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**Luke Martin**

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**Sent:** Sunday, January 09, 2011 7:38 AM  
**Subject:** Sad News

This morning's Knoxville News Sentinel carries the sad sad news that we have lost another great veteran of the 103d. God Bless him and keep. The link to the Guest Book for his family is included for those who want to write a note. I will post a note of condolence on behalf of all veterans of the 103d.

## Herman L. Holsopple Jr.

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HOLSOPPLE, HERMAN L. JR. - age 85, of Oak Ridge passed away Thursday January 6, 2011 at the Harriman Care and Rehab Center in Harriman, Tennessee. Herman was born May 6, 1925 in Jacksonville, FL to the late Herman L. Holsopple, Sr. and Jean Criswell Leib Holsopple. Herman and his family moved to Oak Ridge in 1958 where he was employed with Union Carbide and Martin Marietta as an Organic Chemist in the Analytical Chemistry Division and later as a Patent Agent with the office of the General Counsel until his retirement in 1992. Herman was a member of First United Presbyterian Church of Oak Ridge and was a United States Army Veteran of WWII having served as a Combat Medic with Company C 411th Regimental Combat Team of the 103rd Infantry Division. In 1994 Herman along with other surviving members of the 103rd was invited by France to return to the town of Pfaffenhoffen for the 50th Anniversary Celebration of their Liberation. Herman was a Consulting Rosarian and had served as past President of the Holston Rose Society. He achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, he was a former Boy Scout Troup Leader, and active in MENSA, Toastmasters, the Optimist Club, and the Atomic City Stamp Club. He was a pilot, and enjoyed camping, mountain climbing, traveling, and having fulfilled his goal of parasailing over all of the 7 seas. Preceded in death by his wife of 52 years Louise P. Holsopple, son Mark Wayne Holsopple, and his sister Peggy Heaton. Herman is survived by his son, James Holsopple and his wife Susan of Oak Ridge; daughter, Katherine Aquilino and her husband Mike of Maryland; sister, Betty Phillips of Washington State, and numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren. Funeral service will be held Wednesday January 12, 2011 1:00 pm in the chapel of Martin Oak Ridge Funeral Home. Interment will follow at Oak Ridge Memorial Park. The family will receive friends Wednesday from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at the funeral home. Martin Oak Ridge Funeral Home in charge of arrangements.

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1/9/2011



PEACE AND HAPPINESS - CHAPTER I

The first twenty years of my life have been full. The first chapter has ended and a new chapter has begun. I look forward to the years ahead with great enthusiasm because I now know better than ever the art of living. I don't claim to have found the elixer of perpetual youth nor do I claim to be a perfectionist. I have just discovered, through experience, that happiness is sometimes hidden in dark corners and must be sought after much in the manner of any other precious substance.

My early life is a blur of traveling, moving, packing, unpacking, making new friends and losing contact with some of the old ones. As a child, I traveled from one section of the country to another, always without stopping long enough to really become acquainted with the land and the people. If our family is typical, then it seems that the families of civil engineers never get fully unpacked before it is time to pack up and move across the country again. Wherever and whenever a civil engineer was needed, my father was usually there.

We finally stopped in East Tennessee long enough for my sisters and me to spend most of our school years in the same city. Indeed, our family became a conscientious and stable member of the community. That is, the whole family except me was content to become an established and integral part of Knoxville. I had spent too many years traveling to be satisfied with living in one place for too long at a time.

So, one summer when I was fifteen, I made a hitch-hiking trip from Tennessee to New York, to Massachusetts, to Maine, to Niagra Falls, to Canada, then back to Tennessee. Two years later, when I was 17, I made a similar hitch-hiking excursion through the southern states and into Mexico. These pilgrimages served to satisfy my wanderlust and I lost my irrepressible urge to travel. I was beginning to learn the value of old friendships and tranquil, patient living.

My adolescent years were filled with the same happy, time-consuming hours of joy that mark the lives of most boys at that age. I joined the Scouts and went camping in the Smoky Mountains with Troop 14. I ran on the high school track team, went to dances with my best girl, worked in the afternoons as a copy boy for the Knoxville Journal, then later as an orderly at St. Mary's Hospital, and, in general, led a happy and nearly irresponsible life.

