doubled up in his hole. He didn't answer. What was going on? Was everybody dead? I went down a little further and came to Grusecki's hole. He was digging. I told him that Hudson and Carroll were dead. About that time Carroll crawled up and asked, "What's wrong?" I looked at him and said, "Hudson's gone. "Gone where?" he asked. "He's dead, God damn it," I replied. That was all. The gun was out of commission and nothing could be done for Hudson. I holed up with Harrington while Grusecki went down to contact Slyford. The entire first section of 16 men was missing except for Wagner and Dell. The dead were Horeja, Gentry, Ng, Doris and San Martin, in addition to Hudson from our second section. Among the wounded were Foeking, Lt. Geckler and McMahon. I heard later that both Foeking and McMahon had legs amputated. (Foeking showed up at a 410th reunion with both legs intact) Lt. Geckler rejoined our outfit in June.

It was very dark that night. Harrington had a square hole dug alongside of a small tree and I climbed down in and helped him dig for about 2 hours. Everything was unearthly quiet except for the occasional growling of the rifleman who had been hit earlier in the evening with that first mortar round. We pooled our resources—that is, food and water. Between us we had about a half canteen of water and 4 D ration bars (dry, hard chocolate) plus my can of walnuts and honey. By 3:00 AM we had eaten and drunk everything available. There was no sleeping because of the danger of a night attack. As it would have been hopeless to remain in our advanced position with so little of our strength remaining, our whole unit pulled back under the leadership of Lt. Boyle, a forward observer for the field artillery, attached to our unit. All of the officers of B Company had been killed or seriously wounded. Also, we were cut off from our rear echelon. We found out later that a German tank and infantry had approached the house at the crossroads during the night and had captured all equipment and personnel there, including the aid station. Plourd, our medic, and Purcell, our driver, and his jeep were among the 25 or 30 men captured.

Nov. 30, 1944: We retreated about 500 yards along the side of the mountain and dug in again. By daylight Lt. Boyle was directing artillery fire on the town of Itterwiller. The Germans were making strange noises continually until sun up. Their tanks would rumble up and down the road, with a motorcycle or a truck also in evidence every so often. Sometimes they would wind up their screaming meemies, multiple barreled rocket launchers. We remained in that position the entire day. Our only contact was with the field artillery radio. About dusk we got the word that the town had been cleared of the enemy. That came as a surprise because it had seemed impregnable only a short time ago. Slowly, in single file, we made our way down the side of the hill, across a creek, and up into the town of Itterwiller. We were ushered into a bakery, given K rations, and went to sleep.

Dec. 1, 1944: We awoke feeling very tired and hungry. The mail had come in. I had two packages. Dell had 18 packages. We gorged ourselves on the rich food, mostly fruitcake, cookies, candies and other goodies from Christmas packages. We had a change of clothing and generally took it easy. I was not among the few from our unit who returned to the hill to help carry our dead to the Graves Registration Office.

We also received replacements—Spurr, Seiber, Phillipots, Morris and LaPoint. The effect of the rich food on our empty stomachs was too much for us. I got very little sleep that evening. I could not lie still for more than 10 minutes because of stomach cramps. I was as sick as a dog—I would vomit, vomit again, and then vomit some more. I wasn't exactly constipated, either—in fact, just the opposite. I had a very severe case of 3's, as did almost everyone else. The stomach cramps and related condition lasted for the better part of 2 weeks.

Dec. 2, 1944: Our rest was short, however, because the following morning we were again on the road. The broad Rhine plain was before us. We walked south, coming to the town of Nordhalten where the dead German soldiers had not yet been picked up around the roadblocks and railway station. We filled our canteens from the town watering trough, using water purification tablets. From there we walked further south to Dambach for a halt of several hours. While there, Spurr, LaPoint and I took a walk back of the church, where several civilians were digging graves, up a small path where we met a strange sight. There were a great number of dead German soldiers scattered over the open hillside in various positions. Upon examining them closer, we could find no blood, no evidence that the ground had been disturbed, or no indication that they had died fighting. They seemed to have been hit by shrapnel. To this day, I am unable to account for the facts; unless they were victims of timed, overhead, American artillery fire. Around noon we pulled out past Dambach in the general direction of Selesstat. But before we swung into action, orders came through that we were to join the French First Armored Division and remain with it until the Colmar pocket was cleaned out. We then backtracked, on foot, through Dambach, Nordhalten, east through Epflig, finally coming to a small village where every house seemed to be occupied by French Army tankers. Finally, we found an empty barn and persuaded the owner to let us use his kitchen to heat water and cook 10-in-one rations. We did prepare supper and upon leaving the next morning, much to his surprise, made him a present of everything we couldn't carry.

Dec. 3, 1944: Orders canceled again—so back to Dambach we walked. The road was lined with trees but practically every one had been dynamited to fall across the narrow paved road. Thousands of slit trenches and dugouts lined the road. The enemy had employed the laborers of the surrounding countryside to prepare elaborate defenses but the French Army had driven north, outflanking them and making them impossible to defend. Periodically, dozens of our men would leave the column and run out into the field, succumbing to the stomach cramps. Arriving in Dambach once more, we found another barn in which to sleep. The owner was a tailor with a 16 and an 18 year old daughter. In the barn was a large draft ox; he milked her and most of us had a good portion of fresh milk. I was one of the few to sleep in the house.

Dec. 4, 1944: Up that morning with the announcement that our battalion was to receive a short rest. We boarded trucks and journeyed to the town of Wingersheim, a small town near Strasbourg. We had to find our own billets, and soon found a house that had two rooms to spare. Six of us stayed there. It was owned by a barber and his wife who had two sons in the German Army, but had already received notice of the death of one. While there, we rested, washed, slept, wrote letters, had our hair cut and got professional shaves. But not me—I got a haircut and had my Abe Lincoln beard trimmed. We received our duffel bags for the first time. Many of the pictures I had with me were ruined because of the way duffel bags were handled. We slept there the nights of December 4th, 5th and 6th. Fresh milk every day—I watched the woman milk the three oxen one evening. She spent most of her time cursing the beast or beating it with her stool. All were so big that they continued to eat and switch their tails—they shook off the blows as though they were gentle pats. The barber invited us to eat with him one meal. We had boiled potatoes, boiled beef and bread. We would have liked jelly with the bread but were too embarrassed to get it from our own rations. The meal was very appetizing, especially the meat and gravy, but we were too polite to eat as much as he would have liked. The last day we were there the barber butchered a hog. I had one picture taken in front of the house while we were there. The sky was cloudy almost the entire period but once the German Luftwaffe strafed the town. They were able to give the streets a good going over. Our latest replacement was Tom Haley from Burdine, Ky. He immediately found a potato still and spent most of his time trying to persuade the hired girl who ran it to let him sample the potato schnapps. From this incident, he was known as "Schnapps" Haley.

On the evening of the 6th of December we were trucked north again to the town of Pfaffenhofen. We departed from the trucks at the square in the center of town and immediately were walking in the direction of the largest town in the area, Merzwiller. It had started to drizzle by that time, and about 30 minutes later we had relieved the unit that had been watching the town. They had attacked the town earlier but had been driven back. We dug in as best we could in the marshy ground, and even though there was no sign of snow on the ground, the temperature wasn't very high. It was cold enough for the rain to turn to sleet. No one got any sleep that night.

Dec. 7 and 8, 1944: Just before dawn we pulled back about 30 yards onto a drier piece of ground, but still in the woods, and dug in again. I dug in with Harrington. E. A. Brown was now the new squad leader. That day and the next were spent in receiving mail, eating C rations and in general improving the holes. In the meantime, artillery was being brought up for the general assault on Merzwiller, just across the Zintzel River. We were to have Corps Artillery support, 48 pieces. It made itself noticeable about noon of the 8th. A short round, just skimming the tree tops, crashed into the top of one of them. The tree burst sent everyone hunting for a hole, and the artillery received a good GI cussing. It was during the evening of the 8th of December that Harrington began to talk about his home. McCarthy had brought the mail up early that evening together with orders to attack Merzwiller early the next morning. We were to give supporting fire to the assault troops crossing the river. We even had a .50 cal. machine gun in position manned by some of our unit.

Harrington and I had crawled into our hole which was covered with logs, dirt and shelter-half. We lit a candle and read our mail. He had received a "Dear John" letter from his 18 year old wife. Harrington had married young--he at 18 and she at 14. He had been drafted early, sent to Alaska, and from there to the 103rd in Texas. He had not seen his wife except for 5 days in California since he was drafted. Soon after he was sent to Alaska, she moved to California and got a job. His letter that night said she was getting a divorce and marrying her boss. Harrington acted very blue and discouraged--he said he didn't care what happened to him.

Dec. 9, 1944: We were up about 4:00 AM following the river bank to positions protecting the railway bridge across which the troops were to go. Seatter was carrying the gun to my tripod and during one of our 5 minute stops, got lost from the column. The artillery barrage was supposed to begin at 4:50 and last until 5:15. By the time Seatter was located in the dark and our position established, the zero hour was fast approaching. We had to set up our gun in a shallow trench, already dug, which was covered by a few logs and evergreen boughs. Haley and Seatter crawled under the logs covering the trench while I put the finishing touches on the gun position. Immediately the Corps Artillery opened up--all 48 artillery pieces, plus heavy mortars and 4.2 in. chemical mortars. It was terrific--for the next 20 minutes or so the exploding artillery rounds traversing up and down the opposite bank, the town, the rail yard, the hills and woods, seemed to light up the whole area. As the barrage began to slacken, the rifle troops began to start across the railroad bridge. All went well for about two minutes until sporadic German artillery fire started to land in the very same area that our own artillery had previously swept. A few of the rounds came as far as our side of the river. One landed near an overturned half-track behind which Spurr and Mike, our runner, were lying.

There were several tree bursts. The three of us were lying just below the level of the ground, with one layer of logs over us for protection. One 88 mm round landed about 2 yards from the hole, blowing the roof off and covering us with dirt and rocks. About two minutes later another round exploded about 6 feet from one corner of the hole, bouncing us around a bit. The fire was too accurate to be guess work. By this time the Merzwiller battle was in full swing. We could hear the fire fight intensify. As it was daylight by this time, we started across what was left of the railroad bridge. At the far end, lying near a shell crater, was one dead GI, a victim of a 105 mm short round.

The 1st section supported C Company in a frontal attack on the town. Our 2nd section was to support B Company in a flanking protective move in order to prevent a counter attack from the West. We followed the main road and met with some opposition by small arms from a group of houses just outside of the town. B Company then left the road and began climbing a small, bare rise to the left. As they got to the crest of the rise, they met some small arms fire from a wooded area, slightly downhill and about 200 yards on the other side of a plowed field. We were ordered to set up our machine guns along an old fence line just at the crest of the rise, in order to cover the forward slope. I dug in immediately behind the gun while Seatter and Haley occupied a large shell hole about 20 yards to my rear. The entire top of the ridge drew water at 6 inches. Any kind of a hole that we dug was full of water immediately—worthless. There we lay until mid-afternoon, pinned down by machine gun and rifle fire from the woods to our front. Finally we received some artillery support—one battery (4 guns). Soon 105 mm rounds were skimming the hill, coming from behind us, going over head, and landing in the woods to our front. We had sporadic support for about 15 minutes. The last 4 rounds fired by the battery almost proved disastrous.

The first round skimmed over our heads by about 30 feet and landed 100 yards in front of us, in the middle of the plowed field. The second round whined over our heads much closer, landing about 60 yards to our front. The third round swished and sizzled as it streaked toward us, barely clearing our gun position, and exploding about 20 yards to our front. That was too close—we were all hunched up waiting for the fourth one, and when we heard the muzzle blast, we knew what to expect. It had our name on it—it wouldn't miss. Just a short hiss and a tremendous explosion—it had been fired on a direct line with the others—it landed just behind the shell hole occupied by Seatter and Haley. Mud flew everywhere for the next few seconds. Needless to say, the artillery was the target for a few choice words.

Our relief was the 3rd Battalion—they arrived about 4:00 PM. They were pinned down by small arms fire even before they could occupy our holes. We left them in this predicament, as we wanted to find a house where we could dry our clothes and find something to eat. At the first house we came to, the 1st Section had caught and was complacently roasting a chicken after having raided the local wine cellar. We were too tired to search further and decided upon a house which had pet rabbits, which we ate, and liked, and lived happily ever after. No—we slept in our bedrolls on the floor in the house.

