



MUD AND GUTS



PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS of WORLD WAR II

by
Arthur J. Clayton
1944 - 1946



Illustrations by Frank Kroggel and Mack Borgotta

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



I am deeply grateful to my brother, Dr. Ken Clayton, for first suggesting and then implementing the idea of scanning my 50-year-old MUD & GUTS, Recollections of World War II, into the modern world of the computer! Ken has put many, many hours of tireless work into the project, displayed his great skill and talents with the computer, and showed unbelievable patience with the numerous corrections and suggestions that I offered. I also thank Ken's wife, Freda, for her understanding, encouragement and patience! - Art Clayton

Added 12/4/2008 by Bruce Clayton: Many of these pages were annotated with letters from Edward F. Defoe, who survived many of the same experiences described by Art Clayton. We regret to report that "Ed of the Frozen North" passed away on Thanksgiving Day, 2008, at the age of 89. He died peacefully at home, surrounded by his family, in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Added 5/26/2014 by Bruce Clayton: My father passed away on October 10, 2010, aged 92 years and some months. Shortly before Art's death I was contacted by Army Platoon Sergeant D. Dawkins, who had enjoyed reading the *Mud & Guts* website. He pointed out that all soldiers of the 103d were retroactively awarded the Bronze Star in 1947 to honor their sacrifices. This happened after the close of the war, so many of them never knew about it. Art was buried with full honors at the Riverside National Cemetery in California.



INTRODUCTION



Dachau, Germany

1945

I have good intentions of making this a complete story of my Army "career" with many of the details which I remember so well. But how long these good intentions will last I do not know.

My accounts will undoubtedly vary with others covering the same incidents. In combat each day is a nightmare and no two people see the same things in the same light and many times no one actually does know what happened nor how. Small towns are just so many snipers in church steeples and so many men left dead or wounded on the town's outskirts.

To the civilian soldiers with whom I shared these experiences.

Arthur J. Clayton



Left to right -
Top row: Crabtree, Bales, Brog, Birdick, Bianco, Birch, Bennett, Brown, Clayton,
Custin, Barton.
Second: Bennett, Ashford, Cordia, Danne, Arnston, Bradley, Craft, Conway, Acosta,
Call, Bell, Coble.
Third: Bifle, Alport, Bullock, Christal, Anderson, Abbott, Church, Christensen,
Collins, Allen, Rufka, Aldridge, Danford.
Fourth: Buckingham, Brown, Davis, Black (Loyd), Brucker, Calvert, Clark, Byerly,
Castro, Childs, Cameron, Bowman, Rocerra, Beck.
Bottom: Boley, Bjorques, Brownson, Black, Carothers, Collins, Carnes, Brower,
Campbell, Cook, Bill, Brown, Amar, Hatchelder.
- Cpl. Cannon, Sgt. Weber, Lt. Frieband, Cpl. Davenport -
- Medic Sgt. Castro

1st Platoon
Co. B, 73rd Inf. Fin Bn.
Camp Roberts, Calif.
July, 1944

To: Ray Crabtree, Ed Fry, Loyd Black, Ed DeFoe, Ralph Wards, Joe Milhoan, Harold Schreckengost.

Christmas 1991

For many years I have promised myself I would someday add some "footnotes" to my original MUD & GUTS, little incidents I remembered long after the book was typed up in 1945-46. Now recent events and most especially a long letter from Ed DeFoe have pushed me over the brink. So herewith are some block-busters from Ed's memory, some others I have heard from, and some of those I remember now but neglected to include "way back there."

Ready?

Ed's comments, and others, are referenced by pages in my MUD & GUTS so I am sending copies of these to those I know have copies of M&G. I never heard from Billy Bowles, Gene Carnes, Paul Crawford, Frank Damanti, Don McGonagle. If some of you can "stir them up" to get into this old memory game, please do so!

Sincerely,

Art Clayton

(Note: These additional comments and recollections will be printed in italics to differentiate them from the original text of MUD & GUTS.)



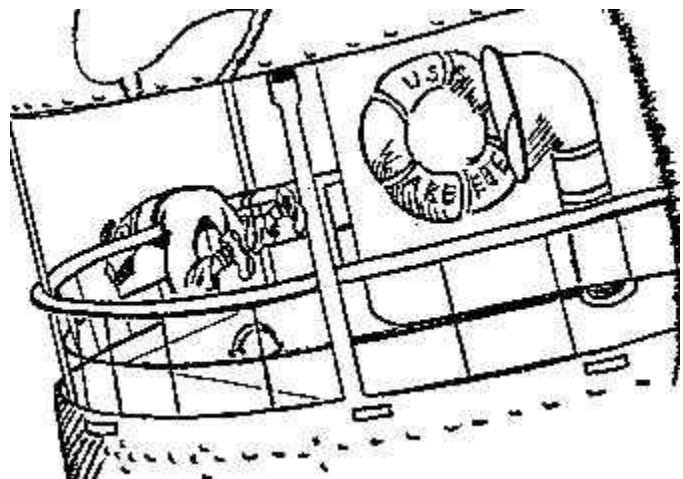
Camp Roberts, California, 1944



Sometime in January, 1944, the President sent his "greetings" – I was now in 1-A and would report for a physical March 21. Living in Prescott, Ariz., at the time, I had my papers transferred from Missouri and at the appointed time went to Phoenix for examination. It was not quite the case of "if you're still warm, you're in" but almost. I passed.

Two months later, May 31, I took the fatal step forward, said "I do" and was in the Army. This was at Ft. MacArthur, Calif., a few miles from Los Angeles. By June 7, I was at Camp Roberts, Calif., starting 17 weeks of basic infantry training. Miles of marching with full field pack, rifle, steel helmet in California's 100-degree-plus sun, firing our new rifles, carbines, mortars, machine guns, BARs, listening to lectures on first aid, scouting, gas, running through various combat courses, crawling under machine gun fire, wearing ourselves out on obstacle courses, drilling, taking calisthenics. It wasn't fun. But by October 7, we "graduated" and were supposed to be soldiers and ready, if not willing, for anything.

After a 12-day delay en route furlough I found myself at Ft. Meade, Md., a staging area for overseas shipments. Here we drew all new equipment and were oriented again and again on insurance, mail, and in general how to behave in a foreign land. We got plenty of "shots" here, too. Our next stop was in Camp Miles Standish, Mass., about Nov. 3, a POE. And on Nov. 10 we were boarding the USS Wakefield and heading . . . for what, no one knew.





**Chariton County
Squirrel Hunters
Win Rifle Honors**

BRUNSWICK, MO. Aug 17, 1944-----

Squirrel hunting in Missouri paid dividends in California for two Chariton County youths recently when they tied for top score as rifle experts in the same infantry training company at Camp Roberts.

In addition to receiving rifle expert medals, each of the soldiers, Pvt Arthur Clayton of Brunswick and Pvt Ernest Drew of Keytesville, was awarded a \$25 War Bond by the company commander for scoring 185 in the tests. High score for the entire battalion was 187.

Pvt Clayton formerly was editor of *The Brunswicker* here and for several months prior to his induction was an editor on the staff of a Prescott, Ariz., daily. He is the son of Postmaster and Mrs. A.J. Clayton. Pvt Drew is the son of Mr. Wilbur Drew of Keytesville and is a brother-in-law of Mrs. Romie Drew of Brunswick.

– From K.C. Star



Twelve Day Delay En Route Furlough

Brunswick, Missouri
October 1944



Bob, Ken, Mom, Art, Dad



Art



Bob, "Mr. Chips," Art



Art, Bob, Ken



ENGLAND



Nov. 17, we landed in Liverpool, England, boarded a train at night, passed through London, and spent a cold, rainy and very muddy night at South Hampton. That was what I saw of England -- countryside, the skyline of London, railroad tracks, and rain, rain, rain. The next day we boarded HMS Invicta and started for Le Havre, France, across the English Channel. A heavy sea prevented us from landing that night but the next morning, Nov. 19, we staggered onto a landing craft and moved into Le Havre harbor. Here we saw the first evidence, actually, of the havoc of war---sunken ships by the dozens, battered sea walls and, as we moved into shore, the wrecked landing boats in which GIs only a short time ago had staged their invasion. The main part of the small city, located along the waterfront, was another mass of wreckage -- every building blasted to kingdom come by the U.S. naval guns. It was a sight to us rookies.

The following days still are only a bad dream to me. It was finally dawning on us that we were actually closing in on the heels of battle. We were in a strange country, bewildered, scared, and very homesick. The civilians, kids and old women, stood in line to get the scraps from our mess kits. We felt sorry for them, and even more at a loss as more and more the meaning of war came to us. Then there were days and nights of travel in cold and leaking boxcars -- the famous *40 and 8's of the last war. No room to sleep, too cold if we could, too suffocating to build a fire. We saw the rail yards of Paris and more evidence of bombings. We stopped somewhere at a small Army replacement depot, whether more than one I've forgotten, but finally we unloaded at Epinal, France, a Seventh Army depot. We drew rifles, more equipment, stood guard, and twice were chased from our beds by air raid alerts.

*40 men or 8 horses.

*From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991:
Re: MUD & GUTS*

I am reading your book again and things are beginning to fall in place....so I will go at this page by page, okay? One thing for sure, we all fought our own war called "the war of survival," which didn't look all that promising at times.....

You took your basic at Roberts and I at Fannon, in the Texas desert...neither one a Disney World, I am sure. But both for seventeen weeks, and home for about two weeks and, yup, to Fort Mead...and England and Le Havre. You talk about sick!! I did real fine until the damn boat leaned on her side and trays from our chow table were landing on the floor....oops, deck -- and one tray from somebody landed in my lap -- filled with "puke"...sorry, I can't find a nice word to describe it....Anyway, Epinal was the pits and, yes, I was lonesome and scared and we hadn't even got started. I'm a city kid and not used to these lousy conditions -- cold, hungry, dirty.

Starting ...or I should say, joining, the 103d didn't impress me but at least we sort of belonged to something.....



ASSIGNED



But the day came when we were told we were going to the 409th Regiment of the 103d Division -- and then followed more days of travel from here to there, sleeping in pup tents and taking orders from T/5s of the service company. Then one morning we were told to throw away everything but our equipment in our packs -- and did so -- extra shoes, socks, gas masks, mess kits, our new Red Cross kits, everything went into a huge pile. The French civilians helped themselves. And we, sick and disgusted at the Army's way of wasting equipment, climbed into trucks and took off again.

We were now traveling ahead of some of our larger field guns and going through country that only a few days ago had been the front lines. Roads, axle deep in mud, blasted by shells, trees uprooted, scores of water-filled foxholes and here and there the bodies of dead Germans along the road or in the fields. And then a town, I think it was Dambach-la-Ville, near Selestat anyway, and we unloaded again. Here, in the attic of an old school house, we became members of B Company, 409th Infantry. Three days before all but about ten men of the company had been captured by the Germans. We were to replace them. It wasn't a cheerful thought.

With squad leaders from other companies we were put into squads, still very much understrength. Crabtree, Carnes, Black, Craft and I, all from Missouri and Camp Roberts buddies, and two other Missouri boys, Damanti and Compton, were in one squad. Allen was our leader. I was made BAR man-- which meant carrying a rifle 10 pounds heavier than the M1, and twice as much ammunition, to say nothing of the clumsy belt, 20-round magazines. I wasn't too pleased.

News clippings from *The Brunswick*, Brunswick, Missouri:

The following notes on the trip on a troop transport from the United States to England were written by Pvt. Arthur J. Clayton to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Clayton. Art is now in France.

Dear Folks--

At Sea, November, 1944

This is an experience I shall never forget as long as I live!

Long lines of soldiers waiting for their train cars while the rain peppered down; the same men laughing a bit exaggerated as we got the first glimpse of our troop ship; walking up the gangplank in single file, inwardly excited (if like me) but a little lonesome and homesick, too; our crowded quarters below deck, but much cleaner and nicer than I had expected; our first visit to the upper decks and the massiveness of our ship; the moments we moved away from shore and crowded the rails to get our last glimpse of the good old U. S. A., quickly disappearing behind in the rain and mist; coming back to our bunks after dark and thinking what a long, tiresome trip is ahead of us--whether 5 days or 20.

We can feel the ship rolling now and we are all wondering if we will be among those who get seasick. One man has already "spilled" his supper.

We are all smoking, some reading, writing; a crap game has (one word deleted) started in one corner, of the compartment. One fellow is warming up on a harmonica, another toots on an ocarina.

It's smoky and stuffy, but the GIs keep on laughing, cursing, talking and joking.

This is a day few of us will ever forget, yes, indeed.

* * * * *

Just came back from a visit on deck; it's dark now and the sky is overcast. A single star peaks through the clouds at intervals. Salt spray blows in your face from the bow, stinging and refreshing after hours in our quarters.

Eight out of ten of us really know what seasickness is now. A gale has been blowing for hours and the ship is consistently nosing up and down, up and down. Vomiting buckets are everywhere and all used! So far I've been lucky; stomach too squeamish for our first meal at sea ---just a bite then back to my bunk. But after several trips to fresh air, supper went fairly well. Feel fine now; maybe I'll be one who 'keeps it down.'

Quarters are still hot and stuffy and the smell isn't pleasant.

* * * * *

This is a first-class ship, or so it looks to me, and with less congestion and better weather it would be a real pleasure cruise.

* * * * *

A sailor says this is the roughest day for some time. Rumors say the sick bay is full of sailors--so pity the poor land soldier!

Less wind now and the water is not so 'bumpy'; many have recovered from their sea sickness and all the decks are crowded with men, some out of their bunks for the first time. Many are reading, some sleeping, others just looking at the water. Nothing else to do.

The Red Cross has already made a hit with us. At the dock, while we waited to board ship, Red Cross girls (all over 50, I'm sure) distributed hot coffee--definitely not the G. I. brand, too--and doughnuts. Very welcome. Later, on ship Red Cross kits were given us - books, writing material, razor blades, cigarettes, cards, soap, lifesavers.

Cigarettes, incidentally, are 5 cents a pack aboard ship--when you can get them. Someone must make a profit on them back in the states. (Ed note: most of that "profit" is tax!)

I still can't believe we are to be sent into combat immediately. Less than 4 1/2 months of basic training isn't much background for combat - but who knows. We're sure heading toward something.

Time passes here only as time. Daylight and dark make no difference 'down here' in our quarters. Without watches and a visit above once in a while days would mean nothing. As it is, it's hard to remember what day it is.

Conversation frequently turns to our 'next voyage'-- home - but few of us hold hopes of making it soon.

Love to all and don't worry.
Art

From Harold Schreckengost, May, 1991:
Ref: Page 4 MUD & GUTS

(At my request, Schreck wrote out this account of the Company B capture at Selestat and their subsequent time as POWs –AJC)

Yes, I was taken prisoner at Selestat. The Army says December 1, 1944, but I am sure it was after midnight so I say December 2. We were rounded up but before they could get us out of town we were caught in our own artillery. As far as I know, no casualties. After a day or two along the Rhine we were taken by truck to Stalag 12-A at Limberg. Along the way we were bombed by our own planes. Arrived December 11. Left 12-A after interrogation and being split up as to officers, NCOs and Pvts on December 23 via side-door pullman (boxcar!). Arrived Stalag 3-B at Fuerstenbert on December 27. The train trip was bad news!! No services except for one pail in the car (for 40 men), very little food or water. We scraped frost from bolt heads and hinges on the doors for liquid. When there would be an air raid while we sat in the rail yards, the guards and crew would bail out and leave us locked in the cars which were not marked with a cross as they should have been.

We were at Stalag 3-B 'til January 31, 1945, when the Russians started a drive so we had to move back to the West. This move was the hard way -- on foot. There were 5,000 of us American Non-Coms in the group. We were on the road for eight days in the cold, snow and ice. At night we slept in barns, warehouses or wherever we were. We arrived at Stalag 3-A at Luckenwalde on February 8. Five hundred of us left the next day and walked to a small camp, 483-C. We stayed here 'til April 22 when the Russian army was again near. On the road again this time for four days when we arrived at Stalag 11-A at Altengrabow. While we were at 483-C we were close to Berlin and Potsdam when the Allies were bombing them day and night. We could see the fires and feel the concussion of the bombs. The four-day walk to 11-A was something you would have to see to believe! We were on the highway along with thousands of German civilians all fleeing west to stay ahead of the Russians.

At 11-A they had connections with the American Red Cross and in seven or eight days a convoy of 70 GI trucks flying white flags came in 35 kilometers behind the lines and took all the English, French and Americans across the Elbe river and we were free at last!

After spending a week or so at different installations, we arrived at Camp Lucky Strike where they built us up a bit for the trip home. I sailed for home on June 2, 1945 and arrived at Camp Shanks, N.Y., June 12, went first to Jefferson Barracks, Mo., then home for a 60-day furlough. Reported back to Hot Springs, Ark., for 14 days R&R. Spent the last three months of my Army career at Ft. Lawton, Mass. Was discharged from Ft. Lewis, Wash., November 17, 1945. Arrived home just in time to celebrate my 26th birthday on November 30.



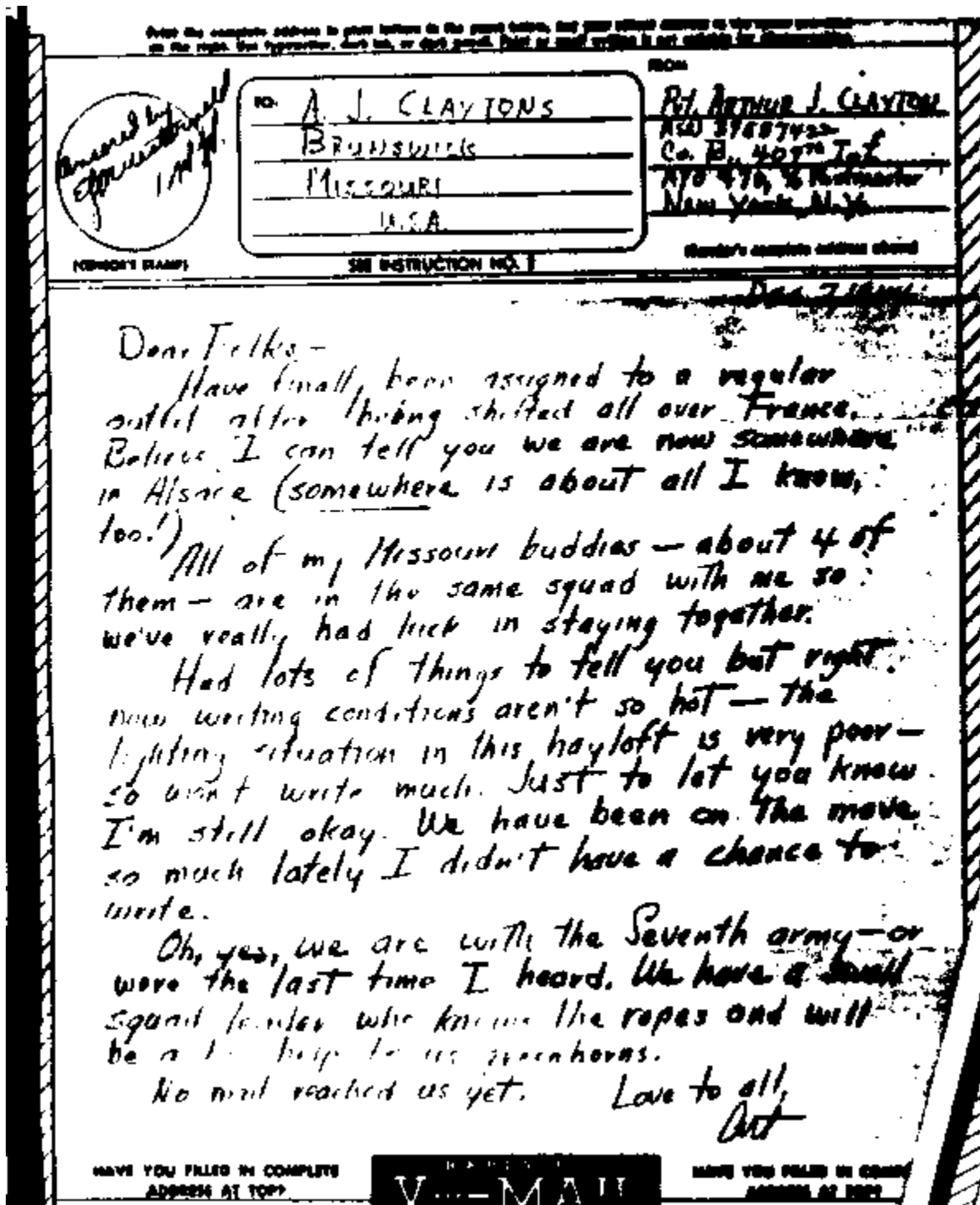
DIVISIONAL GUARD



We joined the company about Dec. 3, and the next day again moved out in trucks, this time going north in Alsace until we finally pulled into a small town by the name of La Walck. Our quarters were in the attic of a small house on the outskirts of town. I don't believe we ever slept there one night. About 5 o'clock every night, we were put out on road blocks, two men at a post, and remained there in the cold rain and snow until 8 in the morning.