My Utopian existence came to an abrupt end when I graduated from Knoxville High School. I, like most of the boys in the Class of '43, had my future cut out. I volunteered for the Army when I became 18 and thought I knew what the war was all about. I thought I knew why we were fighting and what our aims were. Looking back, I can realize how utterly vain and egotistical were my reasons for enlisting. How could I have realized the danger that threatened our Democracy? Hadn't I been living a most normal and unwarlike life? If wasn't until I got a close look at France, Italy and Germany that the solid truth slowly began to dawn on me. It was not until I began to see those wretched people and note their way of life and observe evidences of the way they had been living and had seen the Landsberg Concentration Camp.... it was not until then that I recognized my own fortunate position.

However much I grieved over army life, and however much I wanted to go home, I knew deep in my heart that I was proud to have been a part of the Army of the United States and I was secure in the knowledge that I had done my share in preserving the kind of life I love.

Yes, my first twenty years have been full. I could not start the second chapter any better than by beginning it here at Harvard. If the next two or three chapters are as full of living as the first, then before I reach the end of my Great Adventure, I will truly have found PEACE, and more than that .... HAPPINESS.

Herman L. Holsopple  
Freshman English Composition  
Harvard College, 1946



## ONE DAY OF WAR

Our column was moving toward the Alsatian town of Barr, on the eastern side of the Vosges mountains. Our particular column was composed of three infantry companies and one heavy weapons company, followed by an assortment of service and supply outfits. The time was late November, 1944, a period of much rain and cold weather. A light rain was falling and those who still had raincoats had thrown them cape-fashion over backs and packs. Heads were bent into the rain and rifles were hunched barrel downward from shoulders to keep the rain out of the bores. Nobody talked much since the freshness of the first mile or two had worn off and the business of putting one foot before the other became all-important. Our packs were heavy, the weather was miserable, and our minds were becoming as sluggish as our bodies. Rest was all we wanted -- all we needed. A few days of rest and sleep would make new men of us. But we were not moving toward a rest camp. We were slogging toward an enemy who had retreated and who now was lying in wait for us somewhere ahead.

Sure, we had a few reconnaissance cars scouting the road in front of us. According to the rule book they would sight the enemy and radio the information back to the bat-alion commander. But that was the ideal --- that was the way it worked on maneuvers in Louisiana. Two other possibilities presented themselves: (1) our reconnaissance troops would be ambushed and wiped out before they could radio their position, and (2) they would be allowed to continue half way to Berlin so that the main body could be ambushed. We didn't think about it much, one way or the other. Our main concern was the driving rain and bitterly cold wind.

"Going to be a rough winter," Meyer, the B.A.R. (Browning Automatic Rifle) man from Texas, remarked.

"Going to be, hell," put in Jacobson, a New Yorker. "Where have you been the last two months?"

We waited for an answer from Meyer, but there was none. He probably had not listened for a reply -- probably didn't realize he had made a statement. Everyone was wrapped up in his own thoughts. How long before our next hot meal? Hot K-rations heated over a can of sterno doesn't count. That isn't a meal --- it's dog food. We will all have trench

foot in this kind of weather. Why don't they get us some decent boots? Wonder why the shutters are closed on all the farm houses we see. Don't see any sign of life. The people are probably holed up in their cellars. They say most of these Alsatians are of German descent. Most of them do speak German. The people in the last town we went through did not seem too happy to see us. They just stared when we came through.

Across the mountains, on the other side of the Vosges, the people were really friendly. They waved and shouted and gave us wine. Made us feel good --- felt like we had really done something. I suppose the Vosges mountains is the real dividing line between France and Germany. The people on this side have been kicked around so much they don't really know where they belong. Wonder if we'll catch the Krauts today? Boy, it would be nice to crawl in a hayloft and pile hay all over ourselves and sleep for a day or two. Walking, walking --- always walking. If we have to walk clear across Germany it will be a damn long war --- even without fighting. Thinking, thinking--- thoughts of home, of that cute French girl six or eight towns back. Eight of us billeted in her old man's house. Been a week now, I guess. Got to start watching Eddie and Mac for G.C. Both claimed they laid her. Be coming to me in a few days dripping and wanting to go to battalion aid. Battalion docs will jab them full of penecillin and next week they'll have it again. What this Army needs is front line pro-stations. Wish this damn rain would stop. This is probably pretty country in Spring.

