

Anderson Pierce Evans
One 6th Street
St. Augustine Beach, FL 32084
(904) 471-3893

Mr. Luke Martin
75 Salty Way East
Selbyville, DE, 19975

Dear Luke,

I would like to know more about the collection of memoirs and memorabilia that you are working on.

Where will it reside and how will scholars and 103d Division veterans access the collection?

When I discovered that there was an active 103d Division organization, I got involved and soon learned that William E. Barclay, a member of the 103d Signal Company was writing a book, or, rather, compiling remembrances of other members of the Signal Company and writing the continuity to tie it all together.

Meanwhile, my grandson had been watching all of the documentaries re the 50th anniversary of WWII and bombarded me with questions about my small part in it. I started putting some recollections in my computer, compared notes with Bill Barclay and offered him any parts of the stuff I had assembled that he could use. He incorporated a number of anecdotes (some, unfortunately, with the *meat* edited out of them) into his book and, with his permission, I incorporated some of *his* anecdotes into what was rapidly becoming *my* book.

Bill printed enough copies (60) of *his* book to meet the wants of the Signal Company veterans who desired copies (and a few more for good measure). The last I heard, (two weeks ago) there were two copies left, to be sold to the first two people to call Harold Rorem at (612) 537-9037, for \$24.00, which *includes*

shipping and handling. Barclay's book "103D INFANTRY DIVISION SIGNAL COMPANY REMEMBRANCES" (bound, laminated soft cover) includes recollections of some infantrymen, as well. His book is 320 pages long.

If you wish to contact the author directly, he is William F. Barclay, 101 Pimpernel Ct., Roseville, CA 95747 Phone: (916) 771-0333 .

All copies of the current printing of *my* book "PAPA'S WAR" (267 pages) are spoken for but if you have access to a computer using DOS and having WordPerfect 6.1 or 5.1 as its word processing program, I would gladly send you a 3 1/2 inch disk containing the complete book, gratis.

Also, I have three extra copies (Bound, laminated soft cover,) of an earlier printing of PAPA'S WAR (235 pages). I would have to recoup (\$18.00) my actual out-of-pocket cost, for printing shipping and handling but you are welcome to as many of these copies as you can use, at that price.

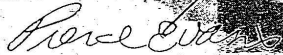
If and when permanent archives of 103d Division memorabilia is established, I will donate to the archives, at no charge, two copies of the then-current version of PAPA'S WAR.

It would be wonderful if more 103d Division veterans would set down their recollections either on audio tape or in written form while they are still able to undertake this task. Their families and comrades in the 103d Division would be most grateful for whatever they leave behind.

A sample of the contents of PAPA'S WAR is enclosed.

Good luck with your project.

Best wishes,



Pierce Evans

P.S. I plan to attend the next 103d Reunion in Columbus in September.

PAPA'S WAR , PART 6

Brenner Pass

Late at night on May 3rd Colonel Donovan Yeuell's 411th Infantry Regiment motor marched more than 40 miles, through the 409th advance positions in Innsbruck and up toward Brenner Pass, one of only two routes through the Alps between Innsbruck and Italy. As was his style, Col. Yeuell rode in his jeep, the second vehicle in the convoy, behind the lead tank. Our radio truck was the third vehicle followed by the rest of Task Force Brenner. We traveled with our headlights ablaze for the first time since before we were committed to action at St. Diè. The weather was lowering and getting worse by the minute. The temperature dropped below freezing again and it began to snow.

Thousands of German soldiers, in awe of the glaring headlights of the 175 vehicle column, poured out of the forests and surrendered. They were directed to discard their weapons and were sent, disarmed and unguarded, back toward Innsbruck to our PW cages. We advanced at very high speed considering road conditions and weather and secured Brenner Pass at 040151 (May 4th, 1:51 a.m.), without opposition.

The task force stopped for the night and the CP was set up in a building right next to the Brenner Pass border check point gate.

Incident in Colle Isarco, Italy, May 4, 1945

Our radio team was sleeping in a nearby barn. Around 040600 (May 4, 6:00 a.m.) two radio operators from the regimental command net, who had been in the CP all night, shook me and Seymour Fader up from a sound sleep and told us that Field Marshal Kesselring had surrendered all

of the German forces in Italy and that, during the night, the 103d Division had linked up with the 88th Division of the Fifth Army. They proposed an excursion down into Italy and suggested that this might be the last chance that we would have to "liberate" a Luger or a P-38 pistol.

Ever since we got into Alsace we all knew that Fader was a good guy to have around. He spoke a mishmash of Yiddish, "Hollywood German" (*English schpoken mit eine cherman occent*), and fractured German put together from a few phrases from the Army's German Phrase Book. Somehow he managed to make himself understood so he frequently interpreted for us.

We were too sleepy to think clearly or we might not have gone. However, Seymour and I piled into their jeep with them and took off into Italy. There was a faint morning glow in the east as we set out.

Probably closer to the truth about the reported linkup was that after we had secured Brenner Pass, an M-8 Recon Car from Division Recon had dashed down into Italy in the dark of night and had met a recon team from the 88th Division somewhere in Italy. They shook hands and then both hightailed it back where they came from.

As we soon found out, the territory between our perimeter and theirs was still in the hands of the Germans who, because of deteriorating communications, had not received word that they had been surrendered and who had no idea that we were within a hundred miles of Brenner Pass. In the dark, they had probably mistaken our M-8 Recon Car for one of their own vehicles and had not challenged it.