Recruits that we were, the officers seemed to think it necessary to scare the hell out of us with tales of enemy paratroops landing nearby and enemy patrols. And don't forget, they warned, we're only six miles behind the front lines. True, we could see the flares and explosions up ahead of us and our own artillery guns blasted away all night from right beside our road blocks. Later we learned how safe we were just a few hundred yards behind the lines, or at least, how safe we felt.

A sample of the famous V-Mail of WWII



From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991:
Ref: Page 7 MUD & GUTS

I always wondered about this: We all were going along in a convoy, I think from Epinal, and we came to this crossroad and the whole convoy stopped. Some GIs motioned for the truck behind us, and some in back of it, to turn right on the crossroad. Of course: "Where are they going?" "They are going to be MPs," someone said. Oh, wow...why didn't they take just one more truck...ours? I've often wondered if this was B.S. or what....for almost 50 years already.

(Anybody else remember this?—AJC)

Billy (Bowles) came to us just after our first battle. I can see him even yet. He sez, "Is your name Ed...DeFoe." "Yeah," I sez. "We are on guard duty tonight," he said, "Can I be your friend?" He looked right into my eyes when he said it. I liked the guy right away.



MOVE OUT!



But our depleted company had had enough "rest" and on Dec. 12 we moved out, marching north. We were wearing the winter-type mud packs, a shoe and boot combination that I soon found wasn't meant for marching with pack and a BAR -- at the end of our first day's hike the bottoms of both my feet were raw with blisters. The next morning we dropped our packs but the harm had been done. Wet, swollen and cold, my feet hurt so badly I could hardly bear my weight -- and this was only the beginning!

Things went along fine for a while. We would dash into towns only to find the Germans had pulled back a few hours before. Usually we dragged a few deserters out of basements or houses. The civilians met us on the streets, shouting "Nichts boche!" and carrying baskets of apples and pears. We ran around flushing houses, an apple in one hand and a rifle in the other. Then we'd move on, hoping to spend the night unmolested in the next town, only two or three kilometers away.

Our artillery was moving up with us and if the setup looked bad they would pour a barrage into each town before we went in. Time and again the Jerries pulled out as we came near and often tossed 88's and mortars back into town after we had gone in. Baker and Charley companies had stopped in one of these small towns to reorganize before taking off again because it was suspected the Germans were waiting for us in the woods just outside. As luck would have it, Allen was told to take a patrol of three men to see if we could draw fire from the edge of the woods.

Craft, Carnes and I were selected to go with Allen and off we went. To say the least my heart was in my mouth when we went over the crest of the hill and started walking across an open field toward the woods. I know the others felt the same way, even Allen, who had seen action before. We moved nearer and nearer the woods, expecting to hear a shot any minute, but nothing happened. We turned around and casting fearful glances over our shoulders, went back into town. It's a strange feeling to think someone is lining you up in his sights and maybe squeezing the trigger

(Handwritten note from Joe Milhoan, platoon leader, Company B, to members of his platoon, Christmas, 1994.—AJC):

Fifty years ago I joined Company B 409th Infantry which had twelve men and no officers after the Selestat affair. We rapidly built the company to combat strength and set out to destroy Hitler's dream.

I was as green as grass but with a group of men such as you and the leadership of Sergeant Wards, we gave the krauts more than they handed out. We were in the Siegfried Line at this time of December, 1944, and struggling to hold the line and stay alive.

You will never know how much I appreciated your support, the fact that I never had a man who refused to follow me or my instructions and the willingness to go the extra mile to accomplish our mission.

We lost some fine men in combat and some since but they are not forgotten. Hope we can all be at Williamsburg and rehash some more fantastic stories.

Thanks for letting me be your Lieutenant and I wish you health and happiness for the holiday season.

*Sincerely,
(signed) Joe*

Remember Christmas in Saint-Jean-Rohrbach?



ONE-SIDED SKIRMISH



I think it was in the same town and the same night that Craft and I were put on an outpost at the edge of town. At the time we were posted it was so black we had to feel our way and could tell nothing of our surroundings except there was another guard on the road only about 30 yards away. We were almost afraid to breathe and strained to hear the slightest sound. Suddenly the road guard cried "Halt!" No answer. "Halt!" again and then an M-1 opened up and a BAR ripped off a full magazine. In the pitch blackness the noise was deafening. Then complete silence again. It was an hour or more later when we were relieved and heard the story. The two guards had seen several figures coming up the road. When no answer came to their challenge, they opened fire. They claimed to have seen one man fall and the others scattered. We pulled out that night, not down the road, so never got to see the results, if any, of the barrage.

We continued our march the following day, cleared several towns without incident. Then, moving down a road in two long, well-spaced lines, we suddenly heard the rat-tat-tat of a machine gun. No one had to tell us what had happened or what to do -- the Jerries had left behind more than a sniper or two....and we hit the ditches. But the firing was only occasional so little by little we moved forward into a shallow ditch in between hills and running at right angles to the road. When the German gun chattered now it cut branches off the bushes over our heads.

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991:
Ref: Pages 8-11, MUD & GUTS

You are right...taking those towns at first was no problem... pretty easy marching through, looking for the enemy and not finding any. You think maybe the war is about to end and this is all there is to it.....uh, oh, "Fix bayonets!" I didn't want to get close enough to anybody to use a knife on him...what would my Mom say?

I remember Billy Bowles was with us on that hill near Rott. His knees hurt him so badly he had tears in his eyes....so, every time he and I had to jam into a foxhole, he would put his knees into the back of my legs to keep them warm. I think that was when Billy shouted at me, "Ed! Am I hit?"

(Page 11, your book) I looked him over, kinda, I couldn't see anything. Then I noticed his ear was bleeding. I knew an 88 had landed near us but nearer to him than me. He then got pulled back by the medic and I didn't see him for quite a while. The screaming and hollering from some of the other guys was proof we were getting slaughtered. Actually, we couldn't see where they were shooting from. (The cemetery?—AJC)



FIX BAYONETS!



We stayed in the ditch perhaps for 20 minutes while our own machine guns got set up and our mortars poured round after round onto the hill in front of us. Then came the order "Fix bayonets!" and a minute later, "Let's go!" and we moved out of the ditch and started up the hill. I thought Oh, my God, is this the way it happens? I had no bayonet on my BAR and didn't know whether to be glad or sorry. We kept running though and after an eternity reached the crest of the hill -- no enemy. They had pulled out, where, we did not know nor care, as long as they were gone.

Our CO decided we would spend the night on the hill and wait until morning at dawn to attack the town, which we later learned was Rott. Allen's squad was put out in front on the top of the rise as outposts and Craft and I dug in on the right flank, the nearest to the enemy. We started digging an L-shaped hole and had not gone down more than 8 inches when water began to seep in. Within a few minutes we had a crude hole dug (it was already dark) and about three inches of water. About 8 inches of dirt was piled up around the edge of our hole as added protection; that gave us then about 20 inches of flimsy protection. Then it came! Whoosh! Bram! and then just z-z-ziz as shrapnel whizzed over our hole. The Germans were shelling our position. We were fortunate that night to be so far forward because until early in the morning they shelled the main body of the company behind us at regular intervals.



Craft and I were already soaked to the skin and each time we heard a shell coming we dived in again. The earth shook, fragments smacked into our circle of dirt, but when morning came we were still alive -- almost to our surprise. When we crawled out of our burrow we were mud from top to bottom, wringing wet and nearly frozen, almost too cramped to stand up. We swallowed a K ration and, still munching crackers, began moving down on the town.



MEN DIE QUICKLY



The company moved out almost in mob formation and Craft and I had not even found our squad, but were on the right flank of the company. As we started down the hill we saw about six Germans running for their holes and a second later one of their machine guns opened up full blast. We all hit the dirt, on the forward slope of a grassy hill, not even a good clod of dirt to get behind. I fell into a small furrow (with water running down it) and looked for something to shoot at. It was barely light, foggy and we were looking into the sun. How the Germans didn't hit us all is still a mystery to me.... we were sitting ducks.

Finally someone found his head and started moving the men over to our left flank into some woods and buildings. The firing quieted down and I soon found, from what little I could see, that I was about the only one still in the field. I finally started to run across the field, to my left, but my legs were too weak from the wet night in the hole and I fell flat. There was only one thing left to do, run down the hill into a larger ditch where there was plenty of concealment from small trees and bushes. I made that and lay half in and half out of the water, with another fellow, Harader, who had been in front of me.

The machine gun swept the ditch occasionally but it was not until mortar rounds started landing close that we really got worried. Several times the explosions threw mud all over us and shrapnel came close - - but not close enough. Finally, I saw the last of our men moving down the road on my left, going into town. I didn't want to be left behind so between mortar barrages, made my way down the ditch. Harader remained in the ditch. I finally got to the road and who should be the first man I meet -- Craft! We went into the basement of the first house we came to and I began to hear the story of what had happened on the hill.

Carnes had been nicked in the back of the head by a bullet. A sniper had shot off half of Allen's mustache. Fererra's shovel handle had been shot off and his leg grazed. Our medic, Lacy, had been killed instantly by a shell burst, another man had lost one leg, Drake had been shot in the groin, Davis in the arm, Gardner in the chest, Evans, our platoon sergeant, had been hit. All told, our platoon had been cut to 13 men but Craft, Crabtree, Black, Compton, Boles, DeFoe, and I were still okay. A sniper concealed in a cemetery on our left rear had accounted for many of the casualties but Sgt. Blank spotted him and put him out of the way.

I found out, too, that the boys had thought I was dead. After they all got back to the house at the left of the slope and they found I was missing, Black, Crabtree and Craft went back out on the hill to find me, but were driven off by the mortar barrage. Aside from the ones I knew, several other men had been killed or were badly wounded. And as we sat in the basement and collected our wits, Catanzano, another member of the company, lay on the floor shot through the head by a sniper. He had gone into the house from the rear, walked to the front door and opened it. The German was not more than thirty yards away and aiming at the door. All he had to do was squeeze the trigger. I think Catanzano was the first dead American I had seen -- lying in a great pool of blood, the back of his head blown out.



PHOTOS TAKEN IN 1967



In the spring of 1967, we (Art, Lois, Bruce and Rich) flew to Paris, rented a German VW Bug, and retraced much of Art's combat area of 1944-45 along the French-German border. These and following photographs were taken at that time.



Here we got our first taste of combat as we approached the little town of Rott. The Germans started firing at us, probably from the cemetery (see trees in upper left) and we sought shelter in the shallow ditch across center of picture.



Ordered to "fix bayonets," we charged up the ridge and the Germans pulled back into town. We spent the night in shallow, muddy holes, dodging enemy shells. The edge of the cemetery is in left foreground of picture. A sniper hidden here took his toll as we moved out to attack the town at dawn.



Looking across the width of the old cemetery, I believe the house on the left is the one where part of our group sought cover when the Germans pinned us down on the slope. House on right is the first one we entered on edge of town.

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991
Ref: Page 13, MUD & GUTS

I think it was Ferrara's or Damanti's rain coat (on his belt) that was full of holes. Ferrara had a brother who was in the Air Corps and he used to say, "If you guys think this is rough, you should be in the Air Corps!" They really had it tough -- 30 missions and they got to go home!

I wish I could remember the guy's name who got circumcised (or even how to spell it!) but (the bullet) just took off the loose skin. He gave me his sort of like a Scout knife. He sez, "I'm going home or at least to a hospital." However, I did see him again after the war and asked him if he wanted it back....and you know, Art, I still have it in my tool box -- to me that was my introduction to the real war.....

It was not until years later, in 1993, that I learned from declassified regimental reports that our Company B lost 8 men killed in action, 19 wounded, and one MIA in our first engagement at Rott on December 15 1944.—AJC



STRAGGLERS



We left the house after about an hour and helped clear out the rest of the town but had no trouble. We stayed for a few hours in another bombed house, trying to dry out our clothes and get our dirty equipment cleaned up. Then we pulled out again, dashing our hopes of spending the night, safe and warm in a building.

Wards led our platoon, or what was left of it, out of town on what developed to be another "draw fire" patrol. We moved down a deep ditch until forced out in the open for better vision. I had no more than stood up when *zing!* a bullet whistled over my head. I ducked into the ditch, raised my head and *zing!* another one breezed over. I crawled through a briar patch (not easy with a BAR, gas mask and ammo bag) and stayed in the ditch.

It was getting dark rapidly, and we finally turned back to the north of Rott after encountering enough snipers left behind to convince us we didn't want to stay too long. By the time we reached our company, which was staying in a deserted house about one-quarter of a mile north of the town, it was dark, but with a good moon. Our squad managed to get into a small pillbox near the house and spend the night, cramped, but safe and fairly warm. During the night, one of the guards outside shot himself in the foot – everyone believed intentionally.

At the crack of dawn we were again on the move, our squad, with Crabtree and, I think, Compton, out in front as scouts. We had gone only a few yards from the pillbox into some woods when Crabtree dropped to his knees and began waving Allen up -- krauts ahead! And then they flushed like a covey of quail, practically under our feet. One German was not more than 30 yards from me, and I remember no feeling at all, more than almost a contempt, when I realized I was looking right down the sights of his rifle! I stepped behind a big tree, knelt down and looked around the other side -- the German had turned and started to run. I raised my BAR, took careful aim (he looked like a barn door in the sights) and pulled the trigger.....nothing happened! A second later Craft's rifle cracked and the German was dead, along with one of his buddies. Rifles were popping everywhere and when we finally let up there were about four dead Germans and several prisoners. None of us had been hurt. I found that my ammo, wet from the night in the hole, and covered with muddy water, had jammed my gun. All that time and I was defenseless!

The next day or two were more endless hours of marching on wet, blistered feet. The Germans had pulled back and kept out of sight. I think it was about Dec. 18 that we crossed the German border at Wissembourg, unopposed and moved up into the mountains and the outer defenses of the Siegfried Line. We pushed on, up and down hills, until after dark, and then were told to dig in for the night. Again I was lucky. Our squad was placed at extreme ends of the bivouac area as outposts.

During the night, German 88mm shells poured into the main company area and many men were wounded. We were far enough forward to go untouched.

In the morning part of our platoon was sent up Hill 503 to investigate a castle, which was thought to be a German observation post. There were not more than eight men on the patrol but when the rest of us went up to look for them a short time later, we found them with nineteen prisoners! Not a shot had been fired; the Jerries simply came out of the rocks with their hands up. For two days we stayed at the castle, dug in

around its sides, drinking water from the meager drippings off the rocks. No other source was available, though we got K rations and our first mail since we had come overseas showed up. I got one letter, from Nellie Lipper.

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991

Ref: Page 14, MUD & GUTS

Yes, I certainly remember about the guy who we thought shot himself in the foot. It was during the attack and I found a slightly used foxhole, jumped in, and suddenly this guy landed on me but he left his foot or leg hanging out. I hollered he should pull it in and he said he wanted to get shot in the leg. I made him get out and we both took off. He was the same guy who the next day the medics hauled away. Maybe that was when he got the idea.

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991

Ref: Page 15, MUD & GUTS

You were right about those BARs....even if the wind was blowing the wrong way the thing would jam. I know Ferreira had one and he carried a shaving brush and a tooth brush to try to keep it clean.



PILLBOXES AND TRENCHES



We finally left the hill and pushed ahead to run into the first pillboxes in the Siegfried. Company C had gone in the night before and with dynamite and grenades driven the Germans from four forts. Our platoon was sent up the hill to contact C, got too far to the right, investigated some log dugouts and finally got back to the left and located C in the pillboxes and a network of connecting trenches. We discovered then that the log dugouts were still supposed to be in enemy hands -- and we had walked right up to them!

Our squad again managed to get set up in a captured pillbox for some rest and to clean our rifles. But a few hours of moving up and down in the sandy trenches soon had my BAR on the bum again and I doubted if it would fire. I soon found out. In the most forward pillbox that we had taken so far were several of our men and a wounded German. Harader and I were detailed to take two other prisoners out to the pillbox and bring in the wounded man. We reached the place without incident; I had gone inside the doorway (the door had been completely blown off) and Harader was sitting in front of the doorway with a bottle of wine in his hand. Suddenly there was a kr-wham! as a German shell exploded only a few yards in front. Harader was inside -- holding the neck, and that was all, of the bottle. For several minutes we hugged the walls inside the doorway as shell after shell burst in front, throwing dirt and dust into the room. The tank must have had perfect vision of the pillbox and knew we were in it. Time after time we thought the next shell would surely come inside. Twice the tank stopped firing for a minute or so and the third time Harader and I told our krauts to come on and we streaked out the door -- Harader first, the Jerries next and me last. I had just reached the brink of the hill behind the pillbox when the tank fired again. The shell landed behind me and the concussion fairly threw me the rest of the way down the slope. Then to make matters worse, a German machine gun on our left opened up on us as we ran for the trench. I didn't care then what happened to the three prisoners but the two unhurt ones were carrying, dragging, pushing the wounded one into the trench -- as their own machine gun tried to reach us. Harader and I, already in the trench by then, turned to fire back at the MG -- and I found again that the BAR had been fouled up by the sand and dirt. It would not fire.

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991

Ref: Page 16 MUD & GUTS

We stayed a few days at that castle. I remember, Art, there was a chapel in the building, just filled with books. I reached up and pulled one out and guess what? It was an American Boy Scout book!

Then we took off for those pillboxes....and Frank Damanti and (I can't remember who) and I were "selected" to see if those pillboxes were occupied. I was the flank man. We put some kind of a bomb in the door and retreated back to the trench like fast. It took a long time for it to explode but finally it did. There were a couple of krauts someone had flushed out. End of that story!



All hell broke loose then and the Germans had started their first counterattack to retake the fortifications. I picked up a rifle and used it for the remainder of the time we stayed on the hill. Shortly after the attack started the pillbox in which Harader and I had just visited was captured by the Germans. We never knew what happened to the five or six GIs who were there when we left. For three days and nights we stayed in the trenches -- in the daytime we were continually shelled, portions of the trenches were blown in on us, trees splintered over our heads; at night the Jerries tried to creep up on us to throw hand grenades or reach us with flame throwers. We stood in the trenches hour after hour, straining our eyes into the darkness to catch any movement, frequently letting go several rounds just to discourage any venturesome German.

During those three days we had two K rations (two dry meals) and only one canteen of water. An hour's sleep was a luxury and one could hardly recognize his closest buddy for the thin, worried faces, blood-shot eyes and two-weeks' beard. Then one morning word came we were going to be relieved. It was true. The 45th division was moving in. At last we were leaving this hell -- but not before our platoon went out to investigate the first pillbox we had lost. My heart was in my boots then because safety was so near, yet I knew what a patrol might mean. We gathered in the trench, Wards said, "Couple of you go out as scouts." He was looking at me and I said, "Okay" and crawled over the trench. The others followed one by one until we were all moving up the rise toward the pillbox behind a knoll. I crawled past two dead Germans who had been killed the night before by mortar or hand grenades and we finally reached a place we could see. Wards stood up, pulled the pin from a grenade and heaved. He said he had seen some Germans in the trees ahead of us and several of us fired shots in that direction. Then trouble came our way. Germans behind the knoll began throwing grenades at us. By the time the second one landed we were on our way out of there but very fast! Crabtree saw one coming right at him, jumped and hit the ground just as it exploded. All he got was a ringing in the ears and a tiny burn on one pant leg. That was the end of our patrol and a few minutes later we left the hill and started back to civilization....

...There are three things that I think I shall never forget that happened on 489. The first, and most outstanding, I guess, is a smell. Burnt powder seems to have a kind of sweet, sickening smell, almost like flowers in a funeral parlor. That smell clung to the hilltop day and night. The night I remember it most was once when I was standing in the trench waiting for the Germans to come at us again. There was a dead GI stretched out on the top of the trench behind my back, stiff and cold. The powder smell was very strong and that night it made an indelible mark on my memory. To this day that smell will come back to me and I remember the horror of waiting there in the darkness, just waiting, and the dead soldier behind me.

Another memory brings a smile. As I said before, our K rations were few and far between. I remember how Black and I, lying in the trench eating our small can of cheese, cursing the Germans when a shell came in, not for endangering our lives particularly, but because the bursts too often threw dirt all over

our food. But we just brushed it off and ate on. We had no water to mix with our orange powder or bullion but tried to eat it anyway, soon giving it up when we found it made us even more thirsty.

The other thought is a reminder of how hungry I must have been. When the 45th came in to relieve us, all the men were carrying three K rations each -- how our eyes bulged and our mouths watered! I remember begging a cracker from one fellow, trying not to show my eagerness to get something to chew on. It's funny now but it wasn't then.