And then we were diving for cover in the ditch. Baker Company, just ahead of us, had met some resistance. A rapid chattering told us that German machine guns were opposing our advance. Then our machine guns opened up with a slower, more throbbing, rate of fire. We forgot that we were tired, and waited, waited for word to tell us what the score was.

It was real quiet. No firing --- just rain beating on steel helmets. Baker Company probably has a couple of scouts out scouting the position. Somebody got spooked. We'll be moving shortly. K-rations are opened and

eaten cold. Swap you a dinner ration for a breakfast ration. Are you kidding? That cheese always plugs me up tighter'n hell. You'll wish you had a plug before today's over. Who wants a D-bar for a fruit bar? Here, me! Good deal. I can't go that chocolate they put in D bars. They say there's a new kind of D-bar coming out with sweet chocolate in it. Wish it were true. Why, in the name of God, do they put lemon powder in the damn dinner rations? What I want is a hot cup of coffee. Don't you know? It's hot in the South Pacific and the boys like nice cool lemonade with their supper. Always the same thing. A little can of chopped ham and eggs in the morning with powdered coffee and a fruit bar. A can of cheese and some dextrose pills and lemonade at dinner, and at supper a can of beef, a pseudo-chocolate bar and bouillon..Where's Ortez? He's got a picture of some Senator and a lot of brass eating a dinner of K-rations and telling how good it is. Somebody sent it to him from home. Well, those sonsabitches ought to eat this crap every day. Bet they went out and bought a big steak dinner when they got through. Sure they did. A man can't live on this. Everybody bitching and griping. Nobody making any suggestions.

It wasn't long until a guy came around the bend in the road, walking toward the rear. His arm was in a sling. "What's going on up there?" somebody asked the wounded soldier.

"Some Krauts in a barn about five hundred yards around the bend opened up on us. Scratched on the arm. Medic said to walk back till I came to a Jeep with some medics in it." The wounded soldier was tall, lean, and obviously a country boy. Country boys make good lead scouts. They are naturally alert, harder to scare and more adept at the art of stalking.

"Any more get hit?", a sergeant asked.

"Yeah, the guy nearest me just about got his ass shot off. You should've heard him holler. Well, guess I'll get on back to the aid station. I'll be thinking of you guys. Take it easy."

Then B Company litter bearers came along with a stretcher. The guy was lying on his stomach smoking a cigarette. Everybody watched them go by. Some pulled out cigarettes and lit them. The sky was terribly dark for four o'clock, even though the rain was beginning to let up. Pretty soon the column was on its feet and moving slowly down the road --- ten yards between men. Somebody was coming up the road. Krauts! Yeah, three of them, with their hands in their pockets and their heads down --- a G.I. walking along behind them. Yeah, kids. Bet they never even finished high school. They can kill you just as dead as a college man. Sonsabitches, I'd like to ram an M-1 up their .....

Pretty careful as we go into Barr. Look out for snipers. First squad take this street. Second go that way. We'll meet you down there. Take it easy. Keep your eyes open. Run from one doorway to another. Watch the windows across the street. The guys across the street are watching the windows on your side. Zing, zing, zing! Where'd it come from? Down there, third window from the end on the second floor of that end house ... saw the flashes. Somebody else saw it, just threw a grenade in. Just a second now. An explosion and then quiet. So they did leave snipers here. Maybe their whole damn army is hiding in these houses. Bet there are some nice beds in these houses. Wish we could stay here. Only a few prisoners taken. No casualties in my platoon.

Wish I had a gun. Being a Medic makes me feel helpless when something is going on. Here we go again. The column is moving on through Barr and on toward Andlav. We didn't do a very thorough job of cleaning out snipers. Didn't check all the houses. Guess they decided to let the rear echelon troops have some fun for a change. They might move in tonight and get hell shot out of themselves.

Back on the main road --- ten yards apart, our company, Charley Company, in the lead now. Wonder how it will be in Andlav. Barr was a snap.. Glad I put mud on that red cross on my helmet. Kraut been

using them for targets lately. How far is Andlau? Six, seven kilometers. Ought to get there by dark. Maybe we'll dig in before we get there. Never can tell.