Dec. 10, 1944: I awoke to find I had been sleeping in the hall. So, next door to eat breakfast with the other section. We pulled out of Merzwiller around noon. Near the railroad tracks we passed a German Flak-wagon—the driver was still in it, burned to a crisp. Our column headed due north toward the German border of Pfalzerland. Late that afternoon we came to an open field where could be seen thousands of pieces of paper scattered to the wind. I picked one up—it was a pamphlet with one side written in German and the other side in English. It was pure propaganda. It read, "American boys, what are you doing here? What are you fighting for?" And a lot more about President Roosevelt and the Wall Street industrialists—pure propaganda. About dark our section took the left fork in the road and went about a half mile to a little town to spend the night. This town had been shelled pretty badly by our artillery. All that could be seen were dead oxen, dead chickens and wrecked and ruined buildings. The inhabitants couldn't understand why we had shelled their town at all since there had been no German soldiers in it for days. We occupied a house that belonged to a woman and her two children. Both the woman and the kids were not exactly friendly. Of course this town was less than 20 km from the German border. We were in the house less than 10 minutes when orders came to move out, so we assembled in the street. We were then told to go back and prepare to spend the night in our billets. But when we got back to the house we had just left, it was locked and nobody was home. So we broke the door in, set up the machine gun in the doorway, swiped about 4 dozen eggs, a loaf of bread, some butter and some jelly. When supper was prepared, orders came to move out, so we put the remaining eggs in our pockets (field jacket pockets were large and roomy) and marched off, eating as we went and carrying our equipment. It was dark as pitch. Finally, we came to Walbourg, where the other section was stationed (All the unnecessary walking could have been avoided had we taken the fork to the right, just before dark). In one place a bridge had been blown up, so we had to detour into a field and then back to the road. It was getting late—we stopped at the first house in town and naturally the other troops had all the beds taken. Into the kitchen—a little more wood on the fire—and soon we were frying eggs again. Just before midnight, about the time we finally got bedded down, it started to rain.

Dec. 11, 1944: The battalion left Walbourg around noon and walked until it reached the rail line. At the underpass, which had been bombed, we followed the rail line north until we came to a large tannery. After some confusion as to guard positions, about dark we took quarters in a drying room of the tannery.

Dec. 12, 1944: Up that morning without anything to eat. We retraced our steps to Walbourg, and this time rested at a building used as a stable. There, unfortunately, after we had shed our equipment, both Seater and I discovered our pistol and holster missing. We immediately reported them stolen and finally Seater's holster and my pistol were recovered from some of the men of Cannon Company and our antitank company. I kept both and Seater put in a request for a replacement. After eating, we left early in the afternoon down the road, a double column, one on each side of the road. At one time we had to detour about 400 yards around a blown bridge. I had found a good map of northern Alsace in the stable, the better to follow our route. We passed through Soultz unter Wald, near some mines. This was very close to the Maginot Line. Some one-star General saw us walking and apparently didn't like our looks, so ordered us through the town to sleep in the woods that evening. At dark Capt. Neely persuaded the battalion CO to let us bed down in a group of mine buildings near the road. Next to these was a PW stockade. We slept at the top of the mine shaft on some dry reeds.

Dec. 13, 1944: Early that morning we began walking toward the German border. Along the way, Capt. Lincoln told Carroll that he had been promoted to S/Sgt. Following the railroad tracks, about noon we came to a town that was occupied by colored troops (a tank destroyer unit). Our section stayed in a house which had its cellar flooded with water. We received packages and mail. I got a box of candy and a silver ID bracelet from Marj. Several of the fellows tried catching some chickens that were running loose but stopped after the farmer ran after them with a pitchfork, apparently cursing them out in German. The people in this area appeared to have plenty to eat: potatoes, ham, carrots, bread, turnips, etc. I doubt if they had even felt the effects of the war until we came along. We pulled out of town late that afternoon and walked for a while, always walking and carrying full equipment. Our destination, or so we were led to believe, was a fairly large town where we were to spend a few days and rest up. When we arrived, we found it fully occupied—so we started out again. It was generally agreed that we were lost—finally, we came to a small village and found an unoccupied barn for the night.

Dec. 14, 1944: An entire day of rest. Here I wrote my first letters since Dec. 6th. The whole day was spent sitting around a large fire, eating, talking and waiting. That night I slept in a house directly across the street from the barn.

Dec. 15, 16, 17 and 18, 1944: Off again, walking a few more miles north until coming to the town of Steinselz. The sky was just getting light as we arrived and took up quarters in the extreme east end of the town. As it was very foggy early in the morning, the visibility was poor. Stan Panoske immediately thought he saw some of the enemy running up the hillside on the northern side of the town. We were excited as we ran into the house and hurriedly began setting up our machine guns in the windows. We had to move two old women from their one small warm room. The men on the hillside turned out to be GIs. We remained in the house for 4 days; there was much argument because of the proximity to the German border and because we were not used to inaction. I went back several miles by truck one day to take a shower. While there, I saw one German plane. Dozens of AA fire immediately broke out and he took for the cover of his own lines. Most of the fellows slept in large 4 poster beds, covered with feather ticks. In our bedroom were 3 modern mechanical mousetraps, the queerest pieces of machinery I had seen. It was quite a while before we were convinced that these were not booby traps. Just outside our window was a battery of "Long Toms," 155 mm artillery that took to firing at the most inopportune moments. The muzzle blasts literally shook the walls and windows. We took some pictures of the house and were quite ready to move on when orders came to push further north on the next morning.

Dec. 19, 1944: Following the road to the North we passed a battery of 90 mm AA guns. They were the first of that size we had seen. We descended into the fair-sized town of Wissembourg, located on the Lauter River, less than 2 km from the border. We did not stop in town, however, but continued on through it taking a small dirt road leading to the North. We dug foxholes on the outskirts of town in the midst of a large vineyard. The town had been taken the previous day by the 14th Armored Div., supported by one of our regiments. We found a small shed full of straw mats which we used to improve our foxholes. Beautiful—straw-lined floor, ceiling and walls. Just across a fence was a turnip patch. I soon had a stove going—a large tin can half full of sand and dirt, with gasoline poured into it. Another foxhole dug for nothing—we were ordered back to town and about dark found a house that was pretty badly beaten up. We had no more than started to clean it up a bit when word came down that an empty apartment house near the center of town was available. We loaded everything in the jeep and soon had settled in the apartment house. Our unit took over the 2nd floor and part of the 3rd floor. These were very modern

apartments, well furnished, full of English, French and German books, magazines and newspapers.

Dec. 20, 1944: Up early to explore the house. Lt Moser became our new platoon leader. There developed a terrific argument over where the different sections were to stay. I found 3 dozen eggs preserved in a large crock—I think it was some kind of brine. At any rate, they tasted as good as fresh eggs. Everyone had plenty to eat and I read most of the English publications.

Dec. 21 and 22, 1944: Much the same as the day before. In the afternoon we were told our battalion had been assigned to Corps Reserve. What special assignment did they have for us now? At dusk we were told to assemble along the street. We moved less than 200 yards and were told to find shelter. I found a copy of "Mein Kampf" printed in German. The house we occupied had two stories. The kitchen was on the ground floor and the bedrooms above. Some cooked while others (myself included) stretched out in one of the bedrooms on the second floor. Mike Colacaro, our runner, accidentally discharged his pistol in the bedroom, making a hole in the ceiling of the kitchen and hitting the stove. It went generally unnoticed, except by the two fellows using the stove, as artillery shells began falling into the section of town we were in. We all cleared the top floor after that. Sometime after midnight the church bells started ringing and more artillery shells fell. Finally, our orders came to move out—it was almost 3:00 AM. Our entire platoon traveled by company carriers. I rode in the rear of the maintenance truck. At first we rode south, in convoy, stopping every few hours to build a fire and warm ourselves and our rations. It was cold! Cold! Awful cold!!! Early in the afternoon of the 22nd we came to a town somewhere in Lothringen to stay for the night. We had traveled south, then west, then north to arrive in the Saar basin and relieve a unit of the 3rd Army, an armored unit, for service at the Battle of the Bulge.

Dec. 23, 1944: The squads were shaken up and Wink was appointed our new squad leader. We cooked dinner in a large kitchen belonging to a farmer. I received a package containing a bottle of ink. That night we moved out toward the front, to relieve the armored units. While enroute in convoy, while it was still dark, the trucks had stopped for "Pisa Call" and a German bomber flew the length of the road not more than 600 feet over our heads. The fields were snow covered but the roads were clear and the plane could probably follow the dark road outline. We speculated that it was a supply or similar plane between the mainland of Germany and the channel ports which were still in German control. That night we slept in a house, the only furniture, a stove. The house, otherwise was completely bare.

Dec. 24, 1944: We moved out early in the morning toward the town of Ruhling. The armored unit, occupying the town, immediately moved out. Around noon, a squad of A Company, supported by our platoon, left town for positions in a small patch of timber overlooking the Saar River. The column was led by an Armored Div. Infantryman; he was to take us to positions already established and bring his men back. The column, single file, with around 20 feet between each man, led from town through an orchard, out into a meadow (lightly snow covered), past a large barn (roof only—no sides) about 2/3 full of hay. The column had easy going as it was cold, not much snow on the bare ground, and a very clear day. The head of the column was well past the barn, almost half way to the timber when mortar rounds began searching the column. Everyone hit the ground and those that were close enough ran for the barn. Our squad was still about 75 yards away when the rounds began falling close to us. Immediately ahead of me and a bit to my right was a large watering trough. I flung myself behind it as Johnson, carrying the gun, hit the ground to my right. Two rounds landed within 20 feet of us. A piece of shrapnel tore a hole in the water jacket of the gun lying alongside of Johnson. Johnson's Christmas packages, which he was also carrying, were dropped—scattering them all over the barnyard. We all grabbed our equipment and ran for the shelter of the barn. Bastuk, our medic, was already patching up some of the wounded. We withdrew completely and went back to town. The armored infantry guide had been killed, as well as two men from A Company, besides the 3 or 4 that had been wounded. About dark we again set out and this time gained the cover of the forest without mishap. We set up two guns, one in a pillbox on the Magnot Line, and the other about 30 yards from it. We took turns guarding and were relieved by members of our other section before daylight the next morning.

Dec. 25, 1944: Christmas Day—and it was spent in a house in Ruhling. I talked with the family living there and found that the young man was hiding from the enemy. He was operating under the FFI. Our dinner consisted of rations brought up during darkness by jeep from the kitchen. It included turkey and two cans of beer for each man, among other things.

Dec. 26, 1944—Jan. 3, 1945: We were up before daylight and proceeded across the field toward the positions

we had left the morning before. Positions had to be moved, and after relieving the other unit, we carried the machine guns back down through the woods to a point overlooking an open field of fire. We had to dig out an abandoned foxhole and also set up a machine gun nest in a ditch running along a brushy fence. We were finished by dark and settled down to guarding. To our left near was an antitank gun and further down the slope along a creek was another machine gun nest, with an outpost of riflemen in front of that. There was quite a bit of snow on the ground by this time. From the 26th of Dec. until the 4th of Jan. it was much the same with a few minor exceptions. One day we would occupy the machine gun nest on the hillside; then back to town; then occupy the position by the creek; then back to town. Very little action—one day four stray mortar rounds landed near our position.

One morning while we were in the position near the creek, (we had relieved the other unit after dark the previous evening) Winik and I were lying in our sleeping bags in the gun position, after keeping watch all night. About 7:30 AM, just after daylight, three men dressed in civilian clothes walked up to our position and started speaking German. Winik had his back to them and I had been reading a book and did not notice them walk up. It was a cold brisk morning and the sun was shining on the snow. At their first words I just about had heart failure. I was scared; they had walked up past our outpost unnoticed and were in a good position to do us in. Each carried a German potato masher on his belt. Winik and I immediately jumped up out of our hole, shed our sleeping bags and covered them with our weapons. We took their grenades and gave each a cigarette from our K rations. They were French civilians who had escaped from the town near the river. They said that they had overpowered a guard and taken the grenades. They had noticed one dead American Lieutenant lying on the road just inside the town. That confirmed our knowledge of the fact that one of our patrol leaders had failed to return. We held them until we could send them around to the point in the woods where they were picked up later and questioned.

During those two weeks, a large scale battle about 100 miles to the North was going on. Although we knew nothing about what had happened at the time, even on our off days, we would dig and set up secondary emplacements. One day a two-star was scheduled to inspect fortifications. We were alerted several times before he finally arrived. He didn't stay long—just as he had finished criticizing our positions, a stray 88 round came from across the river and landed in the snow near the position in the open field. None of us saw it land as we had hit the ground and it had sunk well into the 18 inches of snow cover before it exploded. We manned another position overlooking the twin towns of Grossleiderstroff and Kleinleiderstroff for one night but since our position was located in a heavy woods, we saw nothing. We did, however, capture one German soldier who had gotten lost, or so he said, and was walking across the field right into our positions. He walked right into about 30 riflemen and machine-guns. He said he was looking for his outpost—to relieve his guard. Personally, from the way he acted, I think he knew where he was going, and was glad he got captured, and was safe.