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991
Ref: Pages 20 & 21, MUD & GUTS

Wasn't it odd how we got so when we heard those 88s coming in we could just about tell where they were going to land. When you're so beat there was no use to move out of the way if it isn't going to land in your pocket. And those so-called marching boots or whatever, like wearing just overshoes....your feet would sweat like mad and freeze when you stopped walking...sounds like a bitch from the Stars and Stripes!

Those clothes you mentioned --- they didn't have my size! Boy! How they didn't have clothes to fit a 139-lb GI. My pants almost went around me twice. I finally found a BAR strap and made sort of a belt.



GERMAN POSTCARDS



"Our SS Troops before the Battle"



"Our SS Troops Attacking a Railroad Station"



"Our SS Troops Gathering"



THE ROAD BACK



....And so we left the hill, hoping we would never see it again. My feet were hurting more than ever and every step was torture -- and all the hills were still there. We climbed and dragged ourselves over them all with the thought of rest giving us strength. About three hours later we came to a Jeep and got a cup of warm corn soup of some kind and sometime later a blessed K ration. I felt like crying I was so happy -- rest ahead and something to eat! That may sound foolish, and maybe it was, but our nerves, on edge for so long, were beginning to relax and we were no longer iron men but happy little boys, too tired to show it.

It was sometime later in the day that we reached the border town and here we were met with all the rations we could eat -- and what's more, new clothes....winter trousers, gloves, clean socks, shirts. And bandages for my feet. By 5 o'clock we were loading into trucks and heading back even farther. I cannot remember now how many towns we stopped in but we never stayed long enough to suit us. The first thing we did was to shave and wash. I'll never forget my first look in a mirror....black! with beard and grime. What a relief to be clean again. It was that night, I think, that Black and I, standing road block, broke into another outfit's supply truck and stole all the D ration chocolate bars we could carry. Ashamed? Hell, no! They had plenty.





DIVISIONAL GUARD AGAIN



We finally wound up at a town, I think called Saint-Jean-Rohrbach, where the division CP was set up. Eight of us crowded into a little school room, found some beds, mattresses and a stove -- what more could we want? That night we had our first hot meal and what should it be but chicken a la king. The next morning we knew we had made a mistake....all of us had the "trots" and I mean bad! Cramps hit us every few minutes and we never had time to make the latrine behind the building -- we made for the attic on the third floor! What a mess. Some of us were really sick but the general must be guarded and we were short-handed. So we stood guard day and night, four hours off duty, two on, and spent at least half of our time relieving the cramps.

But life was good, all told, and we hoped our luck would last. We vied with each other for the best posts (the best ones were, of course, the farthest from the general's or colonel's van) and Black and I for several days and nights had a cozy little post on the outskirts of the camp. We kept a watchful eye for the officer of the day (to hell with the Krauts by then....we were veterans!) and talked by the hours of home. We hashed over old times, one story following another in rapid succession, and discussed our plans for the future.

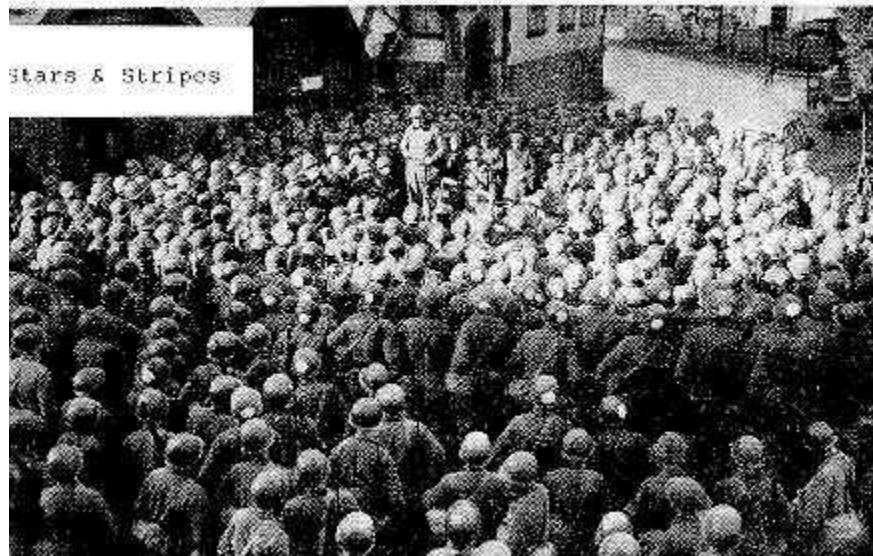
One officer in particular was always giving us trouble. He insisted on snooping and would never approach our post the same way twice. He would try to confuse us on pass words, mumbling his answer to the challenge, hoping we would think he gave the right word when he hadn't....then there was hell to pay. But, since we weren't supposed to know who he was until we recognized him, we soon learned to make him repeat the countersign until we could understand it, acting mad enough to shoot any second. He soon changed his tactics! Black and I wished fervently that some time when we called "Halt" he would accidentally slip and fall in the snow -- then we would let loose a few rounds of BAR over his head, saying we thought he was making a break for it.

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991:
Ref: Pages 22 & 23, MUD & GUTS

I remember that hot meal. I had guard duty...again. I felt I was the only guy in the entire army with guard duty all the time. Guys were coming out of the building with their pants down and the last thing they knew was the lousy password (or care!). I asked the first couple of guys and then I just let them come out and crap in the yard.... but all in all, just to have a warm place to sack-in was reward in itself. I did hear somebody threatened that "Looney" but didn't know it was you....good job!

Didn't we spend Christmas there? Somebody got a sort of plastic tree, sort of a fold-up deal, from home. Another GI asked me if I knew where there was some condensed milk. I did, and he said he knew how to make ice cream with snow and milk but I guess I fell asleep before he finished it...or maybe it didn't work out.

I'm in this picture somewhere, taken in Feb. 1945, at Buswiller in Alsace – From *Stars and Stripes* –
AJC



Heart to heart talk by Maj. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, commanding general of the 103d Infantry Division, to a battalion of his doughboys was given at an Alsatian village where the outfit was resting after helping the 103rd smash back the German salient at Schillersdorf in the enemy's bid to retake Alsace.



HOLIDAY SEASON



Christmas was about the second day we were at Saint-Jean-Rohrbach, but most of us were too sick to appreciate it. Feeling like we were it wasn't a very merry Christmas -- except we could always remember a few days back and then be thankful we were where we were. New Year came with its turkey dinner, and I was well enough by then to make up for all the eating I had lost. I remember saving a huge drumstick for my midnight snack after coming off guard at 12 o'clock.

It was here that we were all put in for Combat Infantryman badges and the extra ten dollars a month pay. Black, Crabtree, Craft and I made our Private First Class ratings and were very proud.



Mailed to Joe Milhoan, Harold Schreckengost, Ed DeFoe, Ed Fry, Loyd Black, Ray Crabtree, Ralph Wards. January 18, 1993
Page 23, MUD AND GUTS
From Joe Milhoan, Christmas 1992

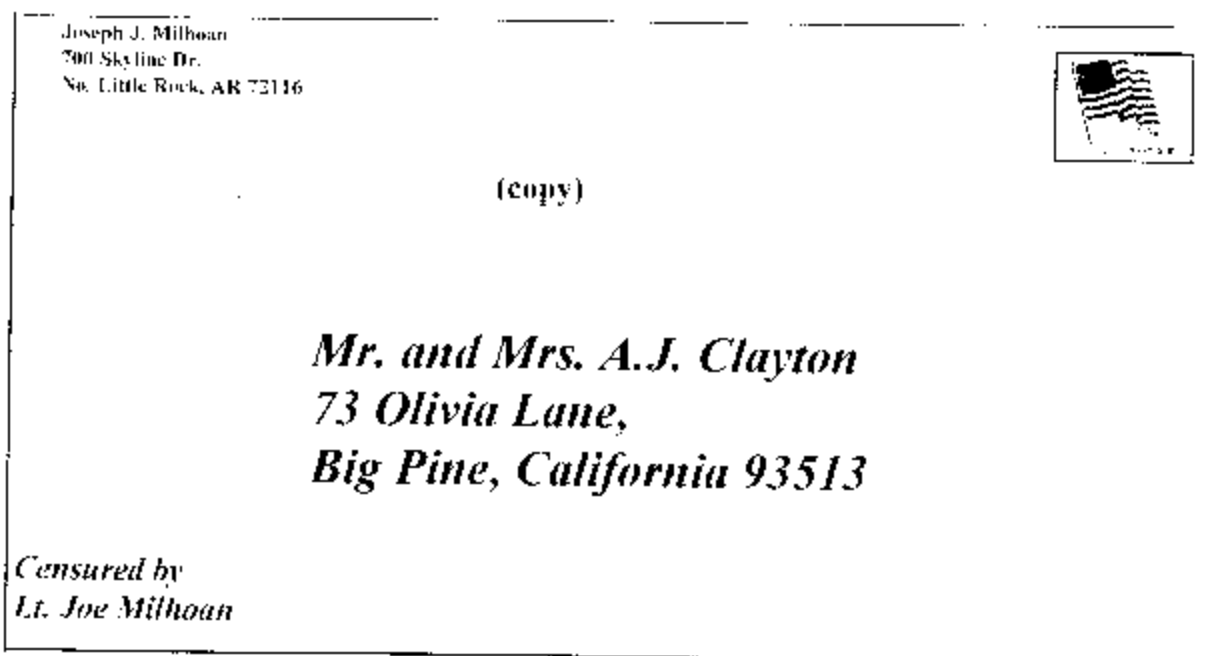
....On December 16, 1944, we were at "Five Points" and took Hill 503 for Battalion CP. We captured 19 prisoners and had just turned them over to Battalion when they started shelling us and wounded the officer who joined the battalion with me. He was assigned to Co. D.

*A fragment entered his back and kidney and he was ZI'd.**

All was not bad on Christmas '44. We ate out of plates, had a full dinner and even had snow ice cream. My only advice was, "Don't eat the yellow snow!" The town we were in isn't on the map anymore (Saint-Jean-Rohrbach). Remember the silo and your favorite Lt. Barber?

You are right...we have missed so much by not getting in touch since '45. I am so proud of all of you for you seem to be outstanding citizens and have all done fairly well financially. Some were not so fortunate.

**Sent home to U.S.A.!*



Christmas 1992

I was somewhat startled to see the above notation "censored by" on a newly-arrived Christmas card. What's this? A letter from 1944-45 just now arriving postmarked "Somewhere in France"? Then I saw the return address: North Little Rock, Arkansas! Maybe some old habits are hard to break..... AJC

Mailed to Joe Milhoan, Harold Schreckengost, Ed DeFoe, Ed Fry, Loyd Black, Ray Crabtree, Ralph Wards. January 18, 1993



GOOD THINGS...



But again there came an end to another good thing and about January 15 we moved out again, this time going north to a small town, Gœrsdorf, near Woerth, in Alsace. We were supposed to be there in a few hours but evening came and then darkness, and we still travelled. Our truck had no top and I, for one, soon became so cold I could barely move. I didn't realize how cold I was until I reached for a cigarette and couldn't tell I had hold of anything! My hands began to feel warm and my feet no longer ached from cold.....I knew I was really getting cold then and started beating my hands and stomping my feet until they hurt, then I knew I was all right. But I've never been so cold, before or since.

Late that night we unloaded and moved into an abandoned hunting lodge. We slept on the floor that night in our winter sleeping bags -- warm and comfortable. What luxury! For a week or more we stayed in this vicinity, making several marches farther north during the day to dig positions just in case the Germans should attack. Wearing all the clothes I had -- two suits of long underwear, two pairs of ODs, shirt and pants, a sweater, a fur-lined jacket and a regular field jacket I soon found I was getting overheated on the marches and within a few days had the old wheezing in my chest and a wracking cough. The medics gave me little cough pills that did no good and I continued to get worse.

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991

Ref: Page 24, MUD & GUTS

That truck ride was really something. I remember you being there. I think I sat with you....we sat close together to make a little heat. You know what? I peed in my pants but I didn't know it until the end of the trip and it began to thaw out. I found another pair of pants in that lodge....it was kind of dirty with only one brown stain but it was dry. By the way, where did you guys get the sleeping sacks? You know, I was a civilian again before I really knew they weren't called "fart sacks." All I had was my rain coat, a really large one I had retrieved from a dead kraut, but I rolled up in a ball and kept warm, or at least, it kept me from freezing to death.



STRATEGIC WITHDRAWAL



One night we were suddenly given orders to pack up and be ready to move out on a minute's notice. It was a long minute.....we left about five hours later, walking over the icy roads and carrying all our battle equipment, personal belongings and bed rolls, a load which in civilian life I would not have attempted to carry over a block. We walked and walked and I coughed and coughed, getting hotter by the minute. I couldn't get my breath and none of us could keep his footing in the snow and ice. Men were sprawling all over the road, cursing, and going on -- no one seemed to know where. Each town we came to we hoped we were going to stop, but we always passed on through.

I was ready to drop and did fall behind several times, only to catch up while the company was taking a break. Crabtree was not faring much better and finally I suggested we slip out of the column in the next town we came to, spend the night, and go on in the morning. I guess I spoke too loudly, because not only did Ray immediately fall in with my plan but so did two other guys! So we just fell behind, "fixing our packs," and when the others had gone, went into a barn, climbed into the loft and fell asleep. During the night another company of our men did stop in the town and most of them slept in the barn with us. They left before we did.

We felt very cheerful when we crawled out of our bed rolls in the morning and started up the road -- Crabtree, Bowles, Compton and I. We saw no GIs along the way and for several hours went through one town after another before we met some tankers setting fire to their crippled tanks.... retreat! The Germans were coming through, were probably in the town we had just left, and we soon found tanks and trucks, stuck in the ditches, burning for a fare-thee-well. We wasted no time then in pushing ahead, fearing any moment the Jerries would overtake us. It was after noon when a truck was sent back to pick up stragglers and we got a ride. A few hours later we were in Buswiller where our company had been set up -- and very happy to be there.

By this time I was so hoarse I could only talk in whispers and cough by the hours. I still couldn't get anything out of the medics but my platoon sergeant was nice enough to let me stay behind when the others went out to dig more positions in case the Germans penetrated that far. It was here I made my first Alsatian friends.... middle-aged man, his wife, and her older sister. They treated me like a son, the wife even fixing up an awful tasting mixture of sugar and creosote (or something) for me to take for my cough. Our whole platoon slept in their barn and practically overran their home but they didn't seem to mind.

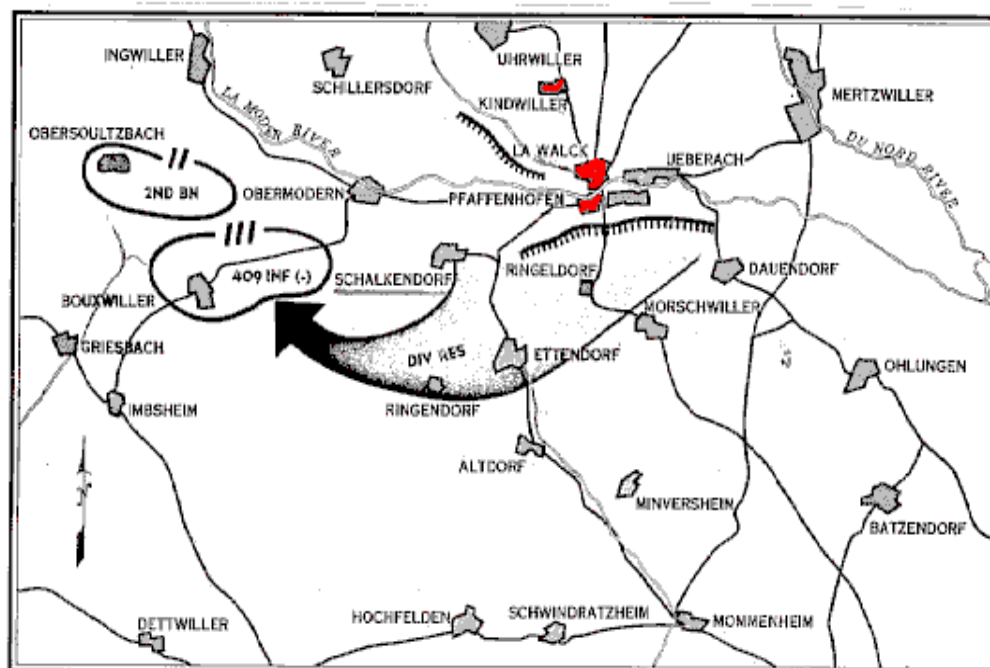
We stayed here for maybe two weeks when we again moved out, marching several miles to a little town called Schalkendorf. From here we took turns as platoons in holding positions in our "main line of resistance" several more miles to the northeast. These days were miserable with long marches and hours in cramped, water-filled foxholes, but nothing of particular interest happened. It was several days later that brought about a series of incidents which I'll remember always.



OUTPOSTS



One evening after dark we set out in trucks, then going on foot when the trucks reached a place in "no man's land" that had not been traveled....the road was knee-deep in snow. We finally came into Pfaffenhofen, stumbled through the pitch-black and deserted streets, crossed a slippery foot bridge and moved quietly into La Walck, a little town we had visited when we first joined B company....now it was our foremost outpost -- Jerry was in the next town, Kindwiler, about two kilometers across the plains! Our squad – Blank was now our leader – was posted in a house on the very outskirts of town on the road to Kindwiler.



From William East and William F. Gleason, *The 409th Infantry in World War II* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947). Reference Pfaffenhofen, La Walck, Kindwiler.

We couldn't see our hands in front of our faces but three of us were sent down to a little brick house about two hundred yards past our main post and absolutely alone and unprotected. Blank left me in charge and after my turn in the open window to listen for German patrols, I sat by the fire in the other room, forcing myself to stay awake all night to keep the other boys on guard from going to sleep. It was a hectic night! When daylight came, Crabtree and I made an amazing discovery....we were in precisely the same house in which we had had our beds, but no sleep, back in December.

For almost two weeks, with one break, we stayed in these two houses, living by night, and sleeping by day, waiting and watching for the krauts in the town in front of us --just a few thousands yards between us, both of us waiting for the other, neither of us daring to drop his guard. I think the letter in the clipping below pretty well describes our "adventures" in La Walck. The Germans shelled us, we shelled them, they ran patrols through us, and we at one time sent a whole company on a raid against them. Our outpost was used as a CP for the raid that night and we had a ringside seat for the small battle that

occurred in the inky blackness....a scrimmage that left a man dying on the bed in our main living room and a score of men badly wounded.

News clipping from *The Brunswicker*, Brunswick, Missouri, Feb. 11, 1945:

Alsace
3:30 a.m.

Dear Folks—

Well, it has come and gone-- my first box of eats! It was the little round tin box which has carried so many pounds of cake and candy before-- and always found its way back home. Was just like seeing an old friend tonight.

The fudge was a little dry but very good, the divinity still moist, also good, the cupcakes were dry but the Dutch cookies were just right. The flashlight and batteries were in good condition, as were the candles, flints, salt and pencils. And believe me, everything to eat really went fast with twelve of us to eat it. And you should have heard the compliments, Mom.

I hope that you can find more batteries for the flashlight and maybe send me a set about every three weeks, throwing in an extra bulb once in a while. When kerosene and candles are scarce and because we do as much "living" at night almost as day, flashlights usually get quite a work out.

Am going to try tell you a few experiences without divulging any military information but if some of it is cut out, you'll know I slipped up and the censor had to take over. First, we are again at the place where I told you we had such good eating, only this time it's beginning to wear pretty heavy on our nerves. I'm part of a group on outpost guard--way ahead of our main line of resistance, in fact--and we are up all night looking and listening for an enemy patrol to come across "no man's land." The nights are black as pitch and we can see all kinds of imaginary objects and our nerves are soon strung to a fine pitch.

About the time we decide there is no danger of krauts paying us a call, they pull a trick like the other night. About midnight, our guard came in and said, "I hear Jerries down the road!" Sure enough, two minutes later here they came, shouting at the top of their voices, "We surrender! We surrender!" They were halted, their weapons taken away, searched, and sent to the rear. Guess they were more disgusted with war than we are and just decided to take it easy by surrendering. But it sure put us more on the alert than ever! And helped our nervous indigestion not one bit.

We've also had box seats for two other shows, ones that far exceeded anything the movies can put out but I hope I never see again. These towns in France are very close together and we happen to be in one only about a mile or so from the next village, occupied by the Jerries! Only a grassy plain lies between and observation naturally is perfect. The other night, a Yank group made a raid on the town, leaving from our post and keeping contact by wire with us. We could therefore follow their progress step by step and were watching from our vantage point when all hell broke loose near Jerrytown. The whole skirmish took place right under our noses and believe me, there was plenty of racket. It was a real show, action packed, but it made our blood run cold just to watch and think of the boys going through that living hell.