We are getting close to Andlau now and becoming more and more tense. If we are going to get it they should open up pretty soon. We are in rather hilly country, with the road curving through alternating farmland and wooded area. Reminds me of home... Tennessee. We are almost into Andlau when the scream and explosion of an "88" landing in a field on our left sends us into the ditches. This is followed by several more rounds in quick succession, landing all along the road and in the ditches. The shelling stops almost as soon as it started. They had our range and are not going to give us a chance to get theirs. But their job was done.

Some of our guys are hit bad. There are a lot of shrapnel wounds. For those who are screaming there is morphine, tourniquets, and bandages. For those who lay quite still there is nothing. The wounded are moved to a comparatively safe spot behind a stone wall. We spread out along the road and advance toward Andlau... not in a long column as before, but in jagged little groups, well dispersed into the fields. Bodies are bent forward and the groups move jerkily in spurts.

A Kraut machine gun picks a group and opens up. Everyone flattens out on the ground. One guy, with grenades, tries to crawl toward the machine gun. He has very little cover. The machine gun roars. The guy is hit. He falls. Then he jumps up and starts running toward the gun. He is hit again and falls backward. Fields, an aid man with red crosses plainly visible, runs over to the injured soldier. He kneels to help him. The machine gun opens up again, this time on the woking medic. Fields pulls off his red cross armband and waves it in the air. The machine gun sprayed his body and Fields fell across the man he had tried to save. The gun continued to chatter at the two still forms, and then poured out



its remaining lead in the general direction of the American troops. Damn those no good sonofabitching bastards! The sentiment rippled across the fields where everyone had seen what had just occurred.

The Kraut machine gun was obviously out of ammunition. In a few moments, three Germans came out of their dugout in a clump of bushes with their hands held high. As the Germans approached the hate was palpable. Every man was watching through his gun sights. Suddenly, as though an unheard order had been given, a hail of fire showered into the three Germans. Long after they were still, American bullets poured into their bodies.... along with many oaths, strong and terrible.

"Those guys didn't have to commit suicide", someone said.

That night we entered Andlau, and the next morning we left. Another day had passed... another day of the long, bitter nightmare that is war.

Herman L. Holsopple  
C. Co., 411th Regt.  
103rd Inf. Div.

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## ORDERS IS ORDERS

Captain Abbott was a man who like his eggs. But being the C.O. of an infantry company didn't give him many opportunities for sitting down to a breakfast of fried, scrambled, boiled or any other kind of eggs after his company arrived in a combat zone in Alsace, France. Nevertheless, Captain Abbott was not to be denied and his men, knowing their commanding officer's unquenchable hunger for eggs, often "liberated" eggs in his name and for his benefit. These the Captain ate immediately or lovingly placed in his mapcase for the time when he might have time to fry or boil an egg. The rumor was that Captain Abbott never, at any time, had less than a dozen eggs in his mapcase.

One murky day in the winter of '44, Charley Company (this was Captain Abbott's command) was advancing toward Ebersheim in Alsace and the men were tense as they walked slowly toward the Kraut's positions. The word was passed for no smoking and no talking. Just over the next little rise trouble could be expected. Capt. Abbott whispered word down the line to disperse, stay low, and above all make absolutely no noise. He then placed his beloved map case against a tree and went forward to do a little reconnoitering.

While the Captain was gone, the only sound to be heard was the steady drip, drip, drip of the rain as it fell from the trees onto the macadam road. In this silence we wondered how far our pounding hearts could be heard. Within a few minutes the Captain returned, walked to his mapcase, and then, like the sound of an "88", he let loose with expletives that must have been heard all the way to Marselle. "Who was the goddam, motherfucking sonofa bitch that sat on my eggs?" "I'll have that rotten, no good asshole court-martialed for this!!!!" On and on he roared, venting his rage on everyone around. Everyone else was silent. After all, the Captain had given the order for absolute silence.

Remaining especially quiet was a new Second Lieutenant who had just joined the Company. Looking for a dry place to sit, he had spied the Captain's mapcase and, without thinking, sat on it. Fortunately, he realized what he had done before the Captain returned and had time to pull a strategic withdrawal.

To this day the Captain would like to know who sat on his eggs and to this day it is a company secret. And, to this day the whole company wonders why it was another five kilometers before we saw even a sign of the Krauts. Maybe the Captain's outburst had something to do with it.

Herman L. Holsopple  
Co. C, 411th Regt.  
103rd Inf. Div.



