

Taped Interview

Cincinnati 2008

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Hershel Woolman, A Company 411<sup>th</sup>

When the war started I was working in a meat packing company (Kingans, later called Hygrades). When I heard about Pearl Harbor I thought, "It don't sound good!" I was twenty-six at that time. I was married and had a family when I was drafted into the Service. We had two children at that time. We were married in 1939. Harold was 4, not yet in grade school. He was born in 1940. Pat was one year and one day old when I was inducted. I took basic training in Florida at Camp Blanding. I had Special Training in Radio and Information during Basic Training in the States. We left out of New York on the Queen Mary. The second day out the seas were ferocious, twice the screws came out of the water. Terrifying ! It was crowded. I had to duck my head to get in the top bunk. It was pretty tight. We basically ate and slept. There was not much to do; twice a day we would rotate the promenade deck to the hold making sure to move in sequence as not to disturb the even keel of the ship. It was a fast boat and it only took 3-1/2 days to cross. We went

over as a Unit but they broke off and we went to the Temps. We landed in England and then took the train to London, then went over to South Hampton on our way to France. This was 1945. We went over to the South of France on our push to what turned out to be the Italian border. We unloaded there. I was a machine gunner. I carried the gun and some ammunition. Two machine gunners from the Pacific and a Lieutenant from the African Campaign had given me instructions on the use of a machine gun back at Camp Blanding, some of the best instruction we would have. My buddy, Zammet carried the ammo. He got hit in the head during combat at the Siegfried Line. We had run out of space and everything else. We were going through the edge of Germany through a little town across the Rhine . A German lady came out of her house and said, "You can go home now!" We asked her what happened. She said Franklin D. Roosevelt died and so you can go home now. I said "no it was your guy we had to get out of commission and then we can go home". At least I got the message across. My commanding Officer was Captain Hebert, A Company. We busted the Siegfried Line. That was the last portion of the Siegfried Line.

We knew there wasn't anything we could do except go ahead because we had not done what we came to do. So we just kept right on going.

We were in the French-German area just across the Rhine. We had Prisoners of War but they were not a problem. We liberated a lot of Death Camps. That was hard. We went through the Brenner Pass to Italy. We had to send a formation down to Italy to meet the 5<sup>th</sup> Army coming up from Italy. We were glad to be in on that part of it. It was wonderful, nobody in the way and nobody going to bother you. We were in Austria next, just below Italy, when we heard about VE day. I wasn't surprised to hear about possibly invading Japan because the Captain had given us the lowdown on it. He said he had offered to volunteer us directly but they decided the Army was handling it, not him. After that our Unit broke up. I came back with the 5<sup>th</sup> Division for the invasion of Japan but we didn't get there either. I was home when I heard about the bomb being dropped. I would have gone to Japan if that had not happened. I was assigned home for a lot of different reasons. I had a family. I was on a thirty day leave. I needed a vacation and I got it. I embarked from Le Havre to go home. We came back on a German supply ship that the Army had taken it over and used it for transport. That was a beautiful ride. I made the quota of points for combat and having children. I would have been "first out" except that I was scheduled to go to the Pacific until they got that changed. I worked for

the meat packers as a shipper when I got out of the Service. I was a shipper. I had my job waiting for me. I started working the next day after I was discharged. I had written letters back and forth with my wife and she kept them. I now have great-great grandchildren. I retired from the meat packing job when Hygrade went out of business in 60's, worked a short while at a couple of other places before going into New Tribes Missions in 1971. Those are the people who have never had a chance to hear. I was a builder with New Tribes for twenty years in Missouri. I helped build and maintain the medical and language centers for the Mission. The language school teaches languages and the medical school takes care of individuals' health. [Mr. Woolman has written a book about his WWII experiences.]



#### FOREWORD

I have read some of the stories that some of our buddies have written, and am convinced that if I can add another glimpse of that terrible, yet captivating period during 1944 - 1945 with Company 'A' 411th Infantry, 103rd Division. The reason being, that we only saw a small portion of a larger picture. This may help future generations to see another small portion of view of that time. I am not a writer, but am receiving help from my children as they explain things that I have written that aren't clear to them. Thanks!! I need all the help I can get, because understanding is what I would like to present.

This is the explanation I gave Mrs. Retha Mae Wiseman. Mrs. Wiseman is a teacher whom I took by her school on my way to my job. Mrs. Wiseman was a person who knew how to ask questions, yet not pry, but allowed me a little space if I got a little up tight. She probably was the first person I talked to about my experiences in battle. I guess she was the best therapy I could have. She started me to talking a little.