Our house was located at the East end of Ruhling across from a temporary PW enclosure. This was nothing more than a small wooden building with straw on the floor, with a double screen of fence around it. Next door to us was a German barracks. Several of the rooms looked very comfortable. We were especially watchful while in town after what had happened on the 24th. The town was too close to the border and no one could tell which civilians were sympathizers of the enemy. Most of the civilians lived in a huge underground cave. It was nearly a mile long and 40 or 50 yards wide. There were kept provisions and everything else imaginable. Spaces were segregated off and families lived there for several months. The cave was an abandoned coal mine, since we were in the rich French coal region of the Saar Basin. Ruhling was located on a bare flat plain so our supplies had to be run in just before dark and just before dawn each day. We heard the rumor that M Company was to relieve us, and on the 3rd of Jan. the entire platoon was relieved, that is all but myself. I was to stay an extra day and show the men coming in the positions. As far as I was concerned, it was a good opportunity to get a full night's sleep, so I climbed into my sleeping bag and didn't wake up until almost daylight on the 4th, about an hour before I was to leave.

Jan. 4-15, 1945: We were a bit late and the jeep was tearing up the road trying to get over the next high terrain feature before we would become too obvious a target. We were stopped numerous times, halfheartedly by guards who didn't even bother to take their hands out of their pockets. We rode back about 6 or 7 miles to the town of Diebling, where Regimental Hqs. had set up. It was a crossroads for the 410th and 411th. I saw several jeeploads of wounded being returned from the 41th sector through the town.

The town of Diebling was noted for its coal mining. However, it had no coal. No transportation either—travel was restricted and dangerous. The only coal hauled was in GI, 2 1/2 ton trucks manned by details of GIs. Spurr

should know, because he was detailed one day. We did everything to keep warm. We stole coal from a pile in front of Regt'l Hqs. and even went out several days and gathered wood along the creek. By this time we were issued heavy, quilted sleeping bags. Most of the time between the 4th and 11th of Jan. 1945 was spent reading. It a welcome change. Football in the streets. A few movies, among them "Gaslight," before we left. One night we had a musical comedy, but the sound track didn't work. I was told twice to shave off my beard, which by that time was well on its way toward the two-inch length. On the 11th, our commanding general resigned due to health and he was replaced by the hero of Bastogne, B/G Anthony C. McAuliffe, the second in command of the 101st Airborne Div. He was insistent upon cleanliness and neatness, and so after the third warning to shave, I shaved. Many of the fellows didn't recognize me since they had never seen me without a beard. It was just as well, I guess, since, in case of a gas attack, I wouldn't have had much time to run and shave before donning my gas mask. It was about this time that Winik got his orders to return to the states. His father had somehow managed to get him appointed to West Point. In the meantime, Pogrnich, a man who had been wounded at Iterswiller, returned. He took over the squad. We played cards, ate, when we had something to eat, and generally took it easy. Our only duty was pulling guard at the center of the crossroads, but nothing much happened.

One night we saw an air raid on Saarbrucken. It was like watching fireworks except that there was very little noise--too far away. We made snow ice cream and took pictures. The owner of our house wanted to go to the next town and get his pig, but as he was out of favor with the mayor who would not sign his pass, the military would not let him go. We got paid on the 16th but had nothing to spend it on.

Jan. 16, 1945: That evening parts of the 70th Div. moved in to replace us. They were fresh from the states and had been ambushed while packed in trucks in convoy--about 60% casualties. Their motor pool guide had led them straight into the German lines and before they could get turned around many had been killed still asleep in the trucks. That evening we moved out--destination unknown. It seemed that the Wehrmacht was slowly pushing us back to the Saverse Gap--all the territory we had taken since Dec. 10. They were also pushing us from Hagenuau and from along the Rhine River. We loaded into 2 1/2 ton GI trucks and traveled all that night. I crawled under a seat and slept most of the way.

Jan. 17, 1945: Daylight found us about 3 miles from Niederbronn on a direct route to the next town--enemy occupied. We guarded the two main arteries leading from town. It so happened that near our outpost was a house and in it lived a family who liked to show their appreciation. At any rate Spurr and Haley got so drunk that they had to ride--they couldn't walk. We walked to Niederbronn that afternoon past a GI 7th Army cemetery, but I couldn't see any names I recognized. Down into the town--it was one of the prettiest towns in Alsace--and it wasn't shelled too badly yet. There was quite a bit of activity as the 100th Div. was having some more trouble in Bitche. We moved into a 3rd floor apartment with a stove and beds and thought we were on top of the world. We bought 3 five-gallon barrels of beer for the platoon and had things well under control when we were notified that our unit had been placed in Corps Reserve. That sounded fine or ominous depending upon how you looked at it. It meant that we would be used only as a last resort and then only as a reserve unit to be switched from place to place whenever and wherever needed. Several of us took it with a grain of salt, along with the beer which was very flat, because of what had happened before. To make it short, we were roused out of bed at 11:30 that night and piled into brand new huge QM trucks and carried off to another location. We spent about 5 hours of steady riding and it wasn't bad--the smoothest ride we had seen to date.

Jan. 18, 1945: I remember riding through Hagenuau about daylight--several buildings were ablaze and occasionally an enemy round would land in town. We drove slowly on through and stopped at a little town just as the fog was beginning to lift. The next two hours were spent in trying to find a house to stay in. Everything was shut up tight and after rousing someone, we found all the buildings full of refugees from the towns closer to the river. Finally, on the West end of town we found a farmhouse that was willing to take us in and let us get warm. Everything was arranged and we were about ready to fix a meal when the order came to move out. It was then that we found that our battalion was the only unit which had made the convoy move. Our mission, as a combat team, was to attack the town of Sessenheim, located on the railroad, and hold it just long enough to rescue about 75 GIs who had been trapped there for the past two days. Their unit had tried and had been beaten back, with heavy losses. It must have been an important mission because our 411th Regimental Combat Team was alerted to take over in case we needed help. As we walked down the street that chilly morning, we could see many American tanks and related armored equipment standing under the trees, much of it looking as if it needed repair.



In broad daylight we filed out of town on to the broad open plain covered with snow toward a thick grove of trees. We were told that the town of Sessenheim was somewhere beyond the trees, between us and the Rhine River. We felt like sitting ducks as we slowly made our way, following the road to the edge of the timber. Nothing happened, so we presumed the enemy was not watching our progress. Once under cover of the forest, most of us were anxious to dig in and find some sort of shelter. The woods were full of piles of 4 foot split logs, neatly stacked for hauling. They would be ideal for cover for holes. Orders seemed to be mixed and no one knew what to do. Finally, the combat team was split up and our C Company assigned to attack from the left while A Company would continue straight ahead. Our 2nd Platoon was split and one section went with C Company. My section accompanied A Company; the 1st Platoon was to stay in reserve in case abnormal trouble developed. At the time this seemed unfair, since our platoon had taken all the casualties so far. But our section tagged along with Lt. Smith's A Company. Looking back, I can consider myself lucky, based upon what happened.

As C Company had to swing around to the left, we killed time by walking slowly toward our jumping off place. We piled all our spare equipment, including our raincoats, gas masks and blanket rolls in one large stack and kept right on walking. There were several dog fights in the air with the German pilots seeming to have the upper hand. We did have one persistent L4 spotting fire for our artillery almost get knocked down by a combination of German FW and German ground fire. While following the road through the forest, I saw 8 American light tanks come buzzing up to disappear ahead of us into the thicker woods. Things were looking up—maybe we could get the job done and withdraw very soon. We weren't to jump off until 5:00 PM which would make it just about dark, so we took our time—wishing we had a hole, when German artillery began to search the forest with 88 mm fire. About 3:00 PM we arrived at a beautiful spot for protection. It was the mortar positions for the last unit that had been there. These were nice roomy holes, with homemade stoves, solid log roofs, extra rations and blankets. We didn't remain long but soon moved out again.

Single file down the road, across a short open space, shell-marked by mortar fire. Ahead lay a fairly large open snow-covered field—on the other side could be seen a thick grove of trees. Between us and the field was a thin line of trees. Ours was to be a surprise attack with no pre-artillery fire. As we lined up along the row of trees, waiting for the order to advance, we could hear some small arms fire to our left which sounded as if C Company had run into a little trouble. At any rate we soon forgot all about C Company. At about 5 minutes before time to jump off, German mortar, rocket, light artillery and heavy artillery fire began to come in. It was staggering—it was the worst barrage I ever experienced. Somehow they had either known, or had guessed, the time of our attack. The field in front of us was torn to shreds. Mortar rounds by the dozens poured into the small fringe of trees where we had been lined up ready to advance. Everyone hit the ground. As it was dark by this time, communication was impossible. The firing kept up until midnight, although not in the volume they threw at us during the first hour. At intervals, the German fire would descend upon our positions, then about 4 to 5 minutes later he would pour a barrage a hundred yards behind us. A Company lost several men right from the first barrage. I never did get a chance to set up the machine gun. Johnson was carrying the gun and we dug together. We began digging lying on our stomachs rising slightly on our elbows between barrages to dig. In no time we were sweating. Shrapnel was tearing the trees and bushes around us to shreds. The tail assembly from a mortar bounced off my helmet and for a bit I thought I had been hit. Occasionally a German flare would light the sky—just making sure we weren't advancing or retreating. Pogrmich, Spurr and several riflemen had crawled into a large dugout with a few timbers covering it and one mortar round (a dud) landed in the soft dirt thrown up around it and the nose of the mortar round just stuck under the lip of the roof into the hole. Medics were working frantically and several men seemed out of their minds as they were yelling for someone to shoot them because they had been hit pretty badly. I was chewing gum a mile a minute, a custom I never failed to keep when the going got rough. Johnson made the classic statement when he leaned over and hollered in my ear, "Brown, I'm scared." I told him I was scared too, but there was nothing much we could do about it. We even talked with some of the fellows next to us about running for it between barrages, but finally the orders came through to sit tight and be prepared to retreat the first chance we got.

By midnight the firing slackened off—we then had a shallow slit trench dug which did protect us from almost anything except a direct hit or a tree burst over our head. We were told to keep a space between our body and the ground to prevent concussion—that's one fact, fortunately, I didn't have to prove or disprove. We could hear someone cutting wood in the grove of trees across the field from us.

Jan. 19, 1945: About 2:00 AM we withdrew several hundred yards. There an old abandoned farmhouse stood, right among several concrete Maginot Line pill boxes, also abandoned. We set up the machine gun in one of the

pill boxes, but immediately saw it was completely inadequate for defense or offense. The gun was then set up just outside the pill box—we would use the pill box only for cover in case of mortar or artillery fire. As daylight arrived on that morning everything seemed calm. The Germans did begin to throw tons of heavy rockets into a town a few miles to our extreme right—these sounded like thousands of birds with their whistling and fluttering noises. As we had no communication with C Company, A Company attacked as scheduled in order to give the right flank protection, if needed. The weary riflemen took off while we at the edge of the woods looked on. Our job was to make sure the enemy did not outflank us and to provide cover in case the GIs should be forced to retreat.

To our left front was a sort of shallow pond, actually a low place in the field where water had accumulated about 10 to 12 inches deep. However, it was now frozen solid, and the riflemen had a difficult time walking as they made their way forward. The last rifleman had disappeared not more than 20 minutes when all hell broke loose. Nebelwerfers, mortars, burp guns and Flak were heard in the forest ahead of us. Immediately A Company riflemen began pouring out of the forest, running without guns, frantically trying to seek protection from whatever was chasing them. They hit the ice a-running. Many slipped, skidded and fell full length into the protection of trees and brush at our end of the ice. One fellow stayed on his feet, only to have a burp gun tip him up at right angles. He took lead in both legs, before he hit the ice and tried to crawl to safety. A medic jeep then tried to rescue him. With red cross flags flying, the jeep took off over the ice. Miraculously, the jeep reached the wounded man, spun around once and stopped. The driver helped the rifleman into the back of the jeep, then got in and gunned the 4-wheel drive, getting foothold on the grass, twigs and brush sticking up through the ice. The German sniper didn't fire another shot at the jeep. A Company was a beaten outfit—they had encountered everything imaginable. The Germans had filtered through the line at night and the riflemen found themselves surrounded with the German soldiers dug in all around them.