## THE ROOKIE

Schneider had just been overseas two weeks when he came to us as a replacement. He was only eighteen, and they had rushed him to France as soon as he had finished basic training. The pity was he had joined us the day before the jump off and hardly had time to get acquainted, much less gain some pointers about what to do in combat. A lot of us in the platoon who had come overseas with the 103rd Infantry Division considered ourselves old timers after six months and we were worried about Schneider. He was quite visibly terrified the morning we went into action, and we well knew that the first few hours were the most difficult for any replacement. If he survived the worst the Krauts could offer without cracking, we thought he would make a good soldier. As it was, we never found out.

We had hardly entered the smoke-filled area on the outskirts of Mulhausen when the barrage started. The shells were falling at a rate of one about every three seconds. There was nothing we could do but lie in the field and "sweat it out". The horrible whine and explosion of incoming mail is understood only by those who have heard and felt it. Some shells "whoosh", some whine, some whistle, and some scream. Every type of shell has its own particular sound and learning the sounds comes quickly. We were not being shelled by any German gun we had ever heard before; and, even though we were on the receiving end, it couldn't be anything other than our own anti-tank "76's".

Schneider had been sticking pretty close to me, and when <sup>he</sup> screamed that he had been hit I was immediately beside him. Fifteen minutes in combat and he had gotten a piece of shrapnel in his lower left leg. It was what we called a "million dollar wound". A "million dollar wound" would not kill you, you wouldn't lose an arm or a leg, but you would be incapacitated for a long time, hopefully, until the war was over.

The shrapnel in Schneider's leg had done enough damage so I knew he would not see any more combat, yet he would not lose his leg. But Private Schneider was very unhappy. He was screaming that he would be killed,

that his leg had been blown off. After dressing his wound and giving him a shot of morphine, I told him that litter bearers would be along shortly to take him to the rear. I explained how he would probably be sent back to the United States, and how everyone would envy him for getting put out of action so quickly; but poor Schneider begged me not to leave him. I told him the artillery fire had been our own and would stop as soon as they learned they were making a mistake. When I said that, I suddenly realized that he had thought we were under German artillery fire. It was almost like telling a child that there is no Santa Claus.

In later days, we used to think about Schneider. He had arrived in combat hardly weaned and had been wounded and sent to the rear. From his actions, we judged that he might have become a "psycho" within a very short time if he had not been wounded. Others broke and were sent home with their "mental wounds". Some joined us later, after treatment, and some we never saw again. Some broke after months and months of fighting, the strain and unending tenseness of combat finally wearing through any mental barriers they might have had.

These men had been wounded in combat, too .... some far more deeply and seriously than those with surface gashes and scars. We thought of Schneider at home or safe in an American hospital in England while the guys in the N.P. (Neuropsychiatric) wards relived in mental agony all the hell of modern war. For this they received no Purple Heart.

Herman L. Holsopple  
Co. C, 411th Regt.  
103rd Inf. Div.



#### THE JUMP OFF

To the civilian population of Schillersdorf, in the province of Alsace, tomorrow would be just another day... another day of having nearly a thousand American soldiers billeted in their homes while these soldiers took turns in manning a line of foxholes and dugouts two kilometers away. The soldiers had been doing this for nearly a month, these French civilians had accepted the position of their town as a frequent enemy artillery target with typical French resignation. Tomorrow would be no different. Some clean-shaven, rested Americans would leave for the lines before dawn and some grimy tired troops would file over the two hills into town from the direction of German-held Rothback and Mulhausen. These tired troops would get a hot breakfast, hit the sack until late afternoon when they might wash, shave and, if lucky, find trucks to take them to a movie in a town ten miles farther to the rear. Everything was becoming routine, and there was no reason for the Frenchmen to expect a sudden change.

What the Frenchmen didn't know and what the G.I.s didn't learn until a few hours ago was that tomorrow, March 15, 1945, would be the beginning of an advance destined to roll until the end of the war. It was not to be another local attack... not a battalion, a regiment or a division attack... not two or three divisions... but an army attack. The whole Seventh Army was going to attack with plane and tank support. Perhaps we should have been happy, since we knew this was going to be something really gigantic. Instead, one could feel the tenseness and sobriety of the platoon as each member checked his equipment and decided what he needed and what would have to be left for headquarters company to carry. Our company was to cross the line of departure at 5:30 a.m. We were to be preceded by Able Company and followed by Baker Company. As night dragged imperturbably onward, we tried to remember what else had to be done. Was the last letter home given to the cook to mail? Did we have our canteens filled? Did we need matches? Did everyone have sulfa tablets? There were dozens of little things to be remembered that seemed all-important.