The other show was in daytime and much more enjoyable for us. It was a clear, bright afternoon, ideal for our observation--and also the air corps. And the boys gave us a real treat. Several dive bombers, roaring in over our heads, plastered the town in front of us with bombs and bullets. The planes were firing when they came over our post; we could follow the tracers as they blazed their way into town. A few seconds later the bombs were released. We watched the explosion, bricks, timber and dirt hurl into the air like a fountain; then the concussion would reach us, rattling windows and shaking the buildings. At only a few hundred yards we could miss nothing. What a show. And I'll bet Jerry thought so too.

We're still looking for the end of the war every day, feeling certain it can't last much longer and hoping it's over before our good luck turns to bad.

Well, enough for this time. Guess you'd better send this on. I'm too lazy to write two letters this long!

Love to all,
Art

Our nerves were soon so on edge we could hardly say a civil word to each other. One alert after another kept us straining our eyes into the night to catch a movement in the snow in front of us. One night we all took up positions outside the house, expecting an enemy attack. Compton and I, with the BAR, were out in front. We changed our position several times trying to find good protection with observation as well. Later when we came in I found one of the other boys, standing at the house, had seen me moving around, had raised his rifle and was ready to shoot before deciding to wait a minute!

One night Blank called me up to the observation window and asked if I saw some men about 200 yards in front of the house, standing in the snow. I stared through the falling snow and sure enough...I could see about six dark objects that we had not noticed before! A patrol? DeFoe and I sneaked out the front door, keeping low in the snow, and I crawled and wiggled my way up to a little knoll where I could get a better view of our "visitors." For several minutes I lay there, blinking my eyes, trying to penetrate the heavy snow fall. The figures were still there. Were they moving? I couldn't tell.

We kept our eyes glued to those six or eight objects for several hours before giving it up as an optical illusion. When daylight came I was standing at the window during my shift at guard. The "patrol" gradually came into view; I called Blank and together we laughed at each other -- our patrol had been a row of cabbage stalks not more than 15 yards in front of the house! That will give an idea of how keyed up we were. Then there was the night the four German soldiers came in to give themselves up (see letter). It was enough to keep us with the jitters.

During all this time we lived on our own. Officers of the day weren't so anxious to check on us when the Germans were known to be right under our noses! We had an ample supply of C rations and 10-in-Ones and with those and what we could find in the deserted basements and houses, we lived like kings. Crabtree did all the cooking -- pancakes, biscuits, eggs, bacon, a variety of jellies, fried potatoes and gravy. I laugh to think of one night when Blank and I were on the prowl for food and firewood. He was armed with a .45, I with my trench knife. I've never fancied sticking a knife into anyone but I am sure that had someone stepped out of a doorway that night in front of me he would have been dead! You get that way after a while on the front.

We spent many thrilling nights on the outpost. Dogs and rabbits, nosing through the garbage and empty cans around the house, scared the living hell out of us more than once but kept us from getting drowsy on our post. We had to run contacting patrols several times at night along the outskirts of the town to

other posts of our platoon. We never knew but what the next minute we would run head on into a Jerry patrol and they kept sending up flares which lit up the whole countryside. When one went off we froze in our tracks until the light went out because against the brilliance of the snow, we would be seen for several hundred yards.

One night a funny thing happened when Compton and I were making the patrol. We were pussy-footing down the road as quiet as mice; a sharp wind blowing, and all of sudden we heard a loud scraping noise. I stopped dead and turned toward the noise, nothing happened. Then I heard a wiggling and squirming in front of me and turned to look at Compton -- he was flat on his belly, crawling into the ditch! "What the hell?" I whispered, "That was just a shutter banging." He said, "Yeh," -- kind of disgusted like, and we went on. Later we had a great time kidding him about being so jumpy -- but to tell the truth, I've never convinced myself he was so far wrong at that! Had the noise actually been krauts, I probably would have been shot. On the other hand, if it had been some of our own men and they saw Compton hit the dirt, they would have opened up on us. Besides, it never entered my head it was a person; it sounded like a shutter to me.....but one never knows.

An example of the irony of the Army occurred here, too. During the day, when we became more brave, we walked around the town like we were going for a Sunday walk -- helmet, to be sure, but usually a carbine or pistol, the lightest weapon we could borrow, maybe two clips of ammo. Then we proceeded to wander through deserted houses, attics and basements, not looking for hidden Germans, but...well, frankly, just snooping (war is war, you know). But whenever we went back several miles where there was absolutely no danger, I never went out the door without my BAR, a full belt of loaded magazines, gas mask, and helmet, even downstairs to eat chow! Orders. That's how the Army runs things.

From Ed DeFoe, December 1991:
Ref: Page 27, MUD & GUTS

There was another barn we stopped at that I remember. Some of the noncoms stayed in the house, the rest of us in the barn. We received some fart - I mean, sleeping bags that they said came from England. Art, those suckers were full of fleas! I could feel them start at my feet and work up and up! A few days later the medics came with some flea powder or something and the guys were sprayed ----but again DeFoe was on guard and I missed it. About a week later I could no longer feel them....they must have starved to death or my not having a bath so long the stink done them in. You know what, Art, I never had regular GI pants since that long ride we had on that open truck...until after the war.

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991:
Ref: Page 27, MUD & GUTS

Now here I'm kind of puzzled. The reason I remember this incident was it was January 19, my birthday, and we were to get a shower, yes, a hot shower, and to remind you of the intelligence of the Quartermaster outfit, they had pitched a large tent in a field with a truck fixed up to make hot water. Of course, steam came out like the atom bomb. We stood in line and some of the guys got their showers. It was a nice day and the sun was quite bright. Suddenly out of nowhere came two airplanes....krauts! I knew it wasn't God but a lot of the GIs were saying so. Well, they opened up and strafed us...twice. Then two of our planes took off after them. I don't know if they got anyone 'cause our planes chased one out of sight and the other crashed into the ground. And damn! I didn't get a shower and I ain't had a bath or shower since Thanksgiving. Oh, well, I didn't want to get a cold like Clayton had.

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991:
Ref: Page 30, MUD & GUTS

That night they sent out a company (a raid on Kindwiller to capture prisoners for information) they got shot up pretty good (?). I was at a "listening post," I'm not sure who was with me but whoever it was loosed the ring on a grenade 'cause he thought he heard a noise. Then, of course, (we realized) we didn't want to give away our position so with the help of the flares he got the pin back into the grenade and just threw it away....in case he hadn't done it right. It didn't explode...so there is a live one out there in some farmer's field. And don't forget the wine and cordials we confiscated at this town!

AJC's reply:

That "listening post," I'm sure, Ed, was La Walck. During that prisoner raid on Kindwiller I was up in the second story window on watch....along with the phone line back to the command post. I was so hoarse I could barely whisper but an officer on the other end of that line kept shouting at me to tell him what was happening. The more I croaked back at him the madder he became. I think if he had ever found out who I was he probably would have shot me on sight!

Later that same evening the raiding company began to return and several severely wounded were brought into our "listening post" for first aid. Finally there were so many people crowding into the little front room I was told (I was now guarding the front door) not to let anyone else in. Suddenly there was a banging on the door and a shouted demand to "Open up!" I repeated my orders that no one was to be allowed in. The voice outside replied, "We've got a badly injured man! Open this door or I'll shoot it open!" I pulled the light-security blanket and let them in. I have long wondered: Did that poor soldier make it or not? I hope so.....

From Ed DeFoe, October 30, 1991:
Ref: Page 31, MUD & GUTS

Wasn't it you and I that went out to see if eight or ten objects in the yard of a listening post were live or dead krauts and found they were eight or ten head of cabbage....it seems to me someone called the CP for reinforcement before we got back to the house? I know it got into the Stars and Stripes.

AJC: It was at this "listening post" on the edge of La Walck that a persistent flea and I engaged in a relationship. I probably was wearing two pair of long johns, two pair of OD pants. We took turns sacked out in the one or two beds in the house, unfortunately loaded with fleas. Somehow one little fellow managed to invade my person and lodged himself behind my left knee. That was okay until he got hungry or wanted to turn over and my skin began to itch like crazy! On the alert all the time, no telling when something might happen, I just could not undress to get at my friend flea. With all the clothing I was wearing, I could not pull my pants leg up far enough out of my boot top to get to the spot behind my knee, neither could I drop my pants far enough to get to the itching spot. This went on for several days with neither of us retreating. Finally in total desperation, I pulled off my boots, stripped down to the bare nothing and grabbed for Freddie (that was his name by now). Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending upon your point of view, Freddie departed my body and disappeared into the bed covers only to bite again.

From Ed Defoe

Ref: Page 31, MUD & GUTS

Don't you think they changed the names of some of those towns? The one where we did the cabbage scene... well, maybe you're right. Anyway, I'll tell you what I did while we were looking at the frozen plant life. I heard a noise in the outhouse on my side of that little hill, fell to my stomach and looked into the outhouse door (the hinge side). I lay there for a few minutes and heard it again, put my M1 inside the door and, well, there he was, a very large crow walking around the toilet hole! It's a wonder we didn't all get fired....wouldn't that have been nice!



Photos of Buswiller



Taken by the Heitz family before the war:



Forced to withdraw from our holding positions near Woerth in January, 1945, we wound up in Buswiller after an agonizing all-night march over ice slick roads (several of us barely made it). Our platoon, maybe 20 men, set up housekeeping in the barn and farmyard of an Alsatian couple named Heitz, who, in spite of the inconvenience, made us welcome. Photo taken in 1967.

Mr. Heitz, Bruce, Mrs. Heitz, Art, Lois, Richard

Mr. and Mrs. Michel Heitz, now in their mid-seventies, welcomed our family into their home like kinfolks.



At left is the barn which was our "home" for the two weeks or so we stayed in Buswiller. The courtyard had recently been tiled and the roofline on the barn changed -- but inside (except for the cement floor) it appeared just the same as 22 years ago. Photo taken in 1967.



In the picture to the left Art is in the orchard behind the Heitz barn where we found our few moments of peace and quiet in 1945, just sitting in the sun, talking. Photo taken in 1967.



Lois with Herr and Frau Heitz's niece and her daughter and cats. Photo taken in 1967.



Mr. and Mrs. Michael Heitz and Art. Photo taken in 1967.



Photos of La Walck



Our outpost on the edge of La Walck for nearly two weeks in February 1945. From this second floor window we kept a constant eye on Kindwiller where the Germans were dug in. Photo taken in 1967.



Road toward Kindwiller as seen from our outpost. House in center and red roofed one on left are new. I believe the green house is the one in which part of our squad maintained a lookout post. Photo taken in 1967.



Photos of Kindwiller



Above is the view of Kindwiller from our outpost in La Walck. Below is the new church in Kindwiller. An old man told us the whole town had been "kaput" and it was obvious many of the homes and buildings were reasonably new.





REORGANIZATION



We were finally pulled out of La Walck when we got so jumpy we'd get prickly scalps if a cat looked at us, and walked back to another town by the name of Bouxwiller (not Buswiller) and again began to have life easy, the easiest, I think, until after the war was over. Our squad lived in one room of the post office away from all the others. We had to stand guard about one night in five and during the day trained, listened to lectures, drilled and occasionally went to shows. We "goofed off" as much as possible on all the training and the officers were just as bad. We did no more than that until the morning of March 12, I think it was.

Captain Walton called the entire company into the mess hall and told us: "You have just heard our artillery pounding away for the past hour. A few minutes ago 410 and 411 (our other two regiments) jumped off on the attack which is expected to take us to the Rhine River. We are at the present in reserve. Be ready to move out in an hour." This was it again and we were on our way, wondering how long we would stay in reserve.

It didn't take us long to realize it wouldn't be long. We were following in the wake of a fierce battle. The Germans for two months had been building up their defenses, a solid wall of mines and booby traps in fields and towns. We stayed most of the first afternoon in a little town, still in our original holdings, but the battle was going on just a few miles ahead. We sat by the road and watched Jeeps, trucks and ambulances coming back with American wounded -- one Jeep with only three men...the driver, a medic, and propped up between them a soldier with apparently half of his throat blown out. The aid man was holding the boy's head steady and trying to stop the flow of blood with his hand. On another Jeep a man lay stretched out on the hood, his right leg blown off. Mines were taking their toll.

We moved on and came to small villages leveled to the ground by our air corps and artillery. The debris was burning furiously and the smell was awful. Everywhere one looked were dead stock blown to bits, cows, calves, horses, lambs. The civilians had evacuated the town but the stock had been left behind. Now we were moving far ahead of our burial details and bodies were becoming more frequent. I remember so well one boy who had never been in combat before but who told some frightening tales from his own imagination. It was early in the morning, a heavy fog clung to the ground -- a typical movie war scene, torn ground and trees...and mud -- and there, lying in the mud at the side of the road, a dead man. His pants had been entirely blown off and his bare rump was pointing skyward, the rest of him hidden in mud and water.

The boy stared and stared at the sight...his first dead soldier. He turned to me, "Is that a real man?" he breathed. "What do you think it is, a wax dummy? Of course, it's real," I growled. I had no reason to talk like that, except I didn't feel too well myself.

A few minutes later we had another eye opener as we passed through one of the burning villages. On both sides of the road, only a few feet apart, were about ten dead Germans, evidently killed in one blast from a bomb or shell as they made a break across the road. It never phased me to see dead Germans but a dead GI hit home with all the force imaginable. It made me realize that Americans were being killed, too, and the next one might be me. As we went down the road on the heels of the battle ahead, we saw innumerable GIs lying dead in holes or along the ditches. In one flat field on the outskirts of a town were four Yanks lying prone, their rifles still pointing toward the town. Killed by a machine gun. Under a

lone tree was a man propped up on a pack, his canteen in his hand. Wounded, and maybe another bullet got him or he just died waiting. It was in this town that we dropped our bed rolls and everything else we could get rid of -- taking over!

AJC :
(Page 35)

Our squad lived in one room of the post office.....As nightfall came we had to black-out the windows so we could have some light, not much but some, in our cramped quarters. So, we were hanging blankets over the windows. There was this bang! bang! as someone hung up the blankets.....and we discovered Billy Bowles hammering in nails with.....a live hand grenade! Okay, so the pin was in place, all secured, no problem but however and maybe not, Billy's well-meaning effort was halted immediately, if not before!

From Ed DeFoe, October 30, 1991:
Ref: Page 35, MUD & GUTS

Oh, yes, I remember Black, Fry, Compton, Craft, Damanti, Crabtree, McGonagle, Carnes and Captain Walton..... he was the only captain we ever had after he was wounded. . . . and of course, Billy Bowles. We had a short visit with Billy in March 1989..... When we left we had a hug and with tear-filled eyes he said, "This is the first time I ever hugged a guy"! I said, "Me, too"....and we drove off into the sunset.

From Ed Fry, December 1985:
Ref: Page 35, MUD & GUTS

I joined the squad at Bouxwiller and was billeted in the post office. The older guy was named Caves (who had gone AWOL from the regular Army, came back and was immediately punished by being assigned to the Infantry!—AJC) who had been a professional hobo. I remember him heating water on the stove for a shave...in a coffee can on that little coal stove. I had just finished shaving and wanted to dry my helmet so I just sat it on the stove over his can of water for a moment. He came in and saw the helmet but no can and jerked it off the stove. Of course, the can of water went with it and all over the place! Caves and I remained friendly in spite of this incident.

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991:
Ref: Page 35, MUD & GUTS

I remember Bouxwiller because we were all called out and a French Officer began thanking us for the support and generally praising us for...whatever...and a runner came and handed me a telegram - - I had fathered a baby girl on the 27th of February (1945)... Kathleen Marie, who I nicknamed "Pug." She lives now with her family just six blocks from our home and is a great help to me with Aggie's (Ed's wife) problem (Alzheimer's disease).

Page 35, MUD & GUTS (AJC)

At the 103d Division reunion in Dallas last September, 1991, Joe Milhoan gave me an original copy of a Divisional NEWS SUMMARY dated March 5, 1945 in which was included this amusing story of

Lieutenant Milhoan and our late, good friend, Amos Craft, with the request that I send a copy to Amos' wife, Cecile, which I did. But the story also belongs as an insert in my book. Here 'tis:

WHAT'LL THEY BLAME C RATIONS FOR NEXT?

Lt. Joseph Milhoan, a 409th Infantry platoon leader had gone to his company CP to report his platoon quartered for the night. It was midnight and quiet in that sector except for an occasional round of artillery.

Suddenly Pfc. Amos Craft, platoon runner, burst into the CP and announced "Sir, you'd better come right away. The heinies dropped a shell right down the chimney of the platoon CP!"

"Anyone hurt?" the officer inquired.

"They got Sgt. Simpson, Sir. Right between the eyes and it came out over his ears. You can see his brains sticking out. I made him lay down".

Lt. Milhoan and his runner hurried off into the darkness. Ten minutes later the Lieutenant was back, still laughing so hard it was difficult to relate this tale:

One of Sgt. Harold Simpson's fellow non-coms had decided to warm himself a can of C rations that night. He placed the can in the oven. But in a few minutes he had forgotten the can and was fast asleep.

When the sealed can exploded, Simpson was in direct line of fire. Two blobs of meat and beans caught him - one between the eyes and one over the ear.

Joe Milhoan swears this is a true story...well, on second thought, I don't think he actually swore it was the truth!! But a good story nonetheless.—AJC

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991:

Something just occurred to me, Art – back on your page 36....I suddenly remembered Billy Bowles must have returned about that time. We were marching...after the "stinky" episode where between burning bodies and powder smell, some GIs had built a prisoner stockade. We spent a little time there and when we pulled out there were a lot of horses, etc., wandering around along the road. Billy said, "Hey, DeFoe! Can you ride a horse?" "Yeh, I did once," I said. Well, I climbed on an abandoned truck and Billy hopped on a horse (with the greatest of ease, I might add) and brought a horse for me ...so I could climb on. I had tried a few times and, man, that horse was high off the ground. Anyway, we were on our way. My horse and Billy's must have been real-life buddies 'cause when his picked up speed, mine did, too. Of course, we had lost the company by that time. When his horse was out of sight of mine...he must have panicked and mine started trotting. That is when my butt met the horse on a very uneven keel...until I could no longer hang on ---- so...I fell off. I landed on my back, busted the stock of my rifle, lost my helmet and was quite angry about the whole thing. By that time, my Texas-born buddy had come back and, Art, he was laughing so hard he even had a hard time hanging on....but at least we were safe because I'm sure if there had been any krauts around they would have shot us, for sure! We managed, however, to continue on and met up with a Red Cross truck which was lost. Well, we kind of had an idea where you guys were and, sure enough, we were able to join the company again....a little late but we left our horses on the edge of town so we wouldn't catch hell.

AJC: Lieutenant Milhoan, did you have any idea this kind of (um...) horseplay was going on?



AT 'EM AGAIN



It was rather queer what a relief it was for a while -- no more worrying about going into action, we were leading the attack now and could lose some of our pent up feelings. For a while one has that "let me at 'em" feeling, but not for long! You begin to think maybe the Jerries have the same feeling and maybe a personal grudge against you. We were in front now and even beginning to see familiar landmarks -- this was almost the same route we had taken back in December when we hit Rott. We cleared several little towns without incident (leaving talkative Crabtree behind once when he got to talking to some woman who claimed to have a cousin or someone in Ohio, or maybe it was New York. He, of course, said he was clearing out a basement, not talking, but we always wondered!)



Then Woerth was ahead, good old Woerth where we had guarded bridges in January and then retreated. We gathered in a woods about half a mile from town and waited for our forward elements to look over the ground ahead. The town was defended and we were going to attack at 4 o'clock on the nose. Our second platoon was going in on the right, C Company on the left, and our platoon, with Blank's squad in front, in the center. At a wave from the captain, Crabtree, our first scout, moved out of the shelter of the woods into the open, Crawford, number two man, close behind, then Blank and then me, as BAR man, fourth. The others followed.

We ran as fast as we could in the soft earth, first to a heavy clump of tall grass, then to a small embankment and on to a wood pile -- then nothing but a clear hill and the waiting Germans were ahead. Their machine gun opened up and bullets cracked like firecrackers over my head as I ran -- why they didn't lower their range and kill us all, I'll never know, but their aim remained high. I ran uphill until I thought I would drop but the top was still hundreds of yards ahead and the krauts still firing. Our own machine guns were cracking then (we had outrun our own artillery and the town had not been shelled) and our mortar platoon was beginning to throw shells toward the hill. One of their first shells was short and exploded just to the left of me but fortunately no one was hurt.

We were finally reaching the crest of the hill, could see the Germans in their holes but they had quit firing, and began to come out with their hands up -- kill as many of us as they could, then yell quits, was their old game -- and the hill overlooking the town was ours. One German, walking out to meet us, failed to halt when we shouted at him; he kept right on walking through our ranks. Someone fired a shot over his head; he kept going. A sergeant raised his M1, fired and the bullet crashed into the Jerry's shoulder, knocking him flat. He stayed there then.