It wasn't long before we got orders to pull back, so back we walked in small groups, while Johnson was sent to contact the 1st Section attached to C Company. As we approached our pile of equipment, a burp gunner hurried us along by throwing lead over our heads—another opened up ahead of us—they seemed everywhere. The Germans were hot after us and in some cases had even passed us. We were running by this time and as we passed our equipment, we each grabbed a bedroll and gas mask and kept right on going, only this time through the unbeaten forest, not the beaten path.

Johnson finally returned, not being able to find our 1st Section—however, they soon appeared. We found out from them that they and C Company had taken quite a beating that morning. Philipotts had been hit in the shoulder with machine gun slugs and LaPoint had been hit in the head. Both were luckily carried back to safety to a jeep and back to a hospital. C Company had advanced the night before and had gotten as far as the railroad but, without support from A Company on the right, had dug in. The next morning when they started to advance, the Germans met them with everything they had. When Philipotts was hit, LaPoint took over and got it through his helmet before he could fire a half dozen rounds. Seatter then took over and lost his head for a second. Although he was ordered to cease fire, he accidentally slipped and fired one burst. Immediately the German crossfire ripped the top of the railroad embankment. Capt. Neely ordered a withdrawal and most of the wounded were carried out. Many dead were left, but part of the 411th Combat Team helped the withdrawal so the remainder of those able to walk eventually found their way back to where the rest of the battalion was dug in. Every single one of the 8 light tanks had been hit and put out of action.

The battalion was dug in with a perimeter defense. We had our position a few hundred feet from the CP. The stacks of wood piled up in the forest were made to order. The digging was soft and we covered our holes with timbers and dirt. That night it snowed about 5 inches.

Jan. 20, 1945: Occasionally a stray round would crash into the tree tops close by. Our own artillery was conspicuously absent. Seatter told me about seeing Russ, Marj's brother. Another unit had taken over our positions up forward and were supposed to attack—we rested in our foxholes. Rifle company mess was tasty. We were given a crate of California naval oranges (huge things) just fresh from a refrigerator truck. Mail call included packages. All sorts of rumors were going around. Once in a while we could hear burp guns fairly close and once the cry went up that a German soldier had been spotted. Two men from C Company finally found their way back to the battalion. The Germans had stripped them of their clothing and had tied them to a tree to freeze. After they returned, everyone watched pretty closely for strangers in GI clothing. About dark on that evening we were ordered to move out. Everyone began packing immediately, anxious to get out of the trap we had gotten into. As

I was in the last unit near the edge of the forest, we had to cover all the other units until the forest was cleared of GIs. We were able to move out about 11:00 PM. The moon was shining slightly and it was light enough to see, in fact it was too light. We did make way too much noise, with the jeeps and everything, but we retreated without mishap back across the plain, up the slope, through several towns until we arrived at the town of Marienthal about 3:30 AM.

Jan. 21, 1945: We were assigned a house but had some trouble rousing the owner. Finally, he climbed out of the cellar long enough to let us in. I pulled guard about 6:00 AM as it was getting daylight. I watched a few artillery barrages thrown across the Rhine and saw tracers along the river, until my time was up. I soon discovered that the night latch had closed behind me and I was locked out. I had a terrible time trying to get back into the house. After being unable to awake anybody, I pounded on the cellar door and got the owner up again. All the fellows from my unit were sound asleep. Part of our unit moved to another house next door after daylight and I cooked some cereal. Spurr found a good pocket watch in a uniform hanging in a closet. (Several years later, while visiting Virgil Morris in Iowa, I found out that Morris was the one who found the watch) Most of us shaved and cleaned up as we hadn't had a chance since the 17th. We knew we were to be trucked out that evening so were feeling pretty good. They got us ready to move out several hours early, as was natural, so we walked to the square and in order to be off the streets, went into a local beer tavern and drank beer until it was time to move. This time our trip wasn't so long and about 2:00 AM we found ourselves in the area of Ingwiller, along the Moder River. I slept, if you could call it that, on the second floor cubbyhole of a deserted shack.

Jan 22, 1945: Early that morning, right after daylight, we went downstairs and into a living room next door where there was at least a fire keep warm by. We slept most of the day. In the room was a huge clock that rang every fifteen minutes and played a tune every half hour. We also learned that Philpotts had died shortly after getting back to the aid station. He had died of shock. Nothing was heard about LaPoint. That afternoon we moved to Ingwiller. Lots of snow everywhere. We were assigned a luxury apartment, complete with furnishings. It consisted of only two bedrooms but they must have been bridal suites. Slept there only that one night.

Jan. 23, 1945: Assigned to defensive positions along the northern edge of town. Our quarters were in a house on the edge of town near an intersection, just across the Moder River facing the line which was about one and a half miles to our front. To our left front was the remains of a Flying Fortress which had crash-landed in a field. It didn't seem to be damaged much. We dug in a position along the road leading west from town and took turns standing guard. In our house lived a blind man, his wife, and twin girls about 6 years old. They weren't bashful and would come into our room and climb all over us. That is where much of our candy and chewing gum went. Freezing cold outside, but warm sleeping inside.

Jan 24, 1945: Another cold day. Still about 7 inches of snow everywhere. Routine—pulled guard and back inside to get warm. We were alerted to move several times but nothing happened, so we settled down for another night of good sleeping. One of the alerts had made us move out of town past the B-17 and dig in on a little side road; it seemed that the enemy had started a counter attack. But the all-clear was given, so back to our original position.

Jan. 25, 1945: So dawned another fateful day. As a matter of fact it didn't dawn quite so easily as that. We were awakened about 4:00 AM and told that we had an attack support mission, that the Germans were running wild in Schillersdorf, a few kilometers to the North. The town had been occupied by 3rd Bn, and our mortar men. It seemed that some SS troops had infiltrated and taken them by surprise before they could get out of bed.

Schillersdorf lay slightly to the Northeast and we had to backtrack to the northeastern road out of town, stopping at daylight for breakfast of mush and pancakes at a very small village along the way. From there, at about 8:00 AM we walked into the forest surrounding part of Schillersdorf. Most of us hadn't gotten over Sessenheim yet so were expecting possible timed-fire or tree bursts. Between Schillersdorf and the woods was an open plain covered with about 10 inches of snow, a perfect target made of anyone walking across it. We started out of the forest but were immediately driven back by machine gun fire. We wanted to move out immediately in the other direction because of possible artillery fire, so Capt. Neely led C Company around to the left still further through the forest and finally after about two hours approached the town from the West. It was rough going through the woods as there were no trails or roads and the snow was much deeper—apparently none of it had melted since the first snowfall. Our equipment kept catching on the branches and spilling more snow. In several places there were huge craters made from artillery shells and the snow was blackened around for many yards.

The smell of death was in the air—the same smell we had noticed on several other occasions. It came from the German gunpowder used in their artillery shells.

About 10:30 AM we left the woods and started across an open field. The town lay in a hollow and there was a slight rise between us and the town. We could only see the tops of the roofs. Wide open spaces with only a few bare fruit trees and about 10 to 12 inches of snow. We were supposed to set up machine guns to support the riflemen. Everyone stayed well dispersed. A Company which had attacked at daylight was pinned down on the northeastern slope. Except for a few GIs who had been bypassed in town, it belonged to the Germans. It looked like a full dress movie, the attack across the open space. A wave of men walking slowly, expecting anything. It didn't take long for it to happen. German 88 mm and mortar fire began to come in. The air crackled as the sound of exploding shells prefaced the battle. Immediately everyone began to run toward the shelter of the nearest buildings. Fortunately no one was hit. I ran about 50 yards—and it wasn't easy. Carrying a tripod, all equipment, and in about one foot of snow. The shoe-paks alone made any speed impossible. I set up the machine gun near a tree but didn't fire. It was here that Harrington, carrying ammunition, behind me and to my left about 15 yards got hit by a fragment from a mortar round. He called out that he was hit. Several of us ran over to him and tried to help. I remember he kept asking for a wound tablet (a large white pill to be taken with lots of water—I guess for shock). At any rate it was not to be taken if hit in the stomach. We opened his pants and pulled out his shirt and undershirt along with his woolen top. He had been hit about 4 inches below and to the right of his navel. A little half-moon blue mark about 1/2 inch long. The heat had seared the wound shut—no blood showed. We told him he had it made—that it was good enough to get him sent back and called for a medic and litter. As I left him, he was very gray in the face and showed pain.

Soon we were able to run down the short slope under cover of a fence along the first house. The riflemen to our left had already entered the street running north and south, so we rounded the corner and ran down the street toward the first intersection to set up the gun. Somehow in the mix-up we lost our ammunition bearers, so only had the one box of ammo. Johnson was carrying the machine gun so we covered the intersection while the fire fight began. By this time the Germans were throwing mortar rounds indiscriminately. Johnson had gone to find more ammo and I suddenly discovered that I was the only one on the street—cobblestoned with two sides made up of stone walls. One piece of shrapnel bounced off my helmet after ricocheting off several walls. I moved the gun back with the help of Pogrnich and Johnson into a barn near the street. We were then ordered across the street into a large trench dug into the raised park in the center of town. It was completely filled with snow. We wrestled the gun into position so as to fire into the occupied part of the town across from the park. Johnson was sent to find the rest of the squad and Dell, Pogrnich and I set up the gun. Immediately about 6 mortar rounds landed all around us, covering us with snow and dirt, but luckily none was a direct hit on the trench. At the street entrance of the trench was a pile of our artillery shells stacked there for use but abandoned when the counterattack began. That was enough for us—we weren't going to be sitting ducks, so Pogrnich ran across the street toward the shelter of the cellar when another rain of mortar rounds landed in and around the street. Nick slipped and fell, then scrambled head first into the cellar. Dell and I hadn't left the trench yet, but we didn't waste much time in getting the gun and equipment across the street and into the cellar. Later we took the gun upstairs and set it up in the window of the house from where we could get a better line of fire if our gun was needed, but we left the shutters closed so as not to give away our position. The man of the house was not too friendly but he finally left. By evening our riflemen had occupied the 6 houses along the street and were bringing up tanks to try and take the rest of the town. I slept my way through most of the fighting that evening and except for pulling guard, stayed under cover all the time. Several houses were burning and the glow lit up the town quite a bit. We didn't take any chances but piled pots and pans along the window sills so that no one could sneak in without making plenty of noise.

Jan. 26, 1945: Daylight found the town in much the same situation. We were ordered to open up with everything we had in order to scare and confuse the enemy. So we opened the shutters and Pogrnich burned up about 2 boxes of ammunition in the predawn barrage of small arms that lasted for about 30 minutes. We got no return fire. The tanks attacked house by house and gradually made their way toward the other end of town. Pogrnich set a barn on fire with tracers. About 4:00 that afternoon the German troops that hadn't left during the night before had surrendered or had been killed. So we moved toward the other end of town. By this time about 1/3 of the houses were burning and even as darkness approached, it was plenty light. The house we moved in to had mail, as well as packages addressed to 3rd Bn. which had never been opened. I found some bacon and ham which we fried before leaving Schillersdorf that evening after dark. Smoked hams hanging in attics seemed to be plentiful in Schillersdorf, along with dried garlic. We were moved back to Ingwiller and up to the 3rd floor plush apartment. Both Wolfe and Packanowski got drunk even before we left Schillersdorf.

Jan. 27, 1945: We were up fairly early that morning. Our squad consisted of Pogrnich, Johnson, Spurr, Byrd and myself. We wanted to look for a place with a more homey atmosphere and less crowding. The close conditions were beginning to shorten everyone's temper. We found immediate results in a house about 3 doors from where we had slept, just past the intersection of Rue Rampen. The home of Frau Gammengingen who had a daughter of 14, one of 8 and a son of 6. Her husband and an older son were both PWs. An older daughter was married and living elsewhere. She agreed to let us stay in a little room just off her woodshed, which had a stove, a table and some chairs. The family seemed very friendly. We were invited inside her house to shave and wash up. We received all our back mail and packages. Soon we had settled for the night—but, orders came to stand guard at the edge of town, just outside of a lemon soda (soft drink) works. It was located near the town's hospital and we were to stop all trespassing. We slept in one end of the building and stood guard in pairs along the porch that was built on the other end. During our second shift, we broke inside to get warm and there was the night watchman firing us. After that, we pulled guard with the door partly open, standing just inside. The watchman gave us a couple of cases of soft drinks. Upon leaving the next morning after daylight, a mortar round landed about 40 yards from our jeep just as we were loading aboard. Byrd, who was the nervous type, circled the jeep and trailer twice before climbing aboard, and then took off like something was after him. I couldn't place where the stray round came from. It was a dud though, because there wasn't any explosion—it just threw snow about 60 feet in the air.