We were told to try to sleep during those last few hours before our departure, but sleep was out of the question. We had just come off the line this morning and had spent most of the day sleeping. Now we were too keyed up, too tense, for sleep. It was always that way before an attack. We knew how exhaustion can consume a man until he can sleep any place and under any conditions, but just before an attack a man is wider awake mentally and spiritually than ever... all of which makes sleep an impossibility.

It was still very dark when we gathered up our equipment. The web belt with canteen, first-aid packet, spade, gas mask, and, finally, in my case two canvas pouches, strapped one on each side. The pouches contained bandages, compresses, syringes with morphine... whatever it took to provide immediate care for the wounds that were bound to happen. I was aid man for this 1st platoon of Charlie Company... for my money the best platoon in the army. There were about forty of us in the platoon that morning, and it seemed inconceivable that by tomorrow there would be less than that number. I could not think of dying myself, as an actuality, and yet I knew that it had to be a numerical, a statistical possibility. This kind of thinking ceased as the platoon took its place in line. We formed up with about a five yard interval between men.

Even as we were lining up, the old Frenchman who owned the house in which the first platoon had slept came out to watch us. He had treated us like kings while we were in his home and had always watched us when we left for the lines. Now he wasn't supposed to know that we were going into an attack and would never be coming back to sleep in his home; yet... he knew. Perhaps our tenseness and desire to get started had given away our secret. Whatever it was, he knew the score, and in the half light of the dawn, he was out to say good-bye to the boys who had given him tobacco and with whom he had shared his home and his wine. I don't know whether there were tears in his eyes when he wished us "Bonne chance!" but we did know that there was all the emotion and gratitude in his voice that could possibly come from a grateful heart. And, to top that, he came up to me

just before we began our march and pressed two fresh eggs into my palm and in passable French/English said, "Pour aspirin et cough pills". I had given him some cough lozengers and aspirin, off and on, when he needed them, but never asked or expected anything in return. He knew how much we all craved fresh eggs, after months of powdered army eggs. When I tried to tell him that I had no place to carry two eggs, he looked so hurt that I had no recourse other than to accept his gift with many thanks. I wrapped them in compresses and put them in my field jacket pocket.

As we walked out of Schillerdorf toward the Germans, the sun peeked a red rim over the horizon, and we knew the weather today would be perfect. It seemed I had never really noticed a sunrise until today. There was so much color in the sky that it seemed fantastically unreal. I know of no way to describe the blends of red, rose, blue, orange and violet of that March 15, 1945 morning. It was a sunrise meant to be noticed. And yet, it was though some evil spirit had painted it and said, "Take a good long look today, buddy boy, because this is the last sunrise you will ever see." And I looked at it and wondered if it would be my last.

The walk over those rolling green hills toward the town of Mulhausen was not long. It was, however, a movie-like operation. We could just as easily have been making a picture for 20th Century Fox. There wasn't a sound. We were now ten yards apart and going up the slope of the last hill before our old positions and German observation. I looked back and as far as I could see there were two ant-like processions of men. I wished more of them could have had the pleasure of being before me, but they would probably have said that the pleasure was all mine.

Word was passed back that our artillery would open up in five minutes and to sit tight until it did. I wondered if the word could get back to the last soldier in the column in five minutes. It wouldn't matter, of course, since he was probably back as far as the artillery anyway. But,



in approximately four minutes our artillery started coming over our heads. It came in all sizes. There was a sudden swishing sound in the air above us as if the sky were being swept by a hundred brooms; and then, as the artillery began to land, there were series after series of tremendous, ear-shattering explosions. The sky was filled with tracers flying over our little hill into Mulhausen. We knew the gunners back near Schillersdorf were laying down a blanket of fire and not aiming at any particular target. The sight was reassuring as well as stimulating as must have been part of the purpose.