## INTRODUCTION

I will start with the most important person in my life and try to work up to my time in the army. Mary and I were engaged to be married early in 1939, no job, no marriage. We finally decided to get married anyhow. I was pledged to work for a farmer near Greenwood, Indiana, following our wedding Nov. 12th 1939. It was not a good job, nor a good man to work for, yet I needed a job.

Now Nov. 11th that year was on a Saturday, and going to get our license, I found that some people in that day regarded it as a legal holiday and did not work. Farmers of that day never noticed that. A kindly policeman pointed me to the clerk's home, and he just happened to have a very exquisite document on hand.

On going home that Friday night, November 10th, I received a call through a neighbor, that Kingan and Co., meat packers, had wanted them to notify me that they were answering my three year old application, and wanted me to go to work on Monday. What do I do now? My brother helped me find a vacant house. A neighbor helped move our scant belongings from the farm house to our vacant house, which we had arranged for. It is now late Saturday night. Sunday I managed sell our chickens, and was late for my own wedding, but my father-in-law grand-standed, and got me off the hook. We got married and went to my father-in-law's for dinner, then I started on the beautiful journey with this lady of my dreams, to the place of our residence. We stopped at several friends, filled the radiator several times, and finally arrived at 419 S Randolph St. Indianapolis, In. (the old car never ran again) Some weeks later I removed the tin cans, shoes, etc. from the bumper as it was causing some talk from the neighbors. I started working at the poultry plant out by the Stock Yards, and was walking there because I didn't have the money for the transfer, nor did I know how or where to make the connections, besides, the late car only went on the hour.

The first paycheck for three and a half days was \$9. We had really hit the jack pot. We were really excited! By the next fall I had moved over to the big hog kill and beef kill operations. We also had gotten a new Frigidaire, a sitting room suite, and purchased our double at 16 - 18 S. Tremont St. The Lord was good and we were not even aware of Him. I moved in, but Mary stayed with her mother until our son, Harold, was born Sept. 6th 1940. Then she joined me in our new home. We were really glad for our good fortune and it proved to be an added blessing when I later went to the army, as the other side of the double nearly made the mortgage payments. My closest buddy said I volunteered "because of those two riflemen shoving from behind."

Those were the days of rationing, coupons for gas, meat tires, sugar, etc. These were no problem for us. We had plenty, and were not used to more than we needed. Really, if it were not for rationing, most folks would have a hard time, because of hoarding and price gouging, which took place on most items not under rationing or price controls.

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Time was taken up with working long hours, and often no weekends off. At least I wasn't complaining about the pay checks. We were shipping meat and rations to the Army, England, Russia, Navy, and any others we had orders for. Russia got the most and the best, especially Tushonka, this was boneless pork loins packed on garlic lard. This was choice eating, high on the hog. Far different from the rations for our army, of course our army didn't ask for Tushonka! I did think that the army rations were delicious, of course I later found them dreary when we ate them, with no other meals.

Our daughter Patricia arrived May 12, 1943. The last months of 1943, and until I was drafted were filled with 100 hour work weeks until May 13, 1944.

## In The Army Now

The big step, - the minute Mary called me to notify me of my "appointment" (by my friends and neighbors), I immediately notified Kingan's that I was leaving - "But you have ten days yet," they said. "But I want to have a chance to visit my family for ten days," say I. And I did!



The picture we had taken that day shows my glee at leaving, it was certainly not a happy face. I am glad it was a command; otherwise I probably would not have gone. I guess I thought I might as well go as go to jail, or? The big step, as you recall, is the one you are requested to take as an indication you are volunteering for service, and actually taking a step into the service. (otherwise, the two riflemen may have to come to encourage you. It was interesting to see some of the antics pulled to try to evade the draft. One enterprising young man couldn't see to read the eye charts, but lifted a thread to move underneath. Another who couldn't hear a normal voice, but can hear a whispered instruction when moved farther away, is allowed to be inducted. I won't tell you what I did, except to complain that the morning paper said that 26 year old men were to be exempt from the draft. "Yes, after your induction, you may call your draft board again."

After taking the customary step forward and becoming part of the services, it is time for your change to army clothes. It would be plausible to be out of some sizes, but inexcusable to have no system of rectifying an obvious error. The supply man was out of 10-1/2 E shoes and gave me 11-1/2 D, saying to get them exchanged when you arrive at your destination. Not too hard to understand.