Jan. 28, 1945: Since it was Sunday we accepted Frau Gammengingen's offer of Sunday dinner. We found out that her 21 year old son was in the German Wehrmacht (Army) and a PW, and that her 18 year old daughter was married to a German SS member and living in Germany. Susanna, the 14 year old girl had taken 4 years of English in school and could speak it very well. For dinner we had carrots, beef and gravy, pickles, French-fried potatoes, bread, butter and cherries. Later in the afternoon another girl came over, 16 years old, and she also could speak and understand some English. There were 6 of us GIs in the room with the Gammengingen family when the grandmother of the 16 year old girl came in demanding that she go home, as it wasn't nice for them to be associating with soldiers. There was no trouble, however, because Frau Gammengingen soon dispelled her fears, saying she trusted us. A colored tank destroyer outfit had left them a phonograph and several Glenn Miller selections, including Stardust and St. Louis Blues. Susanna was very bright, but very superstitious. Naturally, a stork parked on your chimney is very good luck but an owl is the worst type of bad luck. She almost had a fit because we wouldn't shoot an owl perched on a house across the street. We ate sauerkraut and apple fritters that evening.

Jan. 29, 1945: We were kept on alert almost the entire day. Johnson and I spent much of the time talking with the Gammengingen family. We learned that Schillersdorf was a pro-German village and that it was the schnapps capital of the area. I got a clean change of clothes from the Gammengingen cellar. That night H Company moved into town from a week on the line in a holding position and we moved out to take over their foxholes. So began a week of the most miserable conditions possible. We were driven to a position as near to the line as possible. From there we walked carrying full equipment and bedding across a plain covered with snow—about 8 inches. It was dark as pitch; the only trouble we encountered was when one stray artillery round landed several hundred feet from us. We eventually located our holes and crawled in to spend the next few days. That night wasn't too bad, as the holes were deep enough with a few logs thrown over the top for protection and the whole thing covered with snow. We even had straw on the bottom. The hole was full of C rations, K rations, cigarettes and other odds and ends that H Company had left. Nice and dry. I even took off my shoe-paks and slept inside my sleeping bag.

Jan. 30, 1945: The foxhole we awoke in was about 6 ft. by 4 ft., just high enough to sit on a box of ammunition without hitting the log roof with our heads. Room enough for two to sleep while the third stood watch. When Fogmich, Byrd and I awoke that morning, we found we were located just outside the village of Rothbach, a little town which at that time was occupied by Germans. They would filter in one night and we would raid the town the next night. Our position was on a slope, out in the open, but well camouflaged with snow. The nearest houses in town were only about a 100 yards to our front. There was a graveyard and a shed to our left and about midway between the first houses and our hole, a creek ran. Our other gun positions were just above the creek and to our right dug in the open ground. Spurr and Johnson, our ammo bearers, were in a shallow hole several yards behind and above us. We had sound-powered telephone communications with the C Company CP and they had direct communication to the artillery CP. Our machine gun rested on a raised portion of the dugout and its barrel peeked out from under the roof between the ground and the logs. It had almost a 180 degree traverse ability. We read pocketbooks left in the hole during the daylight hours but as the weather seemed to be getting less cold we settled down for another quiet, warm, dry night of sleep.

Several hours before midnight we noticed water seeping in between the logs and down the sides of the hole. The snow was beginning to melt—the spring thaw had come! We maneuvered around in the hole several times that night to evade the puddles of water that were rapidly forming everywhere. Water was dripping and making so much noise that we couldn't have heard anything outside if our lives depended upon it.

Jan. 31, 1945: As morning dawned, we had gotten no sleep. It found us with about 3 inches of water in the hole and rapidly rising. It was difficult to find a comfortable position. We had to keep our feet out of the water to keep from freezing. To do this, we had to sit on ammo boxes and rest our feet on anything sticking out of the water. We phoned in our plight but were told that we couldn't expect any relief for at least two days. By this time our feet had gotten wet and water was literally cascading in, not only from the roof, but from the hillside in back of us. We burned K ration boxes, canned heat and anything else that would burn to keep warm. We began to bail water late that afternoon, disregarding any attempt to maintain camouflage or security. As it got dark we were still bailing. The landscape of snow about us was beginning to break up by little rivulets of water. Fogmich was about fed up. As darkness settled, we began our second night of sleeplessness. As soon as it got dark enough, all of us got out of the hole and walked around to warm up and stretch. Johnson came down to stay with me and Byrd replaced him in the hole with Spurr. Nick went back to the CP because he was having trouble with his feet. I guess he convinced them that we needed relief because they promised us relief the next evening.

Feb. 1, 1945: More of the same, although the weather was not so cold. Around midday as we were watching the town, we could see several German soldiers going from one house to another; pretty soon one of them came to the door of the nearest house to us and threw a pan of water out. I called up the CP and they got in touch with our artillery. I directed about 6 rounds of 105 howitzer fire but never did hit the house we had in mind. I think the trouble was that when I said 20 yards left, the word finally passed down to the gun crew was 20 yards too far left. I was trying to correct and they were also correcting; as a result the explosions kept getting further and further away. As the afternoon wore on, we prepared our equipment in order to get away as soon as possible. Our relief came shortly after dark and we began our trip back to the CP. It was in a house located just out of sight of the town, behind a hill where the Germans couldn't see. All living quarters were on the second floor. Our squad slept with about two dozen riflemen on the floor of one of the upper floor rooms.

Feb. 2 and 3, 1945: We awoke, intent upon getting our equipment dried out and in shape for another turn in the foxhole. Someone during the night had stolen my .45 pistol, belt and holster. It had been a mess when I brought it in. I had dropped it at the door with the idea that I would clean it after I had had some sleep. I had no weapon, so Slyford finally gave me a grease gun that McCarthy had carried around in the jeep. I took it with four clips back with me that night. I couldn't keep a clip in it. It kept dropping out at the slightest excuse. We relieved part of Rigby's squad; it occupied a hole near an anti-tank gun and was to the extreme right side of our machine guns. Rothbach had been raided twice by A and B Company, once by a platoon and once by a company. This time A and B Company were to raid it again. We were supposed to fire into the hill on the other side of the valley at zero hour. Make enough noise so that the two companies could enter the town. When our turn came to fire, one round was all that would go off. The dampness had tightened up the web belt so much that the rounds would not come out. The gun was in terrible condition. Several of the other guns opened fire, and it wasn't long before German artillery also opened fire. The muzzle blast could be heard and then a whine as the round sped up the valley toward us. It would land 50 yards or so from us but close enough to give us a scare. The raid turned out successful and once more the Germans were cleared from Rothbach. We had a good vantage point from that

hole. That morning we saw three German tanks apparently knocked out on the road in the valley. Occasionally, we could see men climbing around and several times our artillery scared them back into holes. I could see smoke coming from what seemed to be bare ground—someone had a fire going in a well-concealed hole. That afternoon we were given a ringside seat to an air battle—what there was of it. Our 411th Reg. was parading back in the rest area before our new Commanding General, Maj. Gen. McAuliffe, and one lone German recon plane had strafed the formations. All AA in the territory took a shot at it and it was hit just before crossing the lines directly over our heads. The pilot bailed out and the plane dove for the ground. It smashed into the field right before us in the valley and burned all that night. The pilot was carried over the lines into German territory, but only after every rifleman within shooting distance had taken a crack at him. We went back for a night's sleep again and it was decided that half the platoon would rest while the other half watched. We were to be relieved every 24 hours. That night I slept in the cellar; Byrd did not go back to the holes. He stayed around the CP as a guard and later was transferred to a driver's spot. It was decided that I would not go out the next night but rather the following morning in order to split up the men into two groups. I pulled guard around the CP the next day. By this time we were getting diversified C rations—franks and beans, spaghetti and meat balls, meat and noodles, stew, meat and beans, and hash.

Feb. 4, 1945: Just before dawn I went out to take my turn at the foxhole and got the original hole again. Spurr and I moved into the hole—and what a mess! The roof had settled and when daylight came we saw that the gun could not be moved as the roof was resting on the water jacket. We bailed water and tried to get the gun loose by digging under the trail leg. We had convinced Slyford that it was best to abandon the hole and hunt for another. We were then told that M Company would relieve us and that we were going back to a rest area. That night at dark we gathered up all equipment and moved out, abandoning the hole. I carried 9 wet woolen blankets which had somehow accumulated in the foxhole, but they so heavy that I could only manage 5. We got lost on our way back to the jeep but after about two hours of trouble finally made it. We were carried back to the town of Obersulzbach, which is located about 3 miles from Ingwiller. As we were the last unit of the Bn, in town, we had to take what we could find in the line of a place to stay. We finally got the last place on the North end of town. It was owned by a farmer with a wife, three daughters (one 9, one 18 and one 19). The old lady kept a pretty close watch on her daughters, but some things escaped even her watchful eyes.

Feb. 5 thru 18, '45: We spent 14 days in Obersulzbach. There wasn't too much happening during these two weeks. We got some replacements and a new medic. We called him Johnny and he had been in the Aleutians. We were presented to Gen. McAuliffe and had a parade. We saw several movies and I had a date with a dentist. I also had a visit from the Army Claims Officer in connection with two missing expensive cameras during the fight for Villa back in November. I told him everything I knew, and the truth, but at that time I didn't know who was responsible. We played tackle football and even spent one day on the firing range. It forced us to clean all weapons and gave the new men some experience. Among them were Zurowski, of Polish descent; Perez, a Mexican-American from Texas; and about this time Kountz returned, a veteran of Itarswiller. We made one sham march and attack on Schillersdorf. I visited Ingwiller twice, once to see Russ after he paid me a visit on the 13th and another time to take sugar to the Gammengingens. During that time an ammo truck blew up in Buchswiller and several GIs were killed. The CG seemed to have a lot of snap and go but all we could see was the chicken as it was passed on down to us. We were glad to get back into something a little more like action, possibly, but with a lot less regulation.

Feb. 19 thru Mar. 10, 1945: Again we were moving, this time to the town of Obermodern, just a few miles east of Schillersdorf and almost on the line. Our job was to pull roadblock at the East end of the town. We were close to Pfaffenhofen which in turn was close to our old stomping ground of Merzwiller. Obermodern was the home of the world's tallest human, 8 ft. 8 in. George Pfeiffer. We saw him quite often riding around on his special-built bicycle. It was during our week pulling roadblock that Spurr and Haley returned to Schillersdorf and almost got into trouble. Haley got drunk and had to find his way back across several mine fields after dark. We covered up for him and everything was forgotten eventually.

We lived on canned salmon and rice almost exclusively. Some of us left our chow and muscled in on HQ. Company which had much better food. We showered and slept, saw several movies and played a lot of touch football—between occasional German artillery barrages. One night after coming off guard duty, I climbed the stairs of the house we were billeted in to go to bed. It was very dark, and I didn't have a light. I felt my way upstairs and through the door to the room where I had my sleeping bag. There must have been 5 other fellows all asleep in their bags on the floor. I felt my way past everyone clear over to the corner opposite the doorway.

There I took off my gloves and fumbled with my pistol belt—everything was hanging on it—the pistol, holster, 2 extra clips of ammo, a canteen of water, a shovel and a first aid kit. Just as I got it unbuckled, the whole mess slipped from my hands and thumped to the floor. I had always kept the pistol on half-cock with a round under the hammer. The drop to the floor was enough to set it off. With a loud explosion the gun went off in the enclosed room. It tore the whole end out of the holster and dug a hole slantwise into the floor, coming out into the kitchen below and imbedding in the kitchen floor. Needless to say, everyone was up, thinking the house had been hit by some German artillery. But no one was hurt, and so to bed.

Across the hall from our bedroom was a bathroom—nothing in it except a bathtub and an old-fashioned charcoal burning hot water heater. Two of us decided to heat some water for a bath; however, after about 20 minutes of burning charcoal, the lead around the pipe fittings began to melt and water began leaking everywhere. I guess we ruined the thing; probably the water was not circulating properly because we didn't know how to turn it on.

Our ordinance was experimenting with a multiple-barrel rocket launcher. It consisted of 64 barrels mounted on a medium tank. The 105 mm rockets were hurled at an amazing rate into one of the towns just across the line. We moved back into reserve by taking billets in another section of the town of Obermedem. There we had a room for each squad and in our house we found potatoes and sauerkraut. We stayed in that part of town until the 11th of March. It was during this time that Nick was sitting on the bed cleaning his gun and after he had put it together, shoved the clip in. As it was cocked, he accidentally tripped the trigger. Immediately six .40 slugs tore into the wall traveling the full length of the room about 6 feet from me and shoulder high. The flattened lead bounced back, some of it as far as the bed. Everyone was showered with plaster and mortar. That's how I spent my birthday. I spent some time across the street with a hunchback accountant who worked in Strasbourg, but was unable to travel to work because of the war. He had a radio and we used to listen to all the news broadcasts, both in English and German. It was there that I first heard of the Remagen bridgehead made on the 9th. By this time Panowski came back a Lt. and we pulled a small problem on machine gun support. We also pulled a Bn. problem on a sham attack on the town. It was getting warmer and everyone was contemplating when we would attack and the 7th Army move. It seemed that everything was happening in the North. One night while C Company was pulling a night patrol, the men got caught in a mine field. Two injured men were left there until daylight and some medics within sight of the Germans managed to go out into the mine field and bring back the two men without drawing fire. Either 8 or 10 men were lost on that patrol. These were the only casualties we had for the two weeks before and three weeks after.