For several minutes we were busy digging in in case the enemy started shelling the hill but soon came the order to move down on the town. One squad went ahead of ours but by the time we reached the first house we were all mixed. Several men stopped in a barn but Crabtree, Crawford, Blank and I went on to the front of the next house and dodged into a ditch along the road -- then all hell started popping again.

A German machine gun started raking the road just above our heads and four Germans poked their heads out of the house behind us -- wanting to surrender. Crabtree and Crawford made a dash to the house during a lull in the firing while the rest of us tried to locate the machine gun, but in vain. We fired at every spot we thought it could be coming from but it kept on "strafing" us.



Photos of Woerth



Our attack on Woerth started from the grove of trees in the left background. The tall grass in the ravine was our last bit of cover and then there was nothing but the open field to the top of the hill. The Germans fired on us from the trees but either surrendered or fled when we overran their positions.



Photos taken in 1967.

Our platoon sergeant Ralph Wards, standing in the open door of this barn, was shot through the left shoulder as we exchanged fire with the unseen enemy. This was March 17, 1945. A young man working at this sawmill told me in 1967 that he had been living in Woerth when it was taken by Americans. The townspeople had hidden in the woods in a bunker during the fighting. The young man could not understand why I, an American soldier, was driving a (rented) German automobile! Photo taken in 1967.



From Ed DeFoe, October 30, 1991:

Ref: Page 40, MUD & GUTS

(Where Sergeant Wards was wounded in Woerth, Alsace.)

Yes, I also remember Sergeant Wards....He wouldn't let me fire my bazooka into a barn that held a kraut sniper in one of our raids, and I wasn't real pleased with that decision and on our way back I threw the thing in a culvert and picked up an M1. I got called on that shot and he, I think, told me I would have to pay \$75 bucks. Of course, that didn't worry me as I never saw any of my twenty-one bucks a month anyway. My excuse was...if I couldn't fire it I did not want to carry it....I never knew where my ammo carrier was anyway.....

From Ralph Wards, Christmas 1991:

Ref: Page 40, MUD & GUTS

Well, I guess I am the sergeant that you remember getting hit in the left shoulder in Woerth, France. Maybe you really didn't know me that well though (I had written that he was always at the top of my remembered list of real soldiers—AJC). I was just one of the GIs trying to get the job done and get back home. I will also say I was with the nicest group of men I have ever known.

Ray Crabtree, February 1963:

You remember Sgt. Wards. Well, I thought he had been killed in the barn when the Germans shot through the door and hit him. When I came to in the hospital where you last saw me, he was the first person I saw. He said the bullet went through his chest and missed his heart by a hair.



I showed the man at the sawmill the picture of Woerth in our Regimental History Book and he told me where to find the church. It appeared just the same as in 1945 except for two additional windows on the street side. See photo below from East and Gleason, *The 409th Infantry in World War II* (page 111). Upper photo taken in 1967.



On our way out of Woerth in 1967 we found this big lodge which, I'm sure, is the place we stayed in during our first visit to Woerth when we spent so much time digging fortifications up in the hills. Even the little pillbox in the bend of the road was still there. Photo taken in 1967.



MISSED BY INCHES



Then we heard it coming....the whine of an .88 shell. It kept coming, coming, coming as we tried to bury ourselves in the ditch. I thought, My God, it's going to land right on us! Then with a crash it hit about eight feet above my head in a tree growing out of the ditch but did not explode. Splinters and bark showered us. Had that shell burst when it hit, I'm sure everyone of us in the ditch would have died instantly. Another shell burst on the road in front of us and it was time to clear out, machine gun or no machine gun. So one by one, we made a dash for the rear of the house, scrambling over logs like an obstacle course. Then there was the basement and safety -- let the tank shell us! Darkness came and with it the Germans left, and Woerth was ours. I slept on a mattress that night and was on guard only two hours, 4 to 6 in the morning.





FUN AND WORK



It was one of the days and nights before we were taken out of reserve in which I recall two other instances worth repeating. The first was in the line of fun; the other in the line of duty -- duty, at least, in the warped mind of the First Sergeant we had.

Entering one of the burning villages, our company was resting in a church building. The roof was gone and the building itself badly shelled but as a whole intact. After we had rested a few minutes from the march, we began exploring the deserted town, watching the buildings burn and crumble, looking thru the ruins for souvenirs. In one place we came across the place where a GI had been wounded. All of his equipment was right where he had been when he was hit -- his belt and pack had been cut off, his helmet and raincoat still there. We knew he had been a brand new recruit because all his stuff was spotless and new. It was here I got a "replacement" for my worn-out raincoat.

But to the fun -- exploring one of the cellars, someone found a huge barrel of wine. Not satisfied with drinking a few glasses in the cellar, what did they do but roll the barrel a block or so up to the church! From then on, the boys proceeded to get more than happily drunk. Highlight of the afternoon was a solemn marriage performed by the platoon medic -- dressed in a salvaged summer straw hat, a priest's robe, carrying a swanky cane. The "bride," DeFoe; the "groom" was Black. The ceremony was performed in all the solemnity the tipsy "priest" could muster. When the move-out order came an hour later, the "groom" had a hard time staying in the road -- and he wasn't the only one!

From Ed DeFoe, October 30, 1991:
Ref: Page 41, MUD & GUTS

I guess you are the same Clayton from the service...as no one else would remember the "wedding"! I had forgotten that episode but what I do remember is when we left that church we came outside and there was a basement without a building...and on the floor of that wasted concrete was a pile of "turd" that was really, really large, like really big...and you called a couple of us over and pointing it out said, "Man! I hope we never run into the Kraut who did that!"

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991
Ref: Page 41, MUD & GUTS

Ah, yes...the church "wedding" deal....I wrote you about that...Well, it wasn't the first time or the last that I made a damn fool of myself!

That same night we moved into a woods, several hundred yards off the road. It was necessary for us to keep only two or three feet apart to keep from getting lost in the darkness. After we all had become thoroughly lost, we were told to dig in for the night. Crabtree and I had just started to break the ground

for our hole when our squad was told we must go back to the road and bring out hot chow which had arrived in a Jeep! We finally found the road and started back with about ten huge cans -- two with coffee, two with pancakes, a garbage can full of mess kits (Crabtree and I had it) and the rest of the food. We slipped and fell in the mud, stumbled over logs, got lost and backtracked, swore and sweated. By the time we found the company, we had spilled one whole can of coffee (the most important thing to tired men) and everything was even colder than when it arrived in the Jeep.

Within an hour the company had eaten and the good sergeant, because we had growled so much about having to get the stuff, said we would also take it back. So off we went in the darkness again, the mess kits just as heavy as before. When we got back to the road we found the other companies had gone out to the road, a platoon at a time, to eat and had finished hours ago. We were so mad we were fit to be tied. When Ray and I got back to our "hole" we said a few words for the sergeant sleeping (by then) in a dugout, rolled out our bed rolls and went to sleep -- no foxhole, no all-night guard! We just didn't give a damn if the Germans did come and kill us....they'd get the sergeant, too, wouldn't they!



ON TO GERMANY



We moved out early the next morning after taking Woerth, crossing streams on footbridges -- the road bridges which we had guarded in January had been blown up by the retreating Germans. It soon became a bright sunny day and everyone was feeling fine. We stopped only long enough to be sure a town was unoccupied and then move on again. Soon we were nearing the German border again, almost in the exact position we had gone in the first time (Dec. 18) -- and the Siegfried Line was still there.

It was getting late in the evening and we had covered many miles that day without rest. The border was about two miles ahead and in an effort to be the first regiment to cross into Germany, our platoon left the company behind and started for the border! None of us knew what the hell we were doing, and I even thought the rest of the company was behind us -- but we were going to be the heroes alone! Tired and footsore and thinking we had pushed our luck far enough in one day, we didn't care much about being the first few men into Germany -- or the first to be killed in Germany either. But we kept pushing on and then I saw our platoon leader motioning each man forward to a spot and then sending him toward the road back. I came up to the lieutenant, walked around a bench, and started back the way I had come. I had just crossed the border line! Whether we were first or not we never did find out. Probably not.

From Joe Milhoan, Christmas card, 1991:

Ref: Page 43, MUD & GUTS

...It's such a shame that we could not have gotten together long before this. Anyone who never served in combat with a group like ours can never understand the feeling we have for one another. We had about three bad apples but the others were real soldiers.

(Take your choice, men, as to which group you fit in! --AJC)

AJC in letter to Black, Crabtree, Fry and Craft, March 1963:

...and how about our lieutenant? Was his name Malcohm? I remember his first name was Joe ("...but when we get up front and you want me, don't call out 'Lieutenant!' -- just call me Joe!"). Anyone know of his whereabouts? He was a pretty nice guy even if he was an officer!

Divisions in Contest to Cross First.

WEST FRONT: Map, Story
Page 2.

By Gordon Gammack.

(Illustration Staff Writer in the European
War Zone.)

FRENCH-GERMAN BORDER (FRIDAY) — Numerous Doughboys from Iowa were among the first troops of the U. S. 7th Army to enter Germany Friday at 1:05 p. m.



GAMMACK.

Three infantry divisions vied for the honor of being first across the border, and the race was a typically American affair of "I W A N N A ' B E FIRST."

The winner was a comparative newcomer — the U. S. 103rd Division,

composed largely of midwesterners, and in combat one day short of a full month.

Maj. Gen. Charles C. Haffner, commander of the 103rd Division, is a former vice-president of a Chicago, Ill., bank and probably the only American division commander in Europe who is not a professional soldier.

Dark Horse.

The 103rd Division was a sort of dark horse in the contest to be first into Germany with the U. S. 79th Division to the right and another division to the left considered more likely winners. The division to the left reached the Reich 45 minutes after the 103rd, and the 79th Division, facing severe resistance, crossed the border a little later.

[Gammack did not identify the third American Division, but it was disclosed by the Associated Press to be the veteran U. S. 45th (Thunderbird) Division, from Oklahoma and Colorado, that has seen 367 days of action in Italy, Italy and France.]

To Doughboys making the crossing it was just hard and bitter fighting, but there was jubilation at division headquarters when a phone call to corps headquarters confirmed the honor.

"Hot dog!" exclaimed Capt. Harold Picha of Richland, Ia., as big guns boomed nearby, relentlessly hammering German positions in their own land.

"I'm sure glad for the general," smiled Corp. Donald Harness of Creston, Ia., who is General Haffner's driver.

The Germans yielded the border positions ONLY AFTER BITTER FIGHTING all along the front northwest of Hagenau. The 103rd Division bypassed the town of Climbach on both sides and Thursday repulsed THREE COUNTERATTACKS.

I was in a group of correspondents who first visited the 79th Division where a map-filled room was packed by officers receiving telephone reports from the front.

After one call, an officer grinned, "They say one town is so sunshined there is nothing left for fraternizing, and this is the last chance for the boys," referring to Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower's strict ban on American fraternizing with anyone within Germany.

Maj. Gen. Ira Wyche, 79th Division commander, entered the war room carrying a cane after an inspection trip to the front.

"The situation looks pretty good," he said. "I think we will get across today."

Puffing on Big Cigar.

"Then we went to 103rd Division headquarters and found General Haffner puffing on a big cigar and looking pleased. It was fitting he should be, for his division has had a SPLENDID RECORD in its first month of fighting.

Veteran correspondents say they never have seen a division with finer morale.

"I didn't say anything to the men about the chance of being first across, but I guess they knew it," General Haffner said. "I've always fought to keep my name out of the papers, but I am glad to see my men get the credit."

"How far up can we get?" one of the correspondents asked.

"You can get right into Germany if you want to, but you'll get the hell shelled out of you," the general said.



COULD STILL WALK



We pulled back a mile and started digging in for the night, waiting for the rest of the company to come up behind us. Soon they came -- and kept going! Then we heard the story: Our battalion commander, more than pleased at the ground we had covered that day, had radioed the regimental colonel, telling him the men were very tired and asking permission to stay in the town that night. Said the colonel, "God dammit, your men can still walk, can't they? Then keep walking until after nightfall." (Our battalion colonel had been marching with us, the regimental commander was miles behind, riding in a Jeep). So we moved on into the hills, nearer and nearer Jerry and his pillboxes. Late that night we stopped, were given our posts and told to dig in for the night, keeping one man awake in each hole all night. Blank, Compton and I dug in on a little cliff and after getting a hole actually big enough for two men, all three of us crawled in. I slept with one ear open but both eyes closed and so did the others. Some night a German patrol was going to come by our hole but we didn't think it would be that night....so we slept. This was March 18.



PREMONITION



When men look death in the face day after day and continue to stare it down, they soon begin to wonder how long their luck will last. The bullets won't always be too high nor the shell that lands in their lap, a dud. Compton carried a picture of his wife inside his shirt and several times before we jumped off March 15 he had told us that if anything happened to him this time, we were to be sure to get the picture and send it to his wife. He made us promise, though we ridiculed the idea.

On the morning of March 19 we finally left the main road and took to a trail running parallel to it alongside a hill. Just before noon the column was halted as the sound of firing came from up ahead. We had met the enemy again! Sitting in an old foxhole waiting for the go ahead signal, I kept thinking to myself: I'm going to get it this time; I'm going to get it this time. I don't know just what I meant by that - - wounded or killed -- but it was an awful feeling that I tried to shake off.

Five minutes later we were told to cross the road and move into the woods on the other side. One by one we raced down the slope, across the open road, through a broken place in some barbed wire, and into the woods. We had been there only a minute when whoosh! WHAM!! a shell burst behind us. We hugged the ground as another one came in....WHAM!! It hit a tree only a few yards away. Something hit my left leg like I had been struck with a broom. I turned to look, thinking a rock had hit me, and saw a small hole in my pants leg and a few drops of blood. I do not remember my first impression of being wounded, unless it was one of relief. I knew I wasn't hurt badly and if I was lucky I'd get back to a hospital. Then I heard Compton crying, "Medic! Medic!" and I knew he had been hit too. And as I started crawling toward a hole, I saw Crabtree with a surprised, pained look on his face – hit by shrapnel in both legs!

I crawled into the hole, cut my trousers open with my trench knife and examined my wound. Just a hole the size of a dime, no bleeding, very little pain. I remembered to take my wound tablets and then lay back to wait for the medics. Another shell landed nearby. I later learned Black was hit in the mouth by that one and a platoon sergeant had been killed, I think by the same shell. I waited until the litter bearers had taken Crabtree, Compton and Black back to the aid Jeep. I'll never forget the faces of the rest of my squad as they filed by my hole as they moved up the hill -- each of them with face taut and scared, wondering if they would be next. Two shells and four men in the squad gone.

The litter bearer finally came back for me, loaded me on the stretcher and started down the hill. I thought I could still walk and save them the load, but nothing doing, I was going to be carried – around booby traps, across small streams, and down to the Jeep. From then on the same men who had ignored me when I wanted something for a cough, risked their lives to carry me as gentle as a baby and do everything possible for me. The regimental surgeon, who a few weeks ago would not even look at my throat when I had the cold, tucked blankets around me, asked if I were comfortable, if I'd like a drink of Schnapps or cognac, and insisted I smoke one of his cigarettes. This all went on just a few hundred yards from where the shells were still falling. Nothing was too good for a wounded man! And that attitude remained from that time until two months later when I left the hospital.

I think the worst moment of fear I had was right here on this road waiting for the ambulance which would take me back to the clearing station. Four of us were lying along the road on stretchers (I think my three buddies had already gone back) when I heard a shell coming in. There I was, beginning to feel the shock of the wound and pain, one leg that probably wouldn't have carried me more than a few feet,

the road on one side and a stream of water on the other. I never felt so helpless or exposed as I did then when all the medics ran for the woods and left us alone. I started to roll off the stretcher into the water when the shell landed -- a hundred yards or so up the road. The aid men came back then and moved us into a shelter where we waited for several hours for the ambulance to come back. We slept most of the time...the morphine was taking affect.



1st Battalion aid station near Reisdorf

Note: This scene looks very familiar to me! I think I am the soldier on the stretcher in foreground. The place is right (near Reisdorf), the scene is right (road, trees, bank), the time is right, and I think the man on the stretcher looks like me! I pretty well describe this scene on page 47 of MUD & GUTS. –AJC

Webmaster's note: This is not my book but I can't resist adding a comment here. I, too, recognize my father, Art Clayton, in this picture which was taken some five years before I was born! The man on the stretcher is clearly frowning with concern at the photographer. This is absolutely typical of my dad. As a young newspaper reporter/editor and photographer, Dad just never trusted anyone else to handle the camera correctly. The family has countless old black-and-white photos where Dad is peering at the photographer and frowning exactly as pictured here. – Bruce Clayton

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991:
Ref: Page 45, MUD & GUTS

Holy Cow! I didn't know you guys had been hit...I guess everyone was trying to take care of his own

body. I think this is where we made it up the hill and started down the other side. There was snow up there but as we looked down there was the greenest valley like looking at a picture, then, like God watching the goings on below, some guys (GIs or Krauts) were running back and forth on a bridge; then they climbed into a truck and with a great deal of speed, left the bridge and in a few minutes...POW! Good-bye, bridge!

Oh, by the way...everybody was out of cigarettes, no water, but guess what? We did get mail and I got a check I had to sign so my wife could cash it for \$65. Just what I needed so I could run to the store and pick up cigs and maybe a six-pack...or two...maybe take a cab so I could visit you guys in the hospital. Somehow, I had a hard time feeling sorry for you.....

From Ed Fry, April 1986:
Ref: Page 45, MUD & GUTS

I always thought it was mortars coming in because I never heard or saw any tanks. Remember, we were marching up a blacktop road with a bank on the right side and the first rounds started coming in. That was my first experience with incoming fire and I was ready to dive for cover but noticed no one else did. So I asked the guys how they knew when one was headed for us and they said, "Don't worry, you'll know". Sure enough, the fifth or sixth round coming in sounded different and we all dove for cover. I think we then worked our way through a tank trap made by a lot of felled trees....no, we ended up in a little depression where the round came in that took you and the others out. All this time I kept wondering where the Siegfried Line was. After the medics took care of you fellows, we split up your ammo -- I had the grenade launcher and ammo from Foo's rifle, your BAR ammo and four rounds of bazooka from DeFoe (Ed at first understood that Ed DeFoe had also been wounded at this point... AJC). We climbed the hill through the woods and I almost fell into a trench, so well hidden you couldn't see it until you were right on it. We stayed in those trenches for three days, going back and forth, with only K rations and no water. Yet they brought up some mail the third day! (See Ed DeFoe's account and the \$65 check!—AJC). One morning early, I climbed out of the trench and shook dew from a real heavy fog off the pine needles into my helmet to get water. Also during that time they took the C Company commander out past us, apparently badly hurt and raising bloody hell...that didn't help moral too much. That was my baptism of fire.

The fourth morning while still dark we hit the road on the march and just before light, we could hear noises and see big blotches on the road at our feet. As it got light we could see horses all over the place and smashed equipment on and off the road. We later learned it was a horse-drawn artillery outfit that had been strafed by our Air Force the day before. Boy! The sights I remember! Horses bleeding from the nose like a running faucet; horses standing on their feet.... dead, a horse with a soldier still astride, laying on their side, burning.

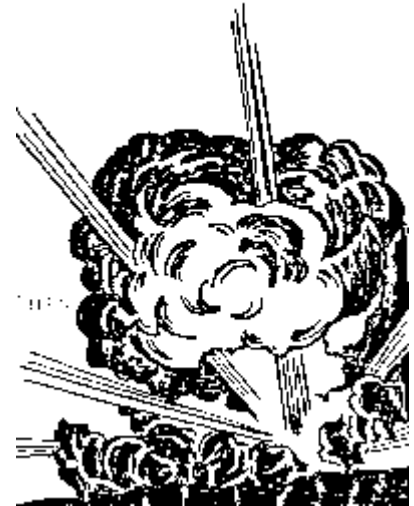


AID STATIONS TO HOSPITALS



Sometime late in the afternoon of the 19th five of us were loaded into the ambulance and started over the rough road toward the clearing station several miles behind the lines. Here the bandage on my leg was changed, a check made on my chart pinned to my blanket, and another shot of dope stuck in my arm. A few minutes later we started for the evacuation hospital and after several hours of not too comfortable jogging in the ambulance, we were carried into the waiting room of a bustling hospital. I raised my head to look around the room and, who should I see sitting up on the cot next to me, looking like a scared scarecrow – Black!

His mouth and nose were wrapped in bandages but he managed to tell me about him being hit a minute after I was (the first I knew of it). A few cots away I could see Crabtree, but he was too doped up to see me, just rolling and tossing on his stretcher. I was then carried into the X-ray room where, twisting around in several very painful positions (my leg was hurting like the very devil by then) several pictures were made of my thigh. Now came the operating room – long tables, huge lights, doctors and nurses in white robes and masks. I wasn't nearly as scared as I thought I would be and talked to the surgeon about what had happened and where the leg hurt the most. The X-ray did not show any shrapnel, the doc said, but something had to make that nice little hole!