Blissfully unaware of the situation, we drove south and entered the little town of Colle Isarco, about eight miles south of Brenner Pass. After rounding a bend in a narrow street, we ran into a company of armed German soldiers. The street was so narrow that the jeep driver could not turn around or back up so he floored it. Fader shouted something in passable German that sounded like, "Make way for the whole American Seventh Army." The Germans, who had their rifles and burp guns slung over their shoulders, flattened against the walls of the buildings on both sides of the street as we barreled right down the center. Their faces were

just inches from ours as they struggled to unsling their weapons. It reminded me of riffling through a Pinochle deck. We got through the soldiers and out of sight around a bend in the road without a shot being fired.

We wasted no time heading out of town and continuing south in hopes of running into some element of the Fifth Army.

We stopped at one point to get our bearings and heard a vehicle approaching from the south so we hid the jeep and crouched in a ditch. It was a great relief to see that it was a major and an enlisted driver in a jeep from the 88th Division. We jumped from concealment and flagged them down. Before we could say a word, the major said, "Boy, are we glad to see *you*. We just came through a town full of armed Krauts who don't know the war is over and we were lucky to get out alive. Get us to your CP immediately so we can report the situation."

They had bullet holes in the jeep to punctuate their story.

The major was not too happy to hear about our experience. We discussed what to do and concurred that the first troops to arrive from either direction would be German. Even so, the major opted to hide his jeep and stay there whereas we decided to try to get back to Brenner Pass.

We attempted to work our way through the opposite side of town from the place where we ran into the armed Germans but soon found ourselves driving into a large cul de sac facing a German Army Headquarters building of some sort. There was a single guard standing at the entrance. Our driver skidded sideways up to the guard kicking dirt and gravel all over his boots. After an angry look at his boots, he looked up into the barrels of our grease guns and gave up his rifle, quietly.

Fader told him that we were from the American Seventh Army and were there to take charge of all of their weapons. We made him take us to an armory, but while there were weapons of almost every description in the armory, there were no pistols. We insisted that there had to be pistols so he led us to the main building and up a flight of stairs but was reluctant to open the door at the head of the stairs.

One of us covered him and the rest barged into the room where there was about a dozen German officers looking at a large situation map. A high ranking officer was outlining his plan for getting the troops under his command back into Germany to the redoubt for the last stand.

Fader made it clear that they had been surrendered by Kesselring and that they were to turn over their pistols to us. The General or Colonel (or whatever he was) was reluctant to do so indicating that it was beneath his dignity to surrender to an enlisted man. He could not believe that we were from the 103d Division because, on his map, the 103d was still north of Ulm, more than a hundred miles to the north. Fader said something like, "You invented blitzkrieg, but we perfected it. Brenner Pass is in our hands. You cannot get back to Germany." Fader then shocked them with the announcement that Hitler was dead. They had not gotten the word.

The officer seemed both resigned and relieved that it was over and started making plans for a formal surrender. Fader told him that there would not be one, that *this* was it, and that they would have to surrender their arms to *us*. Fader said, "Send your troops up to Brenner, unarmed and with their hands over their heads and they will be directed to PW cages." We insisted that the officers give us their weapons right then and there and they reluctantly complied.

The pickings were slim. Most of them had Schmeisser machine pistols which were lying on a table near the door. We didn't want them because there were plenty of those around, but we took them, just in case they had second thoughts. One of the GIs from the regimental radio team got the commanding officer's P-38. The other patted down one of the other senior officers and found in his side pocket a small flat black pearl-handled 25 caliber automatic. I got a Walther PK and that was about it. Fader, who had done all of the talking, came away empty handed.

The General wrote out a safe conduct pass for us and provided an enlisted man to ride on the hood of our jeep to show it at each roadblock. (It seems that after our encounter with the armed troops, the Germans had concluded that we were escaped prisoners of war. They had no idea where we had escaped *from*, but were hastily setting up road blocks to try to catch us.)

When we got back to Brenner, the 103d Division band was loaded on several trucks and playing marches. The Commanding Generals of the 103d (Mc Auliffe) and VI Corps (Brooks), plus a host of other generals and colonels, reporters from BBC, Reuters, and various US news agencies, along with other VIPs, were loaded in trucks and jeeps for a festive jaunt into Italy to *formalize* the linkup that had occurred during the night. Luckily, our radio team was not to be part of the convoy. There was no need for us. After all, the Division and Corps commanders were right there with him. Who else did Yeuell need to communicate with?

It was going to be a splendid parade with flags waving and the band playing (as best they could, considering the fact that they were loaded into several 2-1/2 ton trucks).

No one was dressed for combat.

One thing was certain, we couldn't tell them what they might have run into because we were not supposed to have been there and were very close to being listed as AWOL. We forgot all about the fact that a similar "parade" was probably forming up in the 88th Division's area.

Hopefully, the 88th Division approached the formal linkup in a much more prudent manner. Or maybe the word filtered down to the Germans south of Colle Isarco in time to avoid a disaster.

At mid-morning on May 4th the column moved out with orders to link up with the Fifth Army if they had to go all the way to Rome to do it.

The formal linkup with the Fifth Army's 88th Division took place at Colle Isarco, without any snags, at 041051 (May 4th, 10:51 a.m.).

However, I have always wondered what might have happened if we hadn't gotten to Colle Isarco first.