Mar. 11 thru 14, 1945: On the afternoon of the 11th we moved onto the line. We had only to walk about 3 Km in all. We followed the creek out of town and into the edge of some timber. Then staying behind a rise in the ground we walked across open ground about dusk and after dark moved up to the ridge and into well-furnished foxholes. The holes were deep enough to sit up in. The weather was warm during the day and the hole was so well concealed that we could have a candle lit during the night. The German positions were located all over the opposite slope of a narrow but fairly deep ravine between us. We stayed there that night and during the next day. We were then relieved and went back for food which had been brought from the kitchens in jeeps. The 1st Platoon which had not seen too much since the middle of Dec. was still being held back. The evening of the 12th I slept in the CP. It was located on the western edge of Pfaffenhofen. I guess that was as close as my trail ever came to crossing—from the outskirts of Pfaffenhofen to the center of town. Our house was located near the power station for the town and the Germans kept throwing rounds in hoping to eliminate it. We stayed inside during the 13th and that night went back to our holes. Our mortars were located directly behind us about 100 yards and they continued to throw harassing fire into the German positions. After a night and a day in foxholes, we were again back in the CP. This time tension seemed to be mounting. We were not to return to our foxholes. Rumor had it that the 7th Army was to jump off the following morning. Again all equipment was made battle-ready. The 1st Platoon was to accompany the lead rifle company—that news sounded good to our ears.



Mar. 15, 1945: Holes were vacated early that morning. The day dawned very foggy and smoky. Our artillery had quietly set off hundreds of smoke bombs and the valleys were well concealed in the mixture of fog and smoke. At dawn we were standing under cover of the house waiting for the word to advance. The lead rifle units had already taken off and soon the artillery opened up with a 20 minute barrage. There wasn't much answer from the German side. Once in a while we could hear a small arms fire fight. Finally we got the word and single-filed off into the fog. We couldn't see 6 feet in front of us. The worst danger was mines so we kept very close together so as to keep contact. This was to be the first action for our new men, many of whom had spent Christmas and New Years at home. Johnny, our medic, new at the job, seemed to sense danger—he didn't know what to do. All he could do was follow along behind, subject to danger, but with no means of defending himself. We followed the man in front across open ground, down into one dip, up the other side, then down into another. We passed several German machine gun nests our artillery had dug up. It had also dug up quite a bit of ground all over and the riflemen had been able to clear most of the trenches. We followed along and soon German prisoners were being sent back along the line of our march. As we were the last unit to come, we had to keep them with us. None of us liked it much because it made too large a group of men congregated in one spot in case the fog lifted. Some spots along the ridge the fog did clear and everyone would squat down so as to reduce the danger of making a target. We were halted momentarily every few minutes, but finally we heard a terrific mortar and 88 mm barrage being laid down in front of us. Later we found that part of the lead rifle company and the 1st Platoon had been trapped in a small dip and had taken a terrific beating. Soon part of 1st Platoon came staggering back—some of them walking—some of them being carried on stretchers. One of the fellows had his foot partly blown off, and he was smiling. We thought it had been a mine but it had only been a ragnel. They had only lost Katzmarek, but for the most part the rest of them had been wounded.

Finally the fog lifted for good and the sun came shining through. We could see landmarks around us. We were descending into a valley where once had been an orchard. German artillery kept passing overhead. We passed a French 75 mm gun, apparently captured by the Germans, which had been knocked out just a few minutes before. The word was passed around that we were to go from reserve into the attack as the rifle company and the 1st Platoon could not go on. We hitched on behind C Company and we were off. We crossed a small creek and found ourselves about 100 yards from a small town. Then came a steep bank into a still steeper vineyard. While the riflemen on our left were clearing the vineyard, we rested. We had bypassed three towns by this time and could hear our rear units cleaning them up. Our mortar forward observer, Lt. Moser, was next to us trying to get a line on any enemy positions. We made our slow progress through the vineyard out onto some plowed ground, and following a deep furrow, made our way toward the few trees which marked the crest of the hill. About half way across, someone with a rifle opened up on us from the top floor of a house in the town to our right. He was firing from behind us and to our right and the spurts of light from his gun could be seen very clearly. Also the bullets tore up the plowed ground as they hit. It only served to speed us up a bit. As we had no cover, we walked in the furrow crouched as low as possible.

When we got to the crest of the gentle slope we found a maze of trenches abandoned by the Germans. By this time, most of the morning had gone and it was very clear. We had practically run through enemy territory and were way in front of many of our other units. We dug in on the forward slope of the ridge and could see stretched before us a little town, down a steep embankment. Further on was a stream and a broad open plain. I dug into a large shell hole and set up the machine gun. Kountz was section leader by this time. The riflemen tried to press down the hill to capture the town. I was guarding the right flank. A runner was sent back to see if we couldn't get some sort of light artillery to help us knock out two armored vehicles that were defending the town. The runner hadn't been gone long before he was back to tell us that we were surrounded. He had run into a group of Germans who had fired on him as he was returning over our trail. Some of our guns were turned around and fired behind us. The armored vehicles were kept busy running from one end of town to the other. There weren't more than 15 houses in the entire village. They made it too hot for our riflemen who were getting picked off just as soon as they would start down the hill. Lt. Poole was hit and called for a medic. The rifle company had no medic so Johnny was sent. We never saw him again, alive. He was picked off just after reaching Lt. Poole. He wore nothing on his arm or helmet to denote medic. Kountz spotted what appeared to be four Germans carrying a long wooden box in the distance (about 500 yards). He opened fire with the machine gun but all they did was drop the box and run.

The riflemen were retreating and as they would emerge for an instant into the open, the armored vehicles would open up and cut them down. One fellow who only got it in the leg passed my foxhole hobbling along. I asked him for his shovel and he must have been a new man because he wouldn't give it up until I promised to

return it to C Company supply when I was through. I had broken the handle of mine and as he was going back, he had no further use for his. I dug my hole under the edge of the shell hole but someone, and I suspect D Company, threw in about six rounds of mortar in our vicinity and the concussion caved the hole in on me. I was buried from the chest down. If they were German, those mortar rounds could have picked us off like ducks if they'd had a good observer. Our mission was to secure the high ground on the other side of the town and so protect the crossroads of the main highway where Task Force "Cactus" was to jump off. Just before dark, we established communications with the rear units and about that time the Germans began a counterattack. They appeared to be all around us. We pulled out after dark, with tracers flying everywhere. Ours was the last gun to be pulled, and as we took off I passed 5 or 6 fellows lying on the ground next to a small stack of logs. As I stepped over them I said, "Come on, we're moving out." and "Let's go." About that time someone informed me that both the men on the ground and the stack of logs were dead GIs.

We staged a somewhat disorderly retreat. The German small arms fire sounded pretty close so we half ran, half walked back over the plowed ground, down the vineyard until we came to the knocked-out 75s. There we dispersed and were told to dig in. Perez and I set up our gun in the middle of the swale. The digging was very easy—too easy—as we soon discovered. We drew water at about 18 inches. The night was bitter cold and we would lay in our hole pretending to sleep for about an hour and then we had to get up and walk around or dig our hole deeper and shovel dirt to keep warm. The night was very quiet and the town to our right seemed to have been taken by our units.

Mar. 16, 1945: The dawn was clear and bright. Everyone built fires and ate rations. Soon I got restless and wandered around exploring the elaborate dugouts which had housed the German artillery unit operating the 75s. In one of the holes was a dead German; in others, just equipment. One of our officers with some help packed dirt into the barrel of the nearest 75 and pulled the string. It split the barrel about two feet from the end and curled the muzzle open. The gun had been captured with a round in the breech. Near the other 75 was a beautiful dugout. It still had a wounded German in it. He was sent back and we explored the hole. I found six German cigars, the perfumed kind, and I had a very enjoyable morning. In the dugout, the size of an ordinary room, was a board floor, rugs, easy chairs, desks, and everything imaginable for the comfort of all concerned—all liberated by the Germans from the closest town.

We still had our mission staring at us, so about 100 that afternoon we took off. Our squad followed B Company around to the left, the same route our 1st Platoon had taken the morning before. We climbed the vineyard and skirted the woods until we emerged within sight of the town. By that time C Company with the other squad had taken our positions that the Germans had vacated the night before. Apparently the Air Corps had been called to bomb and strafe the town before we moved forward—so we waited. Soon four P47s appeared, peeled off and began dropping 500 pounders within the town. They put on quite a show—from our high vantage point we could see everything. They would dive directly over our heads or come in from our left and plant their bombs, one at a time, in the streets, trying to hit one of the German armored vehicles. After each had unloaded its two bombs, they began to strafe. Several of the passes were made directly over our heads and the spent .50 cal. machine gun shells would fall like hail among the trees. About 30 minutes of this before the planes left.

Everyone lined up and drew a bead on the town. We all opened fire for about 5 minutes. There was no answering fire. Slowly the riflemen entered and reported that the town was empty. Everyone relaxed, moved into the town and looked around for something to eat. The Air Corps had practically leveled the town. One bomb hit had completely covered one of the armored vehicles by caving a side of a house in on it. We didn't stay long as the road had been opened and supplies were moving up. Units on our left could be seen moving toward a larger town to our left front. The Air Corps was trying to give them support also but the yellow smoke signals were drifting back and some of our troops were getting strafed instead. We moved out of town to our right and set up the machine gun in one of two large excavations for cellars just outside of town. E. A. Brown's gun was set up in the nearest hole and ours was set up in the other. We weren't there more than five minutes when we could hear a distant, but very loud and distinct, muzzle blast up the valley in front of us. It was followed immediately by the whine of heavy artillery—incoming mail. The one round came at us with a terrible ferocity—with a tremendous explosion and earthquake-like vibration, the nearest house to us, about 50 yards, literally vanished in a cloud of smoke and dust. It was a direct hit by a German self-propelled (SP) gun, a huge artillery piece mounted on tank treads. Only one more round came in, but by that time we were up and moving forward across the open field. Our riflemen had advanced across the road, fence, and small stream, on to a gentle treeless rise where there

crossing the creek where it was wider and deeper, but at least we walked across. The Germans were being smoked out slowly but surely. I saw about three enemy with their hands up running toward us when burp gun fire from behind them cut them down—it seemed that they were running out on their buddies. It was almost dusk as we cleared the last few holes. I almost got a chance to fire, but just as I had my gun set up and zeroed in on a hole, which I was going to keep peppering with short bursts while a rifleman sneaked around behind and dropped a grenade into, four Germans climbed out with their hands up. Dark found us midway up the rise, awaiting orders to dig in. We walked to the crest and dug in on the forward slope before settling down for the night. I again dug in with Perez, and his time, although the wind was blowing, we were on a hill and dug in deep enough to keep warm.

Mar. 17, 1945: We awoke just after daylight, knowing that we may be surrounded. As nothing out-of-the-way happened, several of us made our way down the slope to the fair-sized town at the bottom. It was the same town that we had seen in the distance the day before. We stopped at a house on the outskirts and asked for water and apples. GIs from another Bn. were already well established in the town. We explored some of the elaborate dugout observation posts for artillery forward observers. It was shortly after noon when we tailed on behind another part of our Reg. and took off across country toward the main highway. We had the satisfaction of seeing one of the SP guns completely knocked out, nothing left but a buried out hulk. It was an enormous tractor-propelled cannon and we could see its tracks leading among the few houses standing and among the orchards and fields. It seems there were two SP guns and one of them had gotten away. The Air Corps had spotted this one, trailed it, and finally with a direct hit had set it on fire. We followed the main highway north, the same direction that Task Force Cactus had taken. Toward dusk we came to a GI-filled town and were forced to take billets in a barn.