"...START COUNTING"



The nurse was tying my right arm to a board, wiping off the inside of my elbow with alcohol, and then the big needle! "Start counting slowly now," she said. I had not counted past four when a feeling of relaxation came over me like nothing I had ever experienced in my life. I could feel my taut muscles relax, such a wonderful feeling and I drifted off into unconsciousness.

The next thing I remember is trying to shake the foginess out of my brain, desperately trying to remember where I was. Then I found myself in a huge ward, clad in a pair of faded wool pajamas (I had been stark naked when I went into the operating room) and my leg swathed in bandages. Two cots away was Black but no sight of Crabtree. On my right was an air force pilot who had been shot down, wounded and singed a bit.

News clipping from *The Brunswicker*, Brunswick, Missouri

A letter from Arthur Clayton written April 5th while in a hospital in France says he has plenty of time to rest, listen to radio music and think.

It's time like this when I become more homesick than at any other time. More time to think of home, familiar music which brings back so many memories.

I've thought many times of one thing the Army has done that I will always remember favorably. At Camp Roberts I became acquainted with boys who later became nearly as close friends as Renie, Gene Godt, Clyde Bachtel, Bill Freeman. I say nearly because I think Renie will always be almost as near a brother to me as Ken and Bob. With the exception of Jack (Coble) the rest of us from Roberts have stuck together up until the time three of us were wounded at once and became separated. During the time over here our whole squad became close friends; we knew of one another's past, what we did, what we hoped to do, his wife's name and how many children he had.

Many nights in foxholes we have slept peacefully, trusting our life to the alertness of another then trading posts and doing the same for him. There have been times when we shared small bits of crackers or a square of chocolate when no other food was to be found, the last swallow of water in a canteen, slept "spoon fashion" on the cold ground for mutual warmth.

We've raced across open fields to take a town, running with pounding hearts and legs of lead while enemy machine guns seemed to blaze in our very faces.

It's experiences like those that cement friendships that can never be broken. Yet now, back in a hospital, I'll probably never see those boys again while over here. I may go back to my old outfit, probably not, but even so, many of those I left will be gone. Chances are I'll never see them again. By the time we're home again there will be new faces, new friendships. But none will be forgotten.

What am I doing? This isn't a letter, it's an essay! I didn't intend to write so much but my mind strayed. But I have found so many "good fellows" you might say, who I'll always be glad to have known.

The stitches in my leg were removed today and although I feel afraid to move for fear the wound won't stay stuck, it seems well on the way to being as good as ever. Right now my leg is weak, in fact I am weak all over but almost three weeks in bed would do that anyway. I'll probably get several week's rest to regain my strength, maybe if I'm lucky, part of it will be in Paris or England. That was the 'break' I mentioned before but there is nothing definite on it yet.

Can think of little else to write. No mail yet and no telling when I will get any, especially if I move someplace else.

But keep on writing and guess it is time to put in another request for a box of cookies, candy and other eats. Keep sending me clippings and all news from home.

Love to all,
Art

Black and I became separated then; he went to one hospital and I the other. After a long ride on a hospital train, we came into Vittel, France, and I was carried up four flights of stairs to a ward in the hospital. Clean white sheets, soft beds, and nurses and ward boys waiting on us hand and foot! Our slightest wish was their command, but somehow we hated to ask these pleasant, busy people to do things for us -- they seemed to have so much to do. But there was always a drink of water, the fluffing of a pillow, or rubbing our bed-tired backs, maybe washing our dirty feet (scolding us for not taking a bath more often, then making fun of us when we argued we couldn't take baths in foxholes!), bringing us our trays of food -- or a dozen other things.

One morning the nurse told me I was to eat no breakfast -- that meant I was going back to the operating room! About 10 o'clock I was wheeled off to that "awful room" and a medic started snipping the bandages off -- and I thought I was going to jump right off the table! When he yanked the last bit of gauze off it hurt like infernal hell and I thought I was going to pass out. Then I raised up to take a look at what the doc at the evac hospital had done.... expecting a little cut about two inches long. I nearly choked when I saw a gash nearly a foot long! Then came the needle again and I passed out for the second time. When I awoke I was again back in my ward, this time the wound had been sewed up and hurt more than it had open.



Until the morning of May 1 I stayed at the hospital, enjoying every minute of it and dreading the day when I would have to leave. I found that Blank, my squad leader, had been wounded the next day after I was hit and had been sent to the same hospital. When we became able to get around alone, we took turns visiting each other and passed many pleasant hours talking over old times. Then I was released from the hospital proper and went into a convalescent ward. Blank was sent home. During the time we were regaining our strength we took light training -- but mostly just loafed in the sun, making frequent visits to the small town near the hospital and, in short, having a good time.

On May 1 I found myself on shipping orders and then followed more days and nights of miserable life on boxcars -- back to the old Army routine, no more pampering in hospitals! We first went to a depot in Luxembourg, where I met my platoon leader, who had been shot in the foot a few days after I was hit, and was now also on his way back to the 103d. It was while we were in this camp that news of the German surrender

came to us. Strangely enough, there was little excitement, no cheering, almost disbelief that it could be over and we were not going back to be shot at again. Now we were all anxious to get back to our old units before we became replacements for some other outfit.

More boxcars and we were in another camp in Worms, Germany, a hot, dusty, lonesome place that all of us were anxious to leave soon as we got there. Non-fraternization was in effect and anyone caught talking to a German was subject to a heavy penalty. After "open house" in France, some of the boys had a hard time ignoring the buxom frauleins, who were fully aware of the no-fratting law and did everything in their power to tantalize the soldiers. They had methods all their own....

From Worms we travelled south through Germany, stopping for several days in Kaufbeuren, a former Luftwaffe center, where I had the opportunity to examine several crippled German planes, and about May 23 we were trucked back to our old companies. The 103d headquarters were in Innsbruck, Austria, and Baker Company in a small town by the name of Hall. I found the company considerably changed but all of my old friends, with the exception of those I knew had been wounded, were still there – Easter, DeFoe, Fry, Rush, Crawford, and several others. The squad was living in a modern apartment just like a real home.

I was home again!

U. S. RESTRICTED EQUIVALENT BRITISH RESTRICTED
HEADQUARTERS
23D GENERAL HOSPITAL
UNITED STATES ARMY
APO 377

12 April 1945

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 100

Award of the Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster for the Purple Heart
Award of the Purple Heart

U. S. RESTRICTED EQUIVALENT BRITISH RESTRICTED

WILLIAM K. CARROLL, 32514117, Pfc., Co. B., 142nd Inf., for wounds received in action against an enemy of the United States on 19 March 1945; near ***** Germany. Home address: Staten Island, N.Y.

ARTHUR J. CLAYTON, 39587422, Pfc., Co. B., 409th Inf., for wounds received in action against an enemy of the United States on 19 March 1945, near ***** Germany. Home address: Brunswick, Me.

MARVIN E. DEAN, 38389413, Pfc., 662d Infr Avn Bn (then Co. C, 71st Inf), for wounds received in action against an enemy of the United States on 13 November 1944, near ***** France. Home address: (fully unknown);

GEORGE T. RUSA, 38394789, Pfc., Co. E., 378th Inf., for wounds received in action against an enemy of the United States on 6 April 1945, near ***** Germany. Home address: Carnegie, Pa.

WILBERT J. ... 119th Inf., for wounds received in action against an enemy of the United States on 19 March 1945, near ***** Germany. Home address: ...

FRANK G. ... action against Germany. Home address: ...

WINIFRED ... wounds received near *****

WILLIAM ... action against Germany. Home address: ...

Form with stamp: Mrs. Arthur Clayton, Husband, Pfc., 39587422, dated 12 April 1945. Includes a signature and a date field.

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS
23D GENERAL HOSPITAL
UNITED STATES ARMY
APO 376

1 May 1948

SUBJECT: ABSTRACT RECORD OF HOSPITALIZATION

TO: Commanding Officer, 2nd Reinforcement Depot, APO 776.

Clayton (Last Name)	Arthur (First Name)	J. (Initial)	Pfc (Rank)	39587422 (MOS)	28 (Age)
B (Company)	409th Inf Rgt (Regt and Arm of Service)		103rd (Division)		

DIAGNOSIS: SFT, penetrating, left thigh, moderate, WIA 1215 hrs, 19 March 45 in vicinity Bundenhof, Germany.

LINE OF DUTY: Yes

Date admitted this hospital: 22 March 45

Date discharged this hospital: 1 May 48

REMARKS:

DISPOSITION:

RECOMMENDATIONS: 1. General assignment, full field duty. ~~xxxx~~
2. Limited assignment, type of duty. ()
Immediately fit for limited military assignment as specified in Board Proceedings which accompany the above named individual.

HAROLD LEVITT
Captain, M.C.
Registrar

23 GEN Form #17.

R E S T R I C T E D

Pages 51 & 52, MUD & GUTS
AJC, August 3, 1993:

Joe Milhoan called me this date and in the course of our conversation I asked:

"Joe, something has always bothered me. Remember when we were in the same replacement camp going

back to our outfit, about May 5 or 6 or so?"

Joe: "Yes."

Art: "Well, Joe, remember that I saw you standing up there on that little knoll....?"

Joe: "Yes."

Art: "Well, Joe, when I came up to you to say hello, Joe, did I salute you?"

Joe: "... Well, Art, that's something I have been wanting to talk to you about..."

AJC: Add to the information on this page, Joe Milhoan was wounded March 21, 1945, two days after Crabtree, Compton, Black and I, and a platoon sergeant and maybe others, had been killed or wounded. Joe was struck in the foot by a "tumbling" bullet which pierced his boot and damaged his foot. He, too, was in the hospital approximately one and one-half months before being shipped out to return to Company B, 409th, 103d, and the war was still going on....

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991:

Ref: Page 52, MUD & GUTS

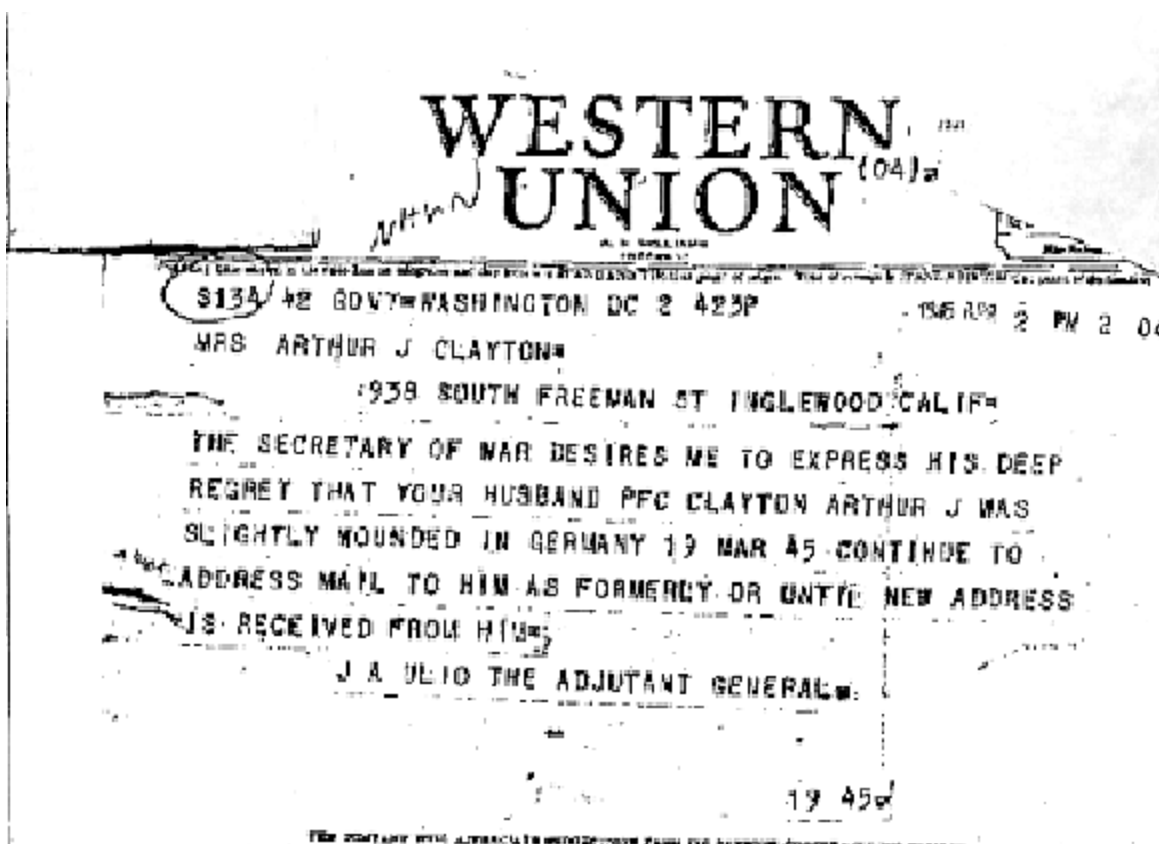
Gosh, having a hard time ignoring frauleins must have been almost beyond control.....for you, but you could take it, being a war hero and a combat vet....

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991:

Ref: Page 53, MUD & GUTS

So here you are back in Innsbruck and we had ended the war for you. Billy and I rode a tank into Innsbruck amid flowers and cognac and brandy -- but wouldn't you know it, guard duty again! Billy and I guarded a cheese and butter factory. "Let no Krauts in!" was the order. "Ok! Ok!" That lasted about 15 minutes or until the officers were gone. We gave a few pounds to some kids and that started the ball rolling. They started coming with coaster wagons and wheelbarrows....kids, old people. We just let them take as much as they wanted.

Yes! That part about Vacation Land was truly heaven on earth. We rode that cable car up to one of Hitler's hide-aways (that's what they told us it was anyway). Remember? Even ping pong. I know we decided...Army life wasn't so bad after all. And a pretense of training..... WHY? The damn war was over!



From *The Brunswick*, Brunswick, Missouri

Arthur Clayton writes home indicating that he is in the hospital, though he was not permitted to say where he was. He says "you probably have received a telegram by now from the war department" which would indicate that he had been wounded. He says he is receiving excellent treatment and "hopes the war will be over before we have to go back up." Two of his Missouri buddies, who have been with him since he left Camp Roberts, California, are still with him, indicating that they were in the same trouble Art was.



VACATION LAND



I should spend much time in reviewing the following months but the time is drawing near when I will no longer have this typewriter -- and my good intentions are finally beginning to give way to laziness!

Living the life of Riley in the apartment, we were well satisfied with our setup. Every other day we went on guard; the other day we made a pretense of training. Our company was guarding a huge German ammunition dump up in the wooded foothills of the Alps mountains which surrounded the area. One squad at a time guarded the dump and we were almost sorry when our shift ended. In the daytime we sat in the sun or roamed the woods, looking for deer. At night we sat by the fire, talked and dozed. It was the best guard we had ever had up to that time.

The scenery in the Alps was beautiful--clean, green forests, snow-capped mountains.....a real vacation land. One day I visited a skiing lodge atop one of the mountains and spent several enjoyable hours trying to ski, then relaxing in the modern hotel like a true tourist. Another time the whole company went up to a huge mountain lake for a rest----- more modern hotels, dining rooms with waitresses, row boating, and just doing nothing. Very much unlike the Army.

On June 4 we moved into Innsbruck, a fair-sized little city recovering from the war. We guarded banks, post offices. DeFoe and I had the best of them all, I think, guarding the rear of the hospital. We were seldom bothered by the OD, had to check no passes, and our post was on the second-floor porch of a house behind the hospital, equipped with a mattress and two chairs. At night, we usually went to sleep, on the mattress, waking the minute the OD, if he came, hit the first step on the creaky stairs below! By the time he reached the top of the stairs we were standing at the rail, very alert and dutiful. I don't think we fooled the officers, but as long as they didn't catch us asleep they couldn't say anything.

While we were in Innsbruck we saw numerous German stage shows and though we could not understand their chatter, we of course enjoyed the dances which usually bordered on the burlesque side. Some skits were in English and went over big. And Austrian or German, friends or enemies, many of the girls on the stage would be hard to beat for looks! These shows were sponsored by the Army but were not USO shows...I've still to see my first of those.

From Ed Fry, April, 1986
Ref: Page 53, MUD & GUTS

....you are correct about rejoining the squad in Hall, not Zirl. I have Zirl on the brain for some reason but in fact never saw the place. It was to the right as we came down the Alps. We got caught in a minefield on the way and while we waited for mine detectors to get to us, we watched a German blow a bridge to Zirl, get on a motorcycle and scoot away. Also while waiting, I was watching a fellow by the name of Fink. All of a sudden he disappeared in a cloud of smoke. He had been sitting right on or near a mine and it blew. It didn't kill him but we never knew if he survived.

From Ed Fry, April, 1985:

We guarded an ammo dump at Hall for a few weeks....I think you got back just about the time I stole some 10-in-1 rations for the squad. We had been living on C rations for weeks – for breakfast, lunch and dinner (it has just been recently that I can tolerate peas again!) – and the Divisional quartermaster was just across the road eating ice cream with their meals. Several guys tried to steal some 10-in-1s at night but got caught every time. One day just before noon I went through the fence, spoke to each guard as I went past, walked the full length of the mess hall (the tables were set with linen and tableware for the noon meal), threw a case of rations over my shoulder and walked back through the place to our billet. That bacon was delicious! I still can't believe I did it but we must have been hungry for me to get up that much nerve.



BACK INTO GERMANY



On July 13 the division moved back into Germany and B Company went to a little town of Issing, a mere village that smelled to high heaven of manure piles. DeFoe, Fry and I moved into a house occupied by an old man and his wife. The old man was "Pop" and his wife was "Mom," and we got along famously. We brought them cups of coffee from the mess hall or a piece of soap from our rations – and we had our laundry done for nothing more!

Our guard here turned out to be even better than at Hall. For a 24-hour period one squad guarded a power dam several miles from the town. Two hours on guard, sitting (at night) inside out of the weather, reading or writing, and then (in the day) six hours off to hunt, swim, or fish. We really did hate to leave this place. Black and I one morning hunted ducks with our M1s but gave that up and went swimming in the ice-cold water below the falls. (Black had returned to the company in June while we were in Innsbruck. Crabtree and Compton had been sent home.) A few minutes lying on the rocks in the sun, and we took another dip. In the afternoon we went "fishing" with our rifles. In 30 minutes, we had five fish averaging about 20 inches each. First we would slip along the bank until we spotted a fish below us in the water, then bang! And if luck was with us, the concussion would kill the fish. Then all we had to do was to get it out and this brought about the most fun. Having no luck in trying to pole them out we finally decided one of us would have to undress and swim out for them. Black went first, then it was my turn....how cold that water was and how hard the fish was to hold on to! But we got our fish and that night had a fish fry.

After about 14 days of this, our company was sent to a small camp south of Munich to process discharged German soldiers. I got my first break in the Army here when they asked for someone to work as a typist in the orderly room. I took the job and soon found I had very little to do. The small amount of typing amounted to nothing and I was free of all guard and training (we never did do any processing).

DeFoe, Fry and I made a trip into Munich one day and got a good view of the totally bombed city by taking a tour sponsored by the Red Cross. We saw many famous places -- most of them blasted into ruins now – and had a glass of beer in Hitler's once-famous Beer Garden.



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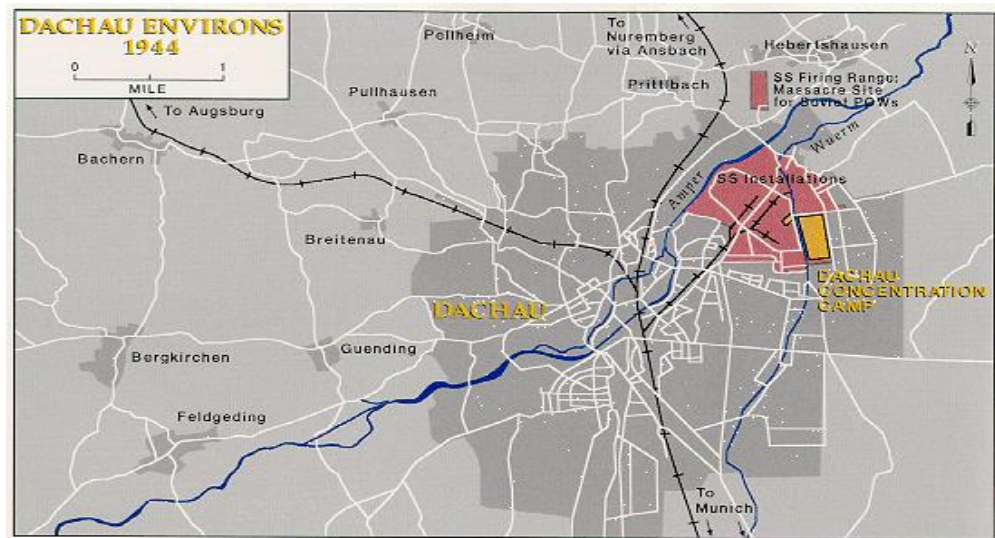


Things moved fast for a while after that. On July 26 most of us with low-point scores were transferred from the 103d to the 9th Division, an occupational unit. First we stayed at Dachau, the famous German concentration camp, then joined B Company of the 47th Infantry Regiment, the company being stationed at Unterbruck, another of the many small villages. On the third day here we were again alerted, this time headed for a division going to the Pacific via the states. Japan was rapidly crumbling with Russia's entrance into the war and the effects of the atomic bomb so we felt certain that by the time we had our furlough in the states the war would be over. We were very happy over the prospects. Then in the very moment we were to climb into the trucks, the shipment was cancelled. The Japs had surrendered. So now we were sure we were doomed for the Army of Occupation....and how right we were!