Within ten minutes we were going down the side of the hill toward a dense curtain of smoke laid by some of our chemical mortars. We expected to run into nothing but pieces of German. As we pushed into the smoked-up area it became next to impossible to see anyone farther than five yards away. Platoons became disengaged from companies, and some had large numbers of casualties in the mine fields because of our inability to spot even mines laid on top of the ground. We were further surprised by the large number of Germans who had survived our artillery and were still able to use their machine guns. It finally became necessary to wait until the wind blew our own smoke out of the way so that we could get organized. In the meantime, we were shelled by our own artillery with all the fury our artillerymen thought was being lavished on the Germans. By this time it was almost 7:00 a.m. and the Jump off had started with a terrifically high number of casualties.

\* \* \*

Later in the morning, I discovered two casualties of my own when I reached in my field jacket pocket and came out with fingers dripping with raw egg yolks. Somehow, I had forgotten by two priceless possessions. But I learned a lesson. You can't have your eggs and eat them, too ... especially in a combat zone.

Herman L. Holsopple  
Co. C, 411th Regt.  
103rd Inf. Div.



#### RENDEZVOUS AT BRENNER

For the first of May, this was the coldest weather I had ever experienced. The fact is that I had not been warm since I arrived in France last October, but I at least had a right to expect some warm weather now that May had arrived. We were in Innsbruck, Austria and it was after midnight. We had just relieved the 410th Regiment of the 103rd Infantry Division and were climbing onto the rear ends of the tanks and half tracks that were to take us to the Italian border. "You can sleep all day tomorrow in Brenner," we were told. "The Germans are withdrawing fast and Brenner is only forty or fifty miles from here." The news was received with some apprehension. Once before, after a long days march, we had been told that we would get to sleep in the next little town, two kilometers down the road. Unfortunately, there were lots of "Krauts" in the way and it took several days. So, we were somewhat dubious as well as cold when we pulled out of Innsbruck at one o'clock in the morning.

As we slowly climbed the winding road leading higher and higher into the Alps, we wondered when we would hear the familiar whistle of "incoming mail", as we called the German artillery. Surely they knew we were coming. There is no element of surprise when you are playing cowboy on a tank. The higher we went, the colder it became. As we pulled our blankets more tightly around our shoulders, we wished we might be part of the tank crew riding inside the vehicle. But we were not tankers; we were infantrymen, thirteen infantrymen on the outside of each tank, infantrymen on the way to Brenner Pass at the border between Austria and Italy.

Every minute seemed to be colder than the one before until our very marrow was chilled by the wind. The snow was getting deeper all the time. At times we slowed to five or ten miles per hour and we thought of the ducks in shooting galleries. Undoubtedly, the road was "zeroed in" by artillery placed on the heights. When would they pin point us? What a place to try to dig in. They could blast us off this road and holdout in these mountains for months, we told each other.

We wondered when the war in Europe would end. The news looked good up North. The Russians were almost in Berlin. The First and Third Armies were rolling. "They will be through up there months before we are finished rooting them out down here in the Alps," somebody said. This optimistic estimate was followed by someone's crack about "howin hell Hannibal ever did it on elephants".

When, at ~~four~~<sup>about 2:00</sup> a.m., we saw the city limits sign of Brenner, we were very happy and very tired troops. We moved into a place crowded with armed German soldiers. Since we had received no notice of any official cessation of hostilities, we were amazed to see all these enemy soldiers wandering around with their rifles at "sling arms". They had, obviously, been told not to resist. Later, they were rounded up and their weapons confiscated.

Sleep was still denied us when the first batallion was ordered to proceed south into Italy until contact was made with the Fifth Army pushing north. This joyful and historic meeting took place several hours later near the village of Colle Isarca, Italy amid a battery of photographers and reporters who were on hand to write glowing reports of the "culminating battle of the Tyrol in which the great Fifth and Seventh Armies linked up to end the fighting in this region". World War II officially ended two days later, May 7, 1945. To a kid who turned twenty on May 6th, it was a great birthday present!

Three weeks later, I received a clipping from home telling of the meeting and a letter wanting to know if I was in this "great action". I had to report that from the Seventh Army's viewpoint the last lap was our most bloodless action. I believe one man was hurt when he slipped and fell from a tank, but that was our only casualty. But we did not complain. The war in Europe was really over and we, like millions of others throughout the world, were prayerfully thankful.

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