Mar. 18, 1945: Early that morning, while we were waiting for food, I went out in back of the barn and listened to a radio for the news on an antiaircraft (AA) unit, a towed vehicle with two .50 cal. guns mounted on a full swivel. This was one day we put in our share of walking. We went through Werth and eventually stopped at a schoolhouse. There some of our mail caught up with us. I remember Gruseck receiving two dozen bars of Hershey's tropical chocolate bars. There were no billets available in the town so I was sent with several others by jeep to another town a few Kms away to arrange for a house for each of our squads. I finally got a house for our squad and also took over saving another house for Wagner. The Alsatian there kept asking me questions and feeding me red wine. I must have taken 6 glasses before I began to feel dizzy and a little loose at the tongue. Slyford, always on the lookout for something to drink, wanted me to take him and Packanowski in and introduce them to the free wine. Due to the usual mix-up in orders, we had to move to the other side of the town and had just settled down for the evening when the order came that we were to move up to the border. I was lucky enough to hop a ride in a jeep with Perez, Zurovski, and a couple of others. Maybe we were lucky or maybe we weren't. We rode for almost 8 hours. I blame it on our transportation officer. We kept going around in circles getting lost—traveling about 70 miles in all. The men who walked also spent about 8 hours enroute, arriving in the town of Clembach only a short time after the motor vehicles. The village was pretty well shot up, as a large battle had been fought there in December. It was located only a few miles from the Lauter River which separates Pfalzertland, in Germany, from Alsace. It was well after 2:00 AM, so we stumbled around in the dark and finally bedded down in a large concrete building which had been pretty well torn up.

Mar. 19, 1945: We awoke after a very short sleep. Our new surroundings were very meager as far as accommodations went. Our kitchen finally came up and we got some food and clean clothes. We cleaned weapons, shaved and took it easy. By this time the entire company was again together. Most of the talk was about the future possibilities, but the 1st Platoon took the death of Katzmarek pretty hard, although to my knowledge it was their only fatality.

Mar. 20, 1945: Much the same. We were issued combat boots to replace the shoe-paks. I kept my buckskin laces for the shoes. They were quite different as they made walking easier. We explored the town a bit. The artillery, 155 long tons, was already set up and continued to pound the German lines, about 6 miles away. The

rest of the Bn. occupied a larger building next to ours. There was straw and potatoes in the cellar.

Mar. 21, 1945: Again we were on the move. Everyone felt better because of the shoes and because we knew the line was some distance away. The road was soft dirt and we could smell the warm weather of spring. Late in the afternoon we came to a small stream, the Lauter River. There, across the makeshift bridge, lay Germany. A fairly modern road lay across the river running parallel to it. We did not cross but instead climbed up the slope on the Alsatian side and dug in about 50 yards above the road. An AA unit was set up near the bridge and our kitchen pulled in behind it. We received our mail and tried to make elaborate foxholes but the dirt was too soft. Some of the fellows caught fish by using grenades. I was tempted to cross the bridge just to be able to say that I had been in Germany, but the traffic was pretty heavy and I felt that we'd be across soon enough.

Mar. 22, 1945: We moved across the bridge late in the morning. We walked east following the road for a mile or so then headed north again. Prisoners by the hundreds were being marched down the road toward us. At noon we ate C rations by pulling off the road and building fires in holes which had been previously dug. We again took up the march. Toward evening we emerged into an opening. Alongside the road we passed a burned out Sherman tank, the top turret had been lifted by a direct hit and the tank had lain there since our first penetration back in December. Across the valley we could see evidence of a German gun emplacement. Near the road was our first look at the WESTWALL, a completely camouflaged pill box. We passed a dead GI which had been flattened by a tank and then shoved into a small ditch along the road. We broke march at dusk just beyond there and were told to disperse and dig in. In the area was a stack of boards which had at one time been a building. We all took some of the boards in the hope of fixing up elaborate foxholes. The digging in the side of hill was very easy, as the dirt was soft. Just about the time we began cutting branches to line the holes, we were told to saddle up and move out. Our next stop found us at the crest of the mountain range and on our way down again. We could hear the occasional roar of our 105s pounding the line ahead of us. We pulled off the road and were told to dig in and get some sleep. Perez and I dug together but the slit trench never materialized. We ran into a boulder about the size of a stove and spent the rest of the time trying to dig around it. The small tree roots were thick so about 2:00 AM we gave up and rolled up in our sacks above ground. The sleep was short—we moved about 3:30 and took off amid much confusion in the darkness. We split up at a crossroads and our squad began climbing a blacktop road until we came to a dirt sideroad at the top of the hill. There we set up our gun on the side of a cut on the ridge. The ground was wet and soggy and we were all sleepy so we didn't accomplish much.

Mar. 23, 1945: And so dawned another day. As we had seen absolutely no action, we weren't very wary. Of course, the lack of sleep had a lot to do with it. I explored our surroundings. Immediately below us at the fork in the road was a horse-drawn "pioneer" or engineer wagon. The horse was stretched out near it as was the driver, both shot. The wagon contained many interesting objects—batteries, all sorts of high explosives, small arms ammunition—scattered along both sides of the road were pack sacks, personal articles—everything imaginable. Part of our Task Force had overrun a group of rear guards and had gone right through them. The dead were still lying along the road. The rest had been sent back as PWs. I picked up many things, among them blankets, a roll of butter, cigars, pipes, combs, etc. Finally our jeep arrived and we loaded on our equipment and backtracked down the hill to the town of Klingenstein. In the center of the town was a stockade roped off for PWs. Many of them had retained some of their food but all their equipment was piled up on the outside and was being searched for souvenirs. I picked up several jars of cigars, still searching for the kind I had found the week before. We sat around washing and reading, wondering—where to, next. It was the first German town we had seen and it hadn't been shot up very much. Some of the fellows were trying to manipulate a German motorcycle they had found—it ran like a one-cylinder washing machine. Just as rumors began circulating that we might get a hot dinner, we received orders to move out—back up the hill that we had gone up and down that same morning before. We were on a more-or-less forced march, traveling light, past the dead horse and wagon around the side of a valley that was fairly steep. At each pass the road was pretty well torn up—it had been bombed. At 5:00 PM we were still marching and still pretty fast—about that time we were following a small stream which paralleled the road along the side of a hill. At the entrance to this valley was a small village, about 10 buildings which had been leveled. I noticed a U. S. half-track with a swastika painted on it burned and still smoking. For the next three miles I saw more human disaster than I had witnessed before or since. For three solid miles a horse drawn convoy—probably supply and engineers—had been bottled up by a huge crater at the far end and had been strafed incessantly and finally the Task Force had buzzed through shoving everything in the road off to the side and into the stream. There were several hundred horses, in all sorts of states of disrepair. Dead, half dead, and some running around loose. Some had been run over by tanks; others had been driven off the road and down the bank and were lying in the creek, crippled or drowned, or burning. Many of the wagons had burned, but there wasn't one live German.

The smell of burning flesh was very strong. We hadn't eaten since the day before but were in no mood to eat just then. By this time some of the horses had been rounded up and many a weary GI had taken to riding bareback. It was just getting dark when we arrived at the next town. To the left was a high mountain and we were told that there were several hundred German soldiers hiding up in the woods. Our lunch arrived in time for supper and we ate out of force of habit and prepared to dig in, in a vineyard, in the event that we were counterattacked during the night. The Germans had made many deep trenches which suited us just fine. We all got some sleep that night.

Mar. 24, 1946: That morning we began walking again, equipment loaded on jeeps, but walking, at a fast clip. More dead horses—beginning to smell. Past dragon's teeth, elaborate pill boxes and deep reed-lined trenches. The heart of the WESTWALL or Siegfried Line. It was beautiful country, especially in the spring. Late in the afternoon we rounded a bend and saw the ruins of a castle atop a small hill to our left. We followed the hill as it sloped downward to the town of Eshbach where we found quarters.

Mar. 25—Apr. 22, 1946: During this period we were in reserve. When we moved, and it was fairly often, we moved great distances by truck. When we stayed in a town, we usually stayed several days. Time was spent resting, sight-seeing or pulling guard. We stayed several days in Eshbach. One of the indelible memories—Red Dog. A card game played with several people beginning with everyone putting something in the pot. Four cards were then dealt to each player. The dealer then asks each player in turn how much of the pot he wishes to match. He may pass, match any part of it or all of it. If a card in his hand is higher than the second card turned up by the dealer (both in number and suit) he wins the pot; if not, his losing increases the pot.

One of the hands I had was almost a classic. We were using German scrip by this time and I had played for about an hour when suddenly I found myself dealt 3 aces and the king of the fourth suit—an almost unbeatable hand. I matched the pot, and would you know it, I drew the other ace. My only hope now was to stay in the game and hope no one else would hit it big. If so, I could at least recover most of my losses when the game broke up and the pot was distributed. I finally was able to borrow some money and did stay in the game, so I didn't lose too much. Again I was visited by an interrogation team asking me about Mrs. Fischer and the two cameras. I again told them the truth, that I didn't know anything about who may have taken them. That same night, after they had left, I learned that the radioman for Lt. Boyle, the artillery forward observer attached to our unit, had taken both and had them shipped back to the States. I decided to tell the interrogators the next time I was asked, but I never heard from them again, so I guess Mrs. Fischer got her claim paid. That night almost everyone got drunk from champagne.

Easter Sunday, while we were still in Eshbach, several of us decided to get some exercise. It was about 1 1/2 miles up the hill to the castle ruins. The Nazis had some sort of observation post there at one time and although the original foundations were laid around 1300 AD, there were many improvements since then. Looking across country from the main tower, I felt about the same as when I was on the Empire State Building. It was because of the combined height of the tower and the steep cliff-like drop of the hill. They had a fairly modern looking kitchen and living room in one part. There was also a fresh water well inside, although I don't know how deep. On the tower was a very old sun dial and the room directly underneath contained glass cases of very old implements for cutting, carving, pounding, etc., a sort of museum. And then the dungeons—little rooms, filled with straw, sort of hidden in various out-of-the-way places. We spent almost two hours climbing stairs, rocks, and ladders trying to explore it. Later, we scared up 5 deer but couldn't get close enough to have venison. For a day of rest, it was a very tiring one.

Still on the West side of the Rhine. A very pretty town. We supervised the turn-in of all civilian weapons. These included guns, knives, explosives, ammunition, swords—even German Army issued equipment not considered weapons. That is where I got the field glasses and the Nazi dress dagger. The town was located in a shallow place in the ground (can't be called a valley) flanked on the Northeast by one small hill on top of which was a one-room church. Civilians came to this church at all hours of the day, not staying over 10 minutes before descending into a more populated part of the area. From that church I got a very good picture of the symmetry of the town. There just wasn't any. Looking down upon those 180 odd roofs, I couldn't even tell where one street lay, and there were 6 of them that I knew of. There was no reason about the layout. A few buildings had had their foundations laid in MDCCCXVIII, 1718, I reasoned. Near the center of town, and later, additional buildings were erected until the most modern ones were on the very outskirts. Dotted the forward slope of the hill, several Siegfried Line pill boxes dominated the surrounding terrain. Although the weather was cloudy, I was using a pair of captured binoculars (Wehrmacht issued) and could see very well for many miles around. While here, our job was to patrol the streets before and after curfew and to allow no one on the streets after curfew. Of course, when we adopted the one hour change in time during our occupation here, due to U. S. Army daylight savings time, it was sort of hard for the civilians to understand, or else they didn't want to understand. All day long there was a continuous line of farmers, farmer's wives, daughters and sons going to the fields to plant, plow, weed or cultivate. Many were the oddities: A bull and a cow pulling a harrow led by a young woman; a middle-aged woman pulling a three-pronged cultivator guided by her husband; three women filling in a large communications trench on top of a little rise in the ground. At one end of town we ran across a house trailer plastered with endless words in bright red and blue paint. I don't know the origin: "Hamburgers, Hot Dogs and Pop, Spamburgers and Beer, Cocktail Lounge—(with an arrow pointing) we take care of all women for nuttin, colb solvice, etc." The neatly cobbled streets and the 18th and 19th century architecture were perfect. This was the typical small rural town of less than 1,000. There were only three houses that one could pick up and transplant to an American town without raising any comment. Their fire department consisted of a 2-wheeled and a 4-wheeled hose cart with 2-handled pumps. As to their firemen's uniforms, they could outdo the U. S. Marines in their full dress red and blue.