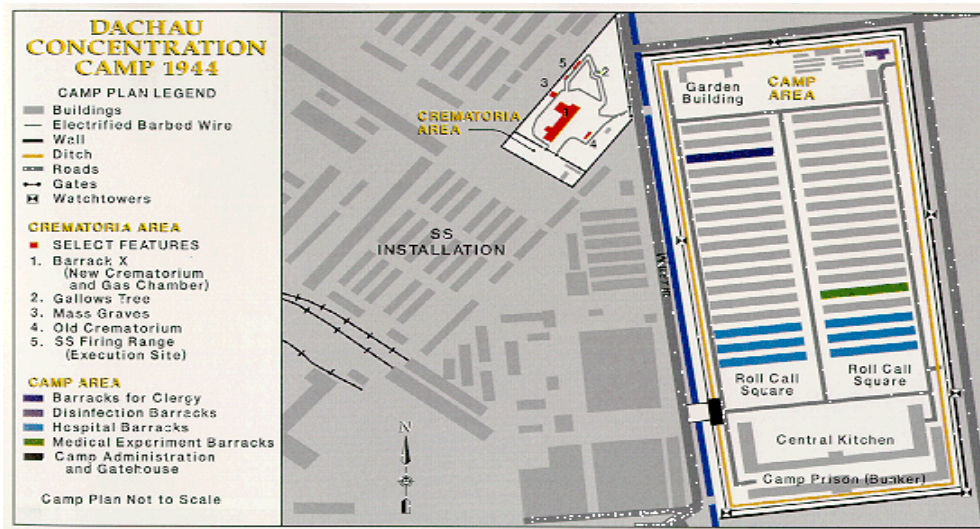
On Aug. 20 two very pleasant things happened to me! One, I met Ronald Peevler, a boy from home who was in headquarters company of the first battalion; the second was a call to work in the regimental public relations office.



DACHAU



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Clippings from *The Brunswicker*, Brunswick, Missouri

FORMER BRUNSWICKER EDITOR DESCRIBES HORRORS OF DACHAU

Dachau, Germany
July 29, 1945

Dear Folks,

I'm going to combine this letter because I want to tell you in some detail of something I have just seen--the site of one of the world's greatest horrors, I think. Perhaps Dachau, just the word, means something to you. Here was one of the

Nazis' most horrible concentration camps--and we are staying within its barbed-wire enclosure in the hospital building.

Across a high concrete wall, just a few yards from me now, are the buildings where many thousands of starved and diseased persons finally were put to death, by one of several devices the ingenious Germans had arranged.

The first sight one sees is the row of small concrete gas chambers. These small rooms, about six feet square--could either be used for decontaminating clothes--and bodies--or put prisoners to death. The next room, large and with a low ceiling first gives the impression of a huge shower room. There are drains in the floor and shower spigots in the ceiling--but all fakes. Prisoners were made to take off all their clothes and enter the room, believing they were to take a bath. As many as 300 persons, I suppose men and women all in one group, were crowded into this room, the door sealed, and the gas turned on. In seven or eight minutes it was all over.

The next room was about the worst, I believe. Here were four, large, furnaces, the crematorium. As many as three bodies were crammed into each furnace at a time and burned, about 165 a day, we were told. Some of the victims were hanged on the rafters just a few feet from the furnaces, then burned. But deaths too greatly outnumbered the furnace capacity so bodies were piled like sacks of flour in the next room, hundreds of them.

In the basement of this building was a bone crusher where the remains from the furnaces were ground into small particles, either for fertilizer or to be put into small urns, resembling flower pots, on the pretense of being sent to relatives. The basement is full of these pots and bone ashes litter the floor. Even in death these poor creatures were shown no decency.

Outside are more example of Nazi technique--a long mound of earth before which many a prisoner knelt and was shot through the head, a tree with rope marks on one limb where "special" prisoners were hanged, rows of kennels where half-starved dogs were kept to be turned loose on the inmates if things became too dull.



Behind another enclosure of close-stranded, electrically charged barbed wire, all of it surrounded by a moat and heavily guarded, the prisoners were quartered. When the Americans broke into the camp, they found hundreds of people too weak from starvation, dysentery and typhus to walk from their huts. Many died before they could be moved. The shacks were finally cleared and burned to the ground by the Yanks.

I might add that several thousand SS troopers, many of them responsible for the operation of the camp, are now on the inside looking out--behind electric wire, floodlights, moat and machine guns. They are forced to do KP, clean up the mess they helped make--but they still live a hundred times better than their prisoners did.

Enough about the camp; now something about what I am doing here. Last Friday about 900 men from 409 were sent here, the 47th Regiment of the 9th Division. The rumor came yesterday that it was all a mistake, that we were supposed to have gone to the 90th Div. or to replacement depots. But today the regimental commander welcomed us to the 47th as if we were going to stay. So we are

still not sure of our circumstances. We have not yet been assigned to companies or battalions. We're waiting for that now.

Dachau is also on the outskirts of Munich, though we had to do a lot of traveling around to get here.

Well, enough for this time. I'll still use my old address.

Love to all
Art

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991:

Ref: Page 56, MUD & GUTS

That Hitler beer garden in Munich -- sort of a cave it was -- anyway, I walked out with a crockery beer mug and I carried it on my belt...not really caring if I lost it or not. And guess what? That mug sets down on my bar in the basement....yes, Art, I finally have my own bar -- but I don't drink anymore...oh, well! The bar's all done in a country music motif -- fake knotty pine, wagon wheels, pictures, and a beer mug from Munich...

The experience of Dachau was one of the places that is burned in my mind 'til I die. A lot of the "kids" claim it never happened but we know, don't we? When we went through there, we were to wipe out snipers and the war was still on.

A Tragedy Preserved at Dachau

BY BOB WILSON

Man's inhumanity to man through the ages is recorded in many of Europe's great museums, monuments and memorials.

The great majority of them, however, have had their relevancy eroded by time. They stir the mind, but not the heart.

None of them evokes the emotional heartache a traveler experiences in visiting those memorials which record the great tragedies of his own time—such as the concentration camp at Dachau, Germany.

The camp, an easy 10-mile bus ride from Munich, has been preserved as a memorial to the known 205,000 persons who were imprisoned there between 1933 and 1945 by the Nazi regime.

Exotic Feeling

It is an eerie feeling to walk the grounds where these prisoners dressed in worn shoes and thin cotton prison clothes once shuffled about as they endured the harsh winter months and punishment.

The camp is still there to view and ponder: the barracks, the notorious shower baths, the gas chamber.

The memorial is easy to spot upon entering the city of Dachau. Serving as a beacon for visitors is the camp's gray wall with its now abandoned guardtowers.

The museum is a large structure which once served as the kitchen, laundry and storage rooms for prisoners' clothing and personal belongings. The museum was planned and arranged by those who survived the concentration camp, the Committee International de Dachau, through the support of the

what punishments and transfer of prisoners to other concentration camps and the liberation of the camp.

Strolling through the exhibits the observer may suddenly find himself the observer, for staring back at him from the photographs are the large, round pleading eyes of the prisoners.

In front of the museum is a handsome International Memorial built in 1963. A fresh wreath always rests at its base.

Barracks Area

Past the museum is the barracks area where prisoners existed in cramped living quarters.

Only two of the barracks remain; the concrete slab foundations of the others front the main camp road, which is lined with poplar trees planted by the prisoners.

At the end of the road are several beautiful monuments: the Catholic mon-

ument, the Jewish Memorial Temple and the Protestant Memorial Church.

According to the files of the International Tracing Service, 31,851 prisoners died in the camp. An additional number of a few thousand prisoners who had not been registered at all were killed by shooting. On the rifle range, the SS executed 5,000 Russian prisoners of war.

Next to the crematorium is the gas chamber, camouflaged as a shower room. The chamber was never used; instead, the prisoners selected for gassing were transported to other concentration camps.

A guide leaflet to the Dachau memorial declares:

"It would be presumptuous to claim that the museum is complete in every respect, but an honest attempt has been made to show quite objectively what happened in Dachau and in other concentration camps."



government of Bavaria. The museum's exhibits relate through documents and photographs the development of the Dachau concentration camp, starting with the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. The exhibits show the persecution of the Jews, how medical experiments were conducted, life in the camp, working conditions, the SS and its activities at Da-

Photos on the remainder of this page were copied from the book HOLOCAUST, compiled by Robert Powers, 411th Regiment of the 103d Division. I was a contributor to this book.—AJC

DACHAU 1945 (August)

U.S. Army Sergeant Guide explaining wood box used to cram people in (tightly) as punishment.

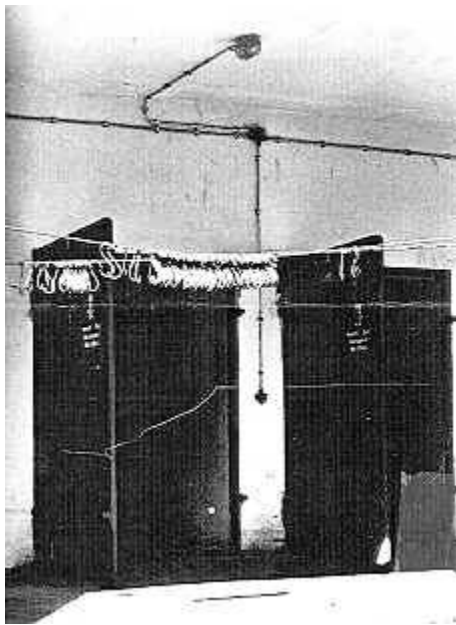


Photos on this and the following pages were copied from the book HOLOCAUST, compiled by Robert Powers, 411th Regiment of the 103rd Division. I was a contributor to this book. ajc

Crematorium

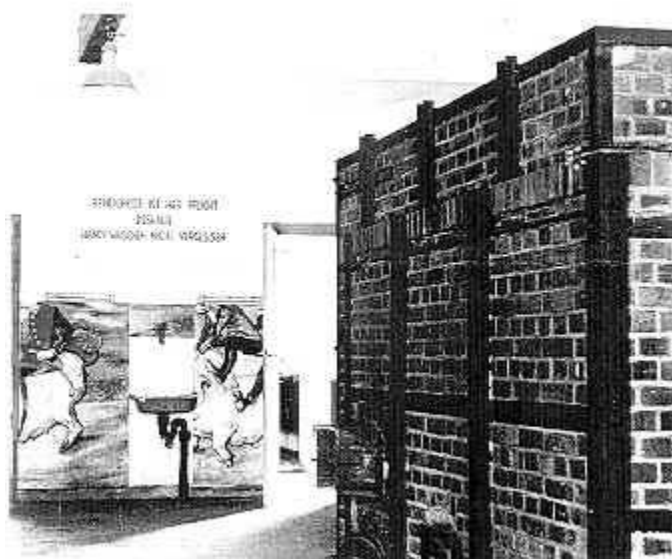


and Chimney

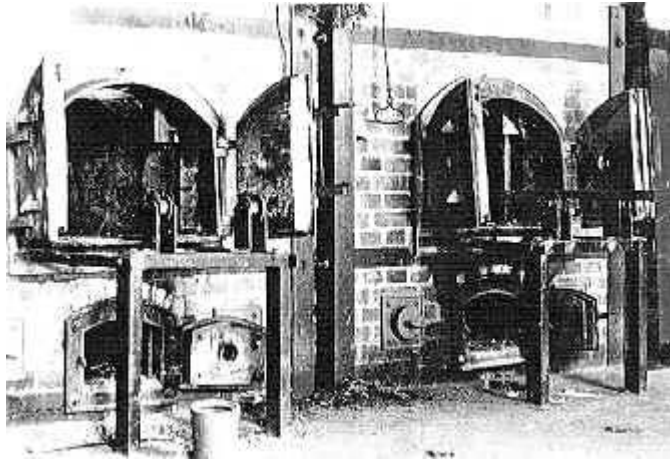


Gas Chamber - Note: Sign on Crematorium & Chimney Door: Caution Gas! Life Threatening Do Not Open!

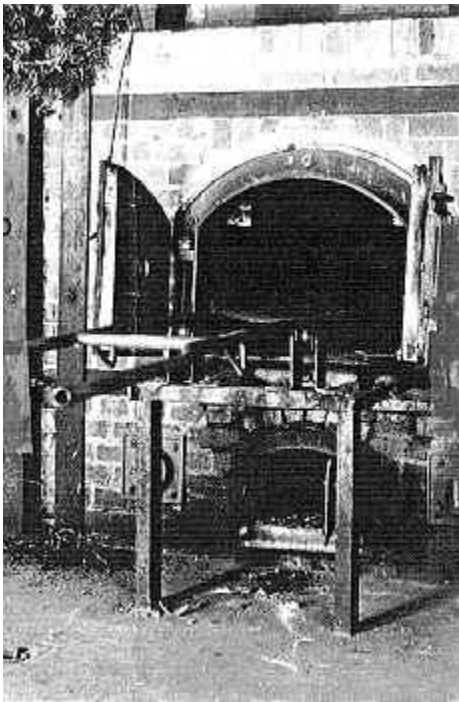
One of the Entrances to Crematorium Area



Note "Sign" and Murals below Crematorium Oven on right - Translate as: "Cleanliness here is a Duty. Don't forget to wash your hands."



Crematorium Ovens



Crematorium Oven



Urn with Ashes of Crematorium Victims



"GOT IT MADE"



When a fellow has a good job in the Army he "has it made." That's just what I had when I moved into Dachau to join the PRO staff. My job was to help issue the weekly regimental paper, *The Raider*, and I was right at home! Writing news, headlines, laying out the four-page paper, and working about two days out of the week in Munich with the German printers was a far cry from roadblocks and drilling. Three of us from the staff, Montgomery, Whitehead and I lived on the third floor of the headquarters company CP, no guard, no reveille or retreat, no formations of any kind. Just go to work in the morning (by Jeep, of course) and come home in the evening. It was a great life.

But on Oct. 12 things began to happen fast. Ralph (Whitehead) got a furlough to England, Montgomery shipped out on his way home – and the lieutenant and I were holding the sack. I became editor and did most of the work in getting the weekly paper out. Saturday I was told I would be leaving Wednesday (Oct. 24) for the 71st Division, a temporary occupation outfit which would be going home in a few months – I hoped.

So it looked as if I were going to be editor of *The Raider* one week and one week only.....but....at the last minute Col. Ward stepped into the picture, said I might as well stay with the 47th until the 71st was ready to ship, and pulled the right strings to have me placed on "detached service" from the 71st. That pleased me because I knew I had a good job with PRO, and I didn't know what I might be assigned to in a new unit -- nor did I know when the 71st was going home, next month or six months from then.

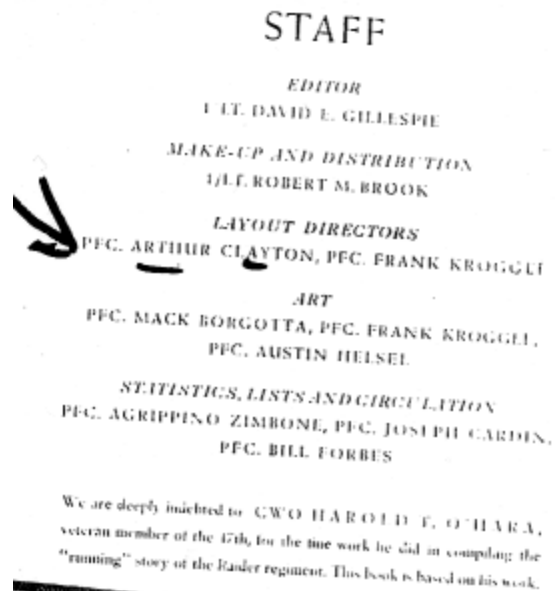
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So I remained as editor of *The Raider* and with our regimental history taking up most of Lt. Gillespie's time, the paper became more and more my entire responsibility. Twice more I was cancelled from the shipping list, and November slipped by, a month filled with football games and long jeep trips to cover them. From Dec. 1 to 5, I traveled with the regimental grid team to Vienna, famous city of Austria. Here, aside from the main event of our trip, a football game, we were guests at several swanky floor shows, sold cigarettes for \$80 a carton to the civilians, and toured the historic areas of the city.

Christmas came and went and still the final "must" order had not come for me from the 71st. But on Jan. 14, 1946, I was called to the 14th regiment of the Red Circle division and left Dachau and Munich behind. For the first time in my Army career I hated to leave a place, but this feeling was tempered by the hope that I would be soon on my way back to the states--and home.



In the 14th, located at Memmingen, Germany, I was immediately placed under I & E and was assigned to the staff of the regimental newspaper, which was just being started. Three men were on the staff, Pfc. William Heath, editor, myself, associate editor, and S/Sgt. John Eriksen, as artist and reporter. Lacking cooperation from the regimental commander and continually running into publishing difficulties, none of us had our heart in our work, but the first issues came off the press and the new paper was on its way. At the end of the second week, however, Heath and Eriksen received notice they were shipping out the next Thursday. I finished the paper, the third issue and its last, and went to work in regimental S-1 office as a clerk typist, awaiting time for my shipping orders, which were expected soon.



On Feb. 15, I was transferred to the 66th Regiment of the 71st and thus began more than a month of the old grind -- freezing in trucks and freight cars, sleeping on floors in wrecked buildings, eating K rations, wading mud, and forever cursing the Army. First we went to Kaufbeuren (I had been here before on my way back from the hospital in May), then by freight cars through Munich to Regensburg; a day in the mud and cold there and then in trucks to Deggendorf -- farther and farther from the nearest shipping port!

From *The Brunswicker*, Brunswick, Missouri

Arthur Clayton, former editor of *The Brunswicker*, thinks he may get home from Europe "some time."

Art was for quite a long time stationed at Dachau, one of the German horror camps. He and Ronald Peveler met while both were at this same location. Ronald has been home now for several months.

While at Dachau, Art reported on the regimental paper for some time and later became editor. He served in this capacity until transferred to another outfit. Here again he was given work on the regimental paper but only helped with a few issues before being transferred again -- supposedly each transfer being somewhat closer to home.

His last letter, dated February 20, and just received was written from Deggendorf, Germany. Part of the letter is quoted here:

"Last Friday (not a week ago yet) I left Memmingen, went to Kaufbeuren. Sunday we took box cars to Regensburg, going through Munich (good old Munich) and near

Dachau. Tuesday (yesterday) we loaded into trucks and came here--Deggendorf. Still further from port!

This morning we learned our 'mission' here - one more job before going home. There is a Russian DP camp here - Russians who fought with the Germans. They are now wanted in Russia as traitors. Rather than go home (if they learn they are going) they will kill themselves. We are supposed to swoop down on the camp one of these dark nights, surprise them out of bed, take all knives, razors, and pistols, etc., away from them before they have a chance to use them on themselves. Nice, huh! All we will be armed with are clubs. The idea is to keep the Russians alive!

Until the raid we 'train' for hand-to-hand combat, etc. I thought the war was over! But it is very unlikely anyone but Russians will be hurt--and then only if they try to kill themselves.

No need to tell you how we are living--like tramps again, cold, muddy, disgusted. Sleeping in an old mill on the outskirts of town, rotten chow, cold rooms, most of us sleeping on the floor. Sometimes it seems almost more than a guy can stand, but it will end sometime.

As soon as the raid is over we are supposed to leave for Coburg, where we will begin processing for shipment. Sometime after March 10, we should start home. Should, I say.

Later: Two of my roommates and I just slipped out and walked into Deggendorf to the Red Cross club. A long hike but it sure is nice to get out of that hole and relax in a clean, warm place. Think maybe we'll just stay in town and see a show. Chow isn't any good at the company anyway. We just eat doughnuts at the ARC.

This is just exactly the same thing I was going through a year ago last November -- except I was going the other way. We're practically 'lost sheep' again and get shoved around like a bunch of criminals by service units. But, as I said before, this time the end (Coburg,) will be much better!

Guess this is all for now.
Love to all,
Art.