We crossed the Rhine on the 7th of April. Loaded into trucks and across a pontoon bridge near Mannheim-Ludwigshafen. Southeast to the North bank of the Neckar River, past Heidelberg on the opposite bank and followed the river due east for many miles. Several canal boats, wrecked and out of action, were in the river. One of the towns, Unterdiebach, we stayed in for several days was on the top of a small slope at a crossroads. There was a large contingent of refugees from the "Slavias" and the local population was worried that when the fighting was over they might not want to return to their homeland. We all slept in houses and for the most part supplemented our rations from the cellars and attics of the German houses. Potatoes fried in deep fat—a delicacy. One of the attractions of this town was a young German girl, about 15, I judge. She apparently was a dyed-in-the-wool Nazi. Although of average looks, she came each morning from a smaller town about a mile away, and the GIs would line up to watch her go by. She carried a pitchfork and worked cleaning out some of the barns. We referred to her as the "Manure Girl" but her attraction was the way she carried herself when she walked. She looked neither right nor left, head held high, and would not respond to conversation, shouting or accept any assistance in her chores. No one was foolish enough to get too close to her while she carried the pitchfork.

One morning, about noon, while I was standing guard at the crossroads, I heard the unmistakable sound of machine gun fire from an airplane. I had my field glasses handy and quickly spotted the aircraft. The sky had been full of allied bombers and fighters, but we weren't close enough to the front lines to hear strafing. A P11 fighter was pursuing a British Mosquito two-engine light bomber. One could see the tracers and the mushroom of fire and smoke as the bomber caught fire. It began to slip into a spin while burning. After losing about half his altitude, the pilot jumped, for I could see the parachute blossom and the plane disappear as it hit the ground several miles away. About 20 minutes later a jeep came barreling up the road and came to a halt at the roadblock. It carried two GIs, one a medic, and a wounded German pilot. We looked quickly at their papers and passed them on. Not before I had cut off a piece of the parachute which was still attached to the pilot. I finally cut a smaller piece of that and mailed it home. The chute had oil spots, blood spots and burnt and melted silk. The pilot had landed in a grove of trees, his parachute hanging on a limb. He was pretty well cut up, burned, and otherwise not feeling so well. A Nazi, flying a captured British aircraft, trying to escape to "I don't know where." And getting picked up and captured alive. His partner stayed with the plane and so was no longer a worry. We sent the jeep to the aid station.

Back onto trucks and back down the hill following the Neckar River, past Heidelberg, until finally we drove through Heilbronn. Now back on the ground. Closer to the front lines—guard duty at night was particularly difficult

since Wehrmacht personnel were wandering around at night wanting to be captured.

Apr. 23, 1945: We were told that our stay in reserve was over and that we were to wait for a detachment of tank destroyers and begin to take some towns. We were scheduled to approach the town of Bohringen in the Black Forest area of southern Germany. Just about dusk we crept over a small hill overlooking the town but were driven back by machine gun fire from the houses nearest us. After dark we sent in 4 men to check the road for mines and pick up information available. It was very cold and I got no sleep. Shortly after midnight a huge explosion shook the hillside. Only 3 of the men returned. After daylight we could see the remains of the 4th man—just part of his torso. He had tripped an antitank mine placed on the road. Our recon had gotten only to the first turn in the road and had reported antitank mines all over. We then pulled back and walked around the other side of the town and in company strength approached the town again. This time our tank destroyers cut across open pasture; the half-tracks made short work of the marshy ground, and with very little opposition we entered the town. The enemy had left during the early morning, with his equipment, that is. There remained about 100 German soldiers, if they could be called that. They were either less than 16 or more than 50 years old. I was one of about a dozen GIs to escort these prisoners back about 15 miles. We left before noon but it was slow going, even though all the way was down hill and very steep at that. Fortunately, we got a ride back but by that time it was almost dark. Our squad took quarters in a house at the extreme northern edge of town. We set up the machine gun in the doorway of the house, half in and half out. To our front was a sloping field, empty except for a few patches of snow. One of our rifle companies had men stationed outside. I was fast asleep when all hell broke loose, or so it sounded like. What had happened—a German soldier, making his way back to the town, apparently from spending time elsewhere, and maybe with a little too much to drink, came wandering down the slope toward the house. The rifleman ordered him to halt but he kept on coming so the machine gun opened fire. The noise of the gun inside the room was tremendous—it sounded like the world was coming to an end. No more sleep for the rest of the night. The next morning was a beautiful day once the fog cleared. The sun shone brightly on what was left of the wanderer; our machine gun had practically cut him in two.

We left Bohringen on the 25th of April. At one town we stayed in some of the fellows had time for fishing—with grenades. They caught several fish but had to give them to a local family because we were moving out. We still continued south until we came to Lechbruck (meaning, bridge over the Lech River). There I stayed with a family that operated the city switchboard. We had to wait until a Bailey bridge could be constructed. I asked the telephone operator to get me Herr Hitler in Berlin. She thought I was serious—she said it was "Verboten" to call the Reichsführer unless it was official state or military business. It was academic anyway since a GI from communications was posted at the switchboard and wouldn't let any calls in or out.

The bridge finally was ready, so we hopped aboard new tank destroyers and rode in style across the Lech River. Traveling about 25 miles per hour, we buzzed across the countryside. As we approached a town, either we were met with rifle fire or by white sheets flapping from every window in town. When it was rifle fire, the TDs would place a couple of rounds in the house hiding the sniper and usually nothing more happened. Several days of this—actually traveling too fast for prisoners to be taken. In one town we came across about 10 GIs who had been captured in Italy. They resented our intrusion. It seems that they had free run of the town, I think it was Krumbach. Their captors had deserted them and they were catching up for lost time. Of particular difficulty were the conditions at night. It was very dark—no moon. One time while I was standing guard, a German soldier came right up to our position. I ordered him, in German, to hold his hands up and finally after fumbling around in the dark got my ammo bearer to take him by the arm back to the CP. I got chewed out for not properly disarming him as he still carried a P38 pistol on him when we was escorted into the company CP.

Much of the time we rode on the famous Autobahn. The only problem was that each little bridge was bombed out and we had to detour over the side, across the stream and up the other side. The further south we went the colder it got. The largest town we came to was Ulm on the Danube. The river was anything but blue and running bank high. We headed further south into the area of Oberammergau, Garmish-Partenkirchen, Mittenwald and Seefeld. This was the winter sports area of Germany and the heart of its highest mountains. There was plenty of snow everywhere. Soon we were watching many human skeletons standing by the road in striped pajamas. Everyone was ordered not to feed them anything since the medics would care for them. Finally we came to the last turn overlooking the Inn Valley of Austria. Several half-track vehicles were overturned along the side of the road. Later we heard that their brakes had failed and the drivers had run up against the ledge on the high side of the road and overturned them rather than go down the steep hill and off the outer edge.

The Inn River and valley were totally different. Here it was hot and sunny. Soon we passed the airport of Innsbruck—many German planes were still parked on the runways. Downtown Innsbruck and house to house search for weapons. Finally billeted across the river as the war officially came to an end on May 9, 1945.

(The foregoing is a result of notes taken in shorthand, in a diary maintained during the period covered, an extract of events described in letters written during the period covered, and recollections during the first year following the period. It was written, for the most part, in 1946.)

Following are some comments made by one of the members of my unit after he read the above:

Ref. Nov. 25, 1944, 3rd Para: "I will never know why I left my sidearm in the bakery and met that German unarmed. Just new to the battle and I was never unarmed again."

Ref. Nov. 29, 1944: "I have spent over 50 years wondering why Sgt. Grusecki came to me and said Sly wanted to talk to me. I had no longer moved from by Hudson and gone to see him (Sgt. Slyford) when the mortars came in. Sly said to move our gun out to the left in the open field as he feared a counterattack. Heading back, I was told by Grusecki to not go back up there—that Hudson had taken a direct hit. We took the other gun and set it up out in the field. I was alone out there, but at least out of those damn trees and shrapnel. The next morning a German tank with some Krauts started out from the church at the edge of town. I was by then so shocked by Hudson and our other losses that I opened up on the tank. The Krauts went into the graveyard and church and the tank turned and faced me. It leveled it's gun and fired one round. I can still hear the swish as it went just over my gun and into the hillside. Luckily the tank turned and went into town. The machine gun bullets just bounced off the tank. The result nearly finished me. How we survived the tree busts that killed so many is a wonder."

Ref. Jan. 19, 1945: "Your account has some errors since the Nov. 29, 1944 action, as we were not together again. I took a machine gun in Section 1 and Philpotts took the other. We gave cover on Jan. 19th to C Company and I went with Capt. Neely. A new young Lt. told me to set up my gun next to a small building on the rail embankment. I said no way, but I would set up about 50 yd. away as I had learned something about combat. About 30 min. later the Krauts sent in a rolling artillery barrage and two rounds naturally hit that building. The Lt. just motioned thumbs up. Real early the next morning while still fairly dark, all hell broke loose. A potato masher fell behind me and I grabbed it and threw it back over the tracks just as Philpotts and La Point opened fire. A burp gun hit them and Neely said to retreat to a better position. It was not me who continued firing as I went over to get Philpotts whom I had befriended. He told me how he had 3 kids back home and was a late draftee. I was not going to leave him there so I got another soldier and we carried him some 200 yards to cover and medics. He was hit in the right shoulder and chest. Sgt. Grusecki told me about an hour later that he had died and I was really sad as he was a very good guy. La Point was not hit—the bullet went between his helmet liner and helmet. They were both awarded silver stars."

Ref. March 15, 1945: "I jumped into a trench with a couple of guys and Johnny, the Medic. Several mortar rounds came in few feet from the trench as the Krauts were naturally aiming where they had just left. When Lt. Poole was hit, someone yelled for a medic and Johnny said, 'Len, I gotta go.' He stood up to leave the trench and fell back in my lap. I asked him what was wrong and as I turned him over I saw he was hit through the neck and was dead in my arms. That's why you never saw him again. He was also one nice young man. We were certainly fortunate to come out alive and while one does learn from combat experience—it is mostly good luck and you know the longer one is on the line, eventually it's his turn and luck runs out. Capt. Neely was one great soldier, wasn't he?"

Some postwar observations—for whatever they're worth:

My wife and I visited the area in 1976, somewhat tracing the route of Company D, 410th, in a rented VW. We met with the Gammeningens. The then 81 year old Frau was still living in the house we stayed at in 1945. Susanne was married and had grandchildren—8yr. old Eugene was also married and had 6 children—we had a Sunday dinner with him, his wife and all but one child who was away a school. The hill near Itterswiler had been logged off and replanted with hardwood trees—hardly recognizable. We stopped in Villed at a small candy shop



and the clerk called for her grandfather who was in back of the shop. We had a long discussion—that's how I found out that Grubbe, the nearest town had been changed to Fouchy. I got the impression, in no uncertain terms, that France treated Alsace as "poor relations."

Food rations during combat were reasonable. I guess the problem was that the Company kitchen had difficulty always finding all the units, as we were always attached to rifle companies and sometimes were cut off or unable to be reached—hence the use of K rations. Also, whenever we could find food on the local economy, we preferred it to rations—it tasted better. Most of the civilian population offered food. Probably Alsace was in better shape than either Germany or France—it was sort of a breadbasket area. I, personally, never understood or was aware of the overall picture. All I could describe was what happened to me or those around me and rumors that invariably pop up.

I felt that the GIs treated the Alsatians almost like the enemy—they stole whatever they liked from houses which were unoccupied. Later within Germany proper, there was plenty of fraternization, contrary to official orders; there were too many instances of German POWs being taken back, a few at a time, not making it to the detention centers. Another thing which bothered me and still does—I felt that the weapons we had to use were inferior to the Wehrmacht's comparable weapons, particularly as they applied to our Heavy Weapons Company. Take my 30 cal water cooled machine gun as an example. It was pure World War I vintage. Slow rate of fire, took 3 people to carry necessary equipment to set it up, was not at all suited to the offensive type of combat that was encountered, wouldn't fire when the web belts became wet and tightened up, etc. But, I felt very fortunate that we did not often meet up with the cream of the German Army, and that I was supporting a Rifle Company and was not a rifleman. As to armored units in support, most of our early support was tentative. That is, our tanks were no match for the enemy's, and that's why they stayed well behind protective cover whenever available.

On another note—as we were leaving Germany to return to the States, we rode in 40 x 8s. While traveling through Strasbourg, our train stopped in the marshaling yards for a few minutes, probably to await necessary switching. As we sat there, many small Alsatian children ran out to greet the GIs leaning out of the freight car doorways to get gum, cigarettes, candy, etc. Many were shaking hands with the GIs. Just as the train started up, a small boy, about 3 or 9 years old, reached to shake the hand of a GI in the rail car right ahead of ours. The GI apparently hung on to his hand too long and the boy was pulled under the wheel and his left leg was cut off just above the knee. An indelible memory which I'll never forget. The boy was left standing, hopping on one leg as we pulled out. All we could do was point back down the tracks as we passed under an overpass roadway trying to alert the civilians standing there. For the most part the GIs were brave and dependable under the worst conditions—but as in all cases, there are always a few bad apples.