From Ed DeFoe, December 18, 1991:

Ref: Page 61, MUD & GUTS

I and all the other guys were shipped to the 71st. They had not seen combat so our war stories even became unbelievable to us. We went to Wilhelm, Germany, not far from Munich. To make a short story shorter - I opened up a service club in an old hotel... even had a jeep and driver, also had charge of a truck to haul the beer, also two or four bartenders, 12 waitresses, a couple of GI bouncers, a room of my own in the hotel....and get this, Art, even a nice old lady to draw my bath and lay out clean clothes. Oh, yes! Hired a band, not real good, but loud. Trouble was, by the time midnight came, they (the band) were drunk and maybe one guy would play and we would sing or whatever. Yes, we even made money. That went on for about a month...talk about living high on the hog!

The night before we got shipped out I threw a party with everything free...lots of cheese, lots of beer, everything, even the glasses or whatever -- spent everything we made!

From Raymond Crabtree, February 1963:

...after I left the hospital where you saw me last, they sent me to another hospital in Nancy, France. From there I went to two different hospitals in Paris where I saw Black. From there I went to a hospital on the canal in France and from there to Belford, England. I came to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, and from there to Oklahoma, close to Tulsa. From there I went to Chickasaw, Okla., and was discharged October 7, 1945.

From Ed DeFoe, December 1991:

...We boarded a train and travelled for a full night and a full day ...stopped in Munich, 20 miles away from where we started. There we joined up with an Engineer outfit (2527th), went up to Frankfurt, then on a Victory ship and Camp Mead, then to a camp in Wisconsin and then home. I think it was the end of February, 1946.

What was the guy's name who came from Boston? Not very tall, kind of a round face, always real cheerful. I think he was kind of a small-time hood....I asked him that one time and he said, "Yes." Anyway, he was with us to the end...we had to wait for him when we pulled out (by truck) to go home.

One more thing about the bar at Wilhelm....we drank with Krauts almost every evening. They came in early in the evening 'cause there was a curfew for them. Anyway, no trouble, not one time, we bought them beer and a mutual pat on the back. I guess GIs are just "good Joes." They didn't want to fight any more than we did.....



"ONE MORE JOB....."



We landed Feb. 19 in a breezy old mill about 2 miles from the small town of Deggensdorf, ate more K rations for supper, made our beds on the floor and wished to hell someone would tell us what we were doing in that God-forsaken place. The next morning we found out.

At a meeting of the company our new commander greeted us with, "Men, I guess you know you are on your way home." A few men cheered but the others just grumbled. The CO continued, "But we have just one more job to do." That did it. The one more job was to raid the Russian camp which I described in the preceding and following clippings. We were disgusted beyond words and most of us wished we were back in our old outfits still sweating it out.



From *The Brunswick*, Brunswick, Missouri

This letter from Arthur Clayton, bearing the date line Deggensdorf, Germany, February 25, is a follow-up on the one which appeared in *The Brunswick* several weeks ago and tells of the raid on the Russian prisoner camp:

Yesterday I think I finished my career as an infantry combat soldier. The rest should be traveling and getting a discharge. Our last combat mission if you can call it that, was quite an experience, however.

As I told you before, the reason we were brought down here was to pull a surprise raid on the German-Russian prison camp near Deggensdorf and get several thousand men on trains for Russia before they could kill themselves. At Dachau a few weeks ago when several hundred Russian traitors were told beforehand they were being sent back to Russia, at least ten of them killed themselves by razors, knives, window glass, or hanging. Others attempted to do the same thing but were prevented from doing so by the American guards. The ex-soldiers, who once fought for the Russians, but came over to the German side later, knew they faced death or long imprisonment if they were returned home. So they tried to kill themselves. It was to prevent a recurrence of that incident which prompted the Army to take such precautions on the movement from the Deggensdorf camp.

An entire regiment of infantry with tanks attached, a network of radio communication, several weeks of planning, and a brigadier general in charge of the operation made it one of the largest single movements employed, I think, since the end of the war. Our company was broken down into assault squads and reserves. The assault units were armed with clubs, four men carrying carbines to be used only if an American life was directly endangered. The reserve was equipped with rifles, clubs and tear gas. All of us wore steel helmets and gas masks. I was picked for one of the assault squads and given a carbine.

As the plan was mapped out, we would move in on the camp at six o'clock and each squad, led by an officer, would break for its particular building. Two of the carbine men would dash to the rear door and deploy through the barracks. The

prisoners were to be routed out of bed, allowed to put on their shoes, cover themselves with one blanket, and rushed outside before they could do harm to themselves if they realized what was taking place. Tear gas and clubs were to go into action the minute the Russians resisted.

At 2 o'clock Sunday morning we got out of bed, had coffee and doughnuts and at 3:45 had been trucked into Deggenndorf and joined the rest of the force. Shortly after 4, we moved out of town, in strict blackout and at 5 arrived in a small village about a mile from the prison camp.

In columns of sixes several hundred yards long, we began to move quietly across open fields toward the camp in the distance. The ground was snow-covered and frozen, and an ice-cold wind was blowing across the plains and the moon peeked in and out of the clouds. It presented quite an atmosphere - an army moving silently across the fields toward the barbed-wire enclosure, no talking, no smoking, no nothing but thinking, and I guess most of us were doing a lot of that. I know I was.

Two minutes before 6 o'clock we slipped through a big hole cut in the fence and started moving down an icy road toward the block containing our quota of shacks. On the stroke of the hour an alarm started beating furiously and we all cursed under our breaths. Had someone betrayed us and warned the camp? We really expected trouble then. (We later found out it was merely their reveille but couldn't understand why it was timed on our arrival so precisely. The prisoners would at least be awakened.)

With a signal our squad broke from the road and started for a hut. I saw the first man, our lieutenant, hesitate, then jump into water up to his knees! There was a ditch about twelve feet across, full of water, on our side of the road and we had to splash through that before hitting land again. The officer and the other men in our assault squad started for the front door of the shack while the other carbine man and I raced across the ice for the back door. We jumped up the steps and tried to get the door open-locked. I thought there was hell to pay then and could just about see the Russians slashing each other's throats while we tried to knock the door in with an ax. We finally knocked a small hole in the door and peered in, then threw down our ax in relief. Everything was under control. The Russians had been completely surprised; some were dressed, others still in bed, but none offered resistance. The raid had worked much better than anyone had even dared hope.

Within a few minutes the prisoners had been taken outside and lined up between the huts to await individual processing. From then, a few minutes after 6, until about 3:00 in the afternoon the Russians and the American guards stood out in below freezing temperature while the prisoners were processed and moved out in small groups to the train. Here is a good example of how inconsiderate; maybe you can even call it inhumane, even an American can be. These men were traitors to their country, an ally of ours, it is true, but they were still human beings. Our company commander, a first lieutenant, ordered the prisoners to be kept standing, at attention, regardless of how little clothing they were wearing, for more than nine hours in freezing weather.

Once the officer left, however, the GIs usually let the prisoners stomp their feet and rub their hands together to keep a little warmth at least. We took shifts at guard and spent half our time in the warm huts, but the Russians stood in the snow hour after hour and I can only imagine how cold they must have been. Only a few minutes in that icy blast and I was ready for a stove--and I was dressed with the intention of keeping warm. In the company next to ours, the prisoners had been herded back into one barrack and guarded there, giving both the Russians and the guards a break. I don't think there was a man in our squad who wouldn't have

knocked down any Russian who had tried to kill himself when he entered the building, or killed him if he had attacked one of us, yet I heard many of the men, including our sub-officer, criticizing the CO for his treatment of the prisoners after they had shown their intentions of behaving.

The Russians ranged in ages from 18, I'd say, to perhaps 65. One boy who said he was 21, but looked much younger, had stood there in the cold for those nine hours and when the time came for him to pick up his pack and leave he couldn't move, suddenly sat down and began sobbing like his heart would break. One of our officers (CO wasn't there) sent two GIs out to bring him in to the stove for a few minutes. Then the kid saw the other side of the hard-faced Americans who had burst in upon him at the crack of dawn with clubs and rifles. One built a roaring fire in the stove, another opened a can of C ration beans and handed it to the boy. A heavy overcoat to go over the boy's light jacket appeared from somewhere, and a pair of felt-lined boots replaced his shoes, and a GI gave him a pair of warm gloves. When he rejoined his group a few minutes later he was a different boy. Maybe some people wouldn't approve of treating our enemies in such a manner--but there was one hut full of American soldiers who felt a little better down deep inside after boy had left. Every man who took part in the raid had seen combat in the war, were men, like myself, ready to enter the redeployment pipeline for shipment home. Combat men were chosen for the job rather than low pointers because the higher-ups knew they would be able to fight if the occasion presented itself. But it didn't, and we were all very glad!

That's my story of the "Russian campaign" in southern Germany, nine months after the end of the war.

Now for home! Don't know any more news of when we will leave for port. Latest dope is we leave this place the latter part of this week for a staging area. Nothing, however, is certain.

Love to all, Art

From Ed Fry, September 1991:
Ref: Page 64, MUD & GUTS

(Reference my account of rounding up Russian traitors in a camp near Deggendorf, Germany, for shipment back to Russia, Ed Fry had participated in a similar raid on Russian prisoners held at Dachau about a month earlier -AJC)

Ten of these prisoners committed suicide and 21 others were injured before our troops could get them out of the barracks. I remember standing right beside that man who sliced his throat so badly that his head was off the edge of the litter and I could see where he had sliced his windpipe open. It appears our officers were more sympathetic than the ones you were with who kept those poor fellows at attention all that time. Also it was not as cold as when you went through it. There were still traces of snow on the ground and the temp around the 30s.

RUSSIANS PRISONERS WHO KILLED SELVES FOUGHT FOR NAZIS
FRANKFURT. Jan. 20 (AP)

The Russians who killed and mutilated themselves in mass suicide hysteria at the Dachau internment camp have been identified as members of White Russian Cossack squadrons of Gen. Viassov, who fought beside the Germans against the Red Army on the Eastern front.

The wave of self-extermination broke out Friday as United States authorities prepared to repatriate the men to Russia.

Ten succeeded in killing themselves, while 21 others inflicted wounds as the deportation train was being loaded.

Viassov, who was wanted by the Russians authorities before the war, had been called Russia's "greatest traitor." Soviet troops had sworn to hunt down every one of his men while Viassov's forces in turn vowed never to be captured alive.

The Germans used the group of Russians as much for propaganda purposes as for front line action. The German radio reported them one day in Poland and the next in Yugoslavia. They used the force for depredation throughout frontal areas where they raped and plundered, disguised as Soviet troops.

From Stars and Stripes:

GERMAN WEAPONS FOUND IN DUGOUT

A small cache of German weapons presumably abandoned last spring in face of the rapid American advance, was accidentally discovered this week by an electrician in Baker Company.

Pfc Edward D. Fry, who handles the electrical repairs and equipment for the company, was searching the premises around the unit area for wire and other materials when he stumbled across several German 20 mm. machine guns and a small amount of ammunition in a hillside dugout. Though the guns were well oiled and in good condition, nothing seems to indicate they were deliberately hidden there for future use. It is believed the weapons were left behind when the crews retreated.

From the 409th Regimental Newspaper, *The Raider*.



THE VOYAGE HOME



But the raid finally came off, Feb. 25, and in a few days we were back on the track toward home, this time by train (still 40 and 8s) to Weissenberg, north of Munich about 150 miles. Weissenberg looked like a nice little town as we drove through it on trucks. Our living quarters there were going to be in an old medieval castle high on a mountain above the town, about an hour's walk-- straight up. There were about thirty rooms in the huge building, each room about the size of a small house, central heating, a few electric lights, ice-cold running water and semi-modern latrines. A little history of the castle might be interesting: The site was first used by monks in the year 749 AD, but the castle as we saw it was built by a German earl during the years 1588-1604. The castle was complete with a deep moat (never filled with water), drawbridge, scores of underground caverns (which we explored by flashlight), watchtowers, a dungeon, and a chapel, which incidentally was built right above the dungeon. The original owner had used the castle as a prison for political and war prisoners. During the Thirty Years War, 1618-1648, King Gustav Adolf of Sweden and his forces tried unsuccessfully for two years to enter the castle. Even to this day it would be almost impossible for infantrymen or tanks, without air support, to cross the moat and gain access to the castle. Before the present war, the place had been used as a convalescent hospital for German war veterans and sick children. During the war, however, it contained Russian and civilian prisoners.

....It seemed to us that the castle, with its moat and barbed wire, dungeon and caverns and barred windows, had been intended principally for a prison -- and now we were virtually prisoners in it ourselves. No passes were allowed and the town, if anyone cared for the long walk down the mountain, was occupied by Negro troops and most of the entertainment spots were off-limits to us -- even if we wanted to share them with the colored boys.

After two weeks of solitary confinement (on March 15), we left Weissenberg by train (this time, wonder of wonders, in stripped-down passenger coaches with triple-decker beds) and four days later had crossed half of Germany and the northern part of France to move into Camp Philip Morris at Le Havre, the French port where I landed 17 months ago.

Postwar Le Havre was quite a change from the mud hole I remembered. Instead of tents with dirt floors we stayed in wooden barracks and slept on cots. Post exchanges, theaters, Red Cross clubs were spread liberally over the entire camp and everything was connected by a camp bus service or concrete walks if one preferred to walk. The weather was ideal and we thoroughly enjoyed our stay here, but wondered from day to day when "our ship" would arrive. The great day finally dawned on March 26....the 66th Infantry Regiment, first battalion, was scheduled to ship! At 8 o'clock we were at the shipyards and by 10 had boarded the New Bern Victory, carrying 1,300 men, a comparatively small ship on which most of us felt certain we would be stricken with sea-sickness. At 3 o'clock that afternoon we hoisted anchor, cast off the ropes and were towed by two tow boats out into the harbor. A few minutes more and we were out of sight of France. All the months of rain, mud, snow, mountains, pillboxes, misery and death were behind us.

No more guard duty, no more occupation, no more bombed cities. We were going home! The trip across was uneventful. The sea was rough most of the time but only a few of us were sick. I spent most of the time on deck where there was plenty of fresh air, read books, and watched the endless ocean. Seven days

later, about 10 o'clock at night, we glimpsed the first sights of New York and from then until 1 o'clock on the following morning, April 4, when we dropped anchor in New York harbor, we never left the railing of the ship. At 8 the same morning, we slid into our dock and began the slow process of debarking. Red Cross workers formed the only reception committee, supplying us with doughnuts, coffee.... and fresh milk, the first we had had since leaving the states.

We moved rapidly then – from the dock to a ferry, past the Statue of Liberty to New Jersey, by train to Camp Kilmer, N.J., where we stayed for two days before leaving for separation centers all over the country. I went to Jefferson Barracks, Mo, (by Pullman) and on April 9, 1946, I received my honorable discharge from the Army. That night I arrived home at Brunswick – a free man!



NOW THAT IT'S OVER



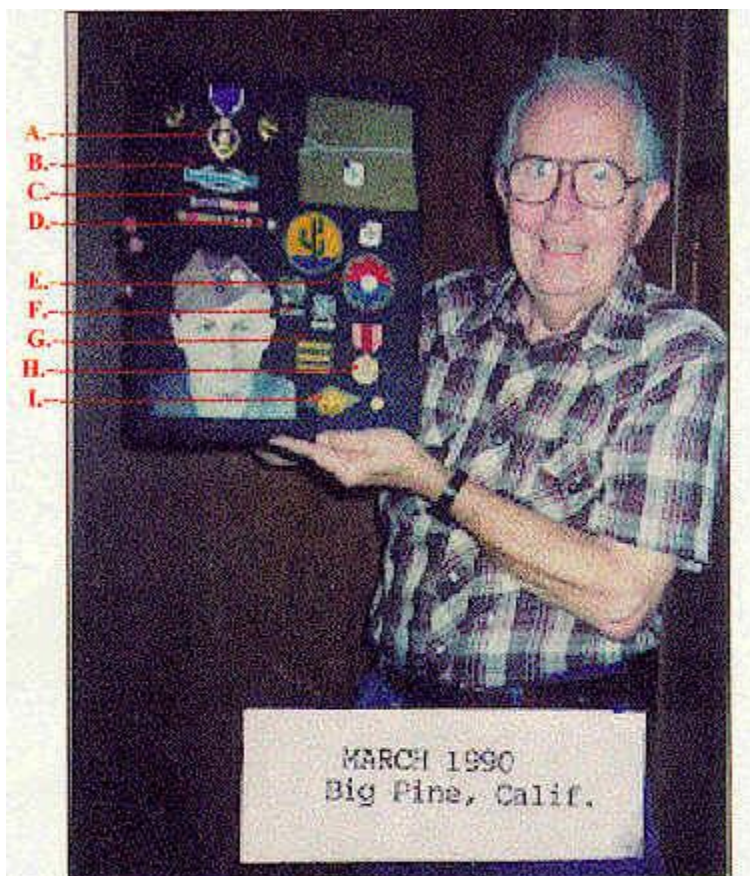
I had been in the Army 22 months, 17 months overseas. I had done nothing outstanding in all that time. I had been in the lowest branch of the Army, the Infantry, and I had remained a private throughout. I did, however, have the satisfaction of knowing I had served in the roughest, dirtiest, most vital part of the entire armed forces. Not because I wanted to, it is true, but having done so, I'm proud of it. No one will ever convince me that anyone who has served in other branches of the military service knows so well as the infantryman the complete horror and misery, the utter uselessness of war.



Honorable Discharge, Jefferson Barracks, MO, April 1946



Two tags....in the event the soldier was killed, one tag stayed with the body, the second was turned in to a service unit for records.



- A. Purple Heart medal for wounds received in action.
- B. Combat Infantry Badge for engaging enemy in a fire fight.
- C. Purple Heart, Good Conduct, Victory, European Theater and Army of Occupation ribbons.
- D. 103rd (Cactus) Division Shoulder patch.
- E. 9th Division shoulder patch.
- F. Rifle Expert and Machine Gun Marksman badges.
- G. Overseas sleeve bars.
- H. Good Conduct metal.
- I. Honorable Discharge pocket patch and lapel button.



PHOTO SUPPLEMENT



This page contains recent photographs of many of the Company B, First Platoon, men mentioned in my MUD & GUTS. Most were taken at Division reunions, others on separate occasions, all within the past five or six years.—AJC



30TH REUNION—

103d DIVISION OF WORLD WAR II



PLATOON BUDDIES

Ed DeFoe, Joe Milhoan, Billy Bowles, Ray Crabtree, Art Clayton, Ed Easter

Part of the "After Selestat" Company B



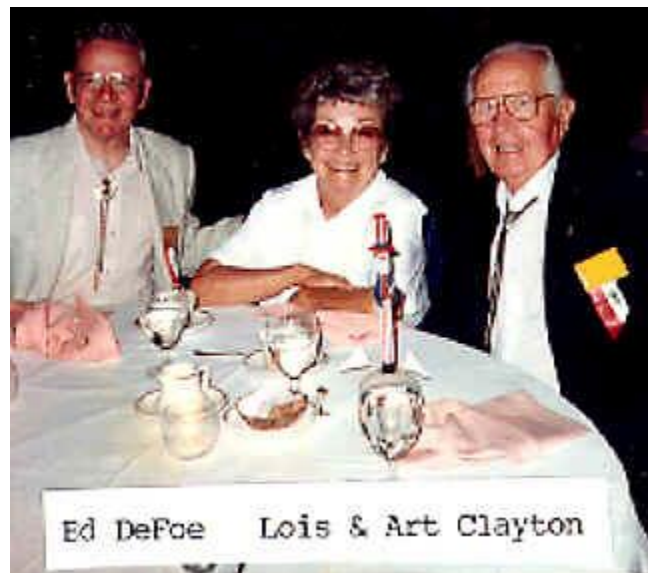
Ray spends his time at the bar...or is this just trick photography by DeFoe?



Billy Bowles was present, but so often absent that it was necessary to use a last year's reunion photo (by Easter)



Ed DeFoe, Ray Crabtree, (Lt.) Joe Milhoan



Ed DeFoe, Lois and Art Clayton



Lloyd Black and Raymond Crabtree, Van Buren, MO, 1993



Ralph Wards (Platoon Sergeant) and Art Clayton, Overland Park, KS, 1994



Ed and Wilma Easter, Pittsburg, KS, 1993

WILLIAMSBURG 1995



Frank Damanti meets Harold (Schreck) Schreckengost, Co. B Commander and the man most responsible for "finding" the "After Selestat" members!



DeFoe, Crabtree, Easter, Fry



Ed Fry, Ed DeFoe, Frank Damanti, Ray Crabtree, Ed Easter, Part of the "After Selestat" Company B



The Crabtrees "pop" for lunch: Lisa and Miriam Fry, Ruby Crabtree, Wilma Easter, Juanita Steinkuehler, Lydia Schreckengost in the Veranda Room at the Fort Magruder Inn