Now Camp Blanding, an infantry replacement center, had just shipped out enough men to allow us in. I had heard that the Army needed no man, yet the camp was full. On getting my gear and trying to get my shoes exchanged, they insist my shoe size had been properly taken care of. Is it they just don't make mistakes, or are never out of the proper sizes. I had to march in one size too long and too narrow shoes. Then too I was notified to report to the dentist. I had just had six teeth filled so as to be prepared for the army, but the Officer insisted they were not 'GI' and he proceeded to drill them out. After drilling the first one, I found myself down on the foot rest, so I promptly straightened up so as not to give him any pleasure of my discomfort. Within minutes all six were drilled and filled. (the fillings all fell out before I had been overseas very long). I reckon I would still shoot that officer if I had the chance. You probably feel like I'm really liking this army. I think that the Army is a fine organization, however, they are responsible for how they allow their people to be treated. Are they just to put us down or do they expect to use us in a very distasteful and necessary job, and then somehow have our respect when they don't try to correct errors? The army for too long has been carrying on business in this manner!

The first six weeks of infantry training, for the most part, I feel a little like being on vacation - except for push-ups. I did a lot of them - on request! It really wasn't bad, that is the one exercise that I needed most, and got. I got a good night sleep and Saturday afternoon off. I even qualified to work in the P.X. to get some money to send to my family, I was not too much disappointed.

Then I got a call to go to Special Information Center training, replacing someone who couldn't make it. Although I had a high I.Q. rating, these guys were brains, and they were six weeks ahead and I have six weeks to catch up, plus take what they are taking too. Somehow at twelve weeks, the Morse code signals begin to make sense, and I was among the top to receive, and was allowed to go outside with the others and rest. The other poor guys were harassed until the wee hours of the morning. The jumble just became worse. In a day or two the army decided it didn't need our expertise at intelligence. There is a dire need again for replacements, whatever that was, and I think I caught the picture; some poor guys were getting shot, and we were to go there and get shot too!

Now it's back to a rifle company. They bring back two machine gunners from the Pacific to try to encourage us. They proved to be angels in disguise, unlike the loud mouth, filthy, lordly, kings - acting as cadre. They have a message to convey to us. We needed what they had to offer. And offer they did! They patiently took the machine guns and BARs apart, and showed how they worked, and how to work on them. Time after time they repeat this, explaining the complications of using them. "Never use one until you have to, then give it everything you have. If you haven't accomplished what you are after - MOVE! They will send the kitchen sink in after you. You will see things, but they may not register." (In my orientation I tried the Air Corp pilot test but missed the sight test. The Sgt. said "look again." I got it. Too late, you only have one chance.) This came to mind. "You hear things that don't

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register. You smell things that can help. Think what your senses are trying to tell you! Your non-com won't be able to give you every command, you'll have to think. You will wear a helmet to protect your head, so that you can use it. Think! What happens to you if you lose your buddy, you will have no help. Protect your buddies, without them you are in deep trouble!" That is different from what we have been hearing. Somehow these guys have lived two years in the Pacific, maybe we should listen to them.

There was also a 1st Lt. from N. Africa who taught the same thoughts. He took us for a course in night sound. "A rifle clicks. What kind is it? Most weapons have peculiar sounds. Try to identify. You should be able to identify a strange one." This final phase was impressive, we listened.

### Shipping Out

The day of graduation finally arrived. Ready or not, here you go! Ten days in route, by way of Washington D.C., changing trains somewhere in Pa. There are no seats. The M.P. said, No seat - no ride." On the way out, someone had left the toilet door open - look, a seat. I wasn't about to lose this ride, so I shut the door and sat on the seat. After coming out, I rode my barracks bag until the next stop, grabbed a seat, and never left it.

I don't know why, or how, I got the courage to go back when the ten days were over, but I did. Saw Washington D.C. Got a quarter apple pie and a cup of coffee for a nickel and went back for seconds. It cost another nickel. Walked around as long as I dared, then back on the train for Fort Meade. Took the infiltration course at least a couple of times, those machine gun bullets seem awfully close. There is no space under my stomach. Served coffee and pie to those who followed on the infiltration course, and do K/P. They tell me my orders have been snafued (situation normal - all 'fouled' up), so I called Mary, and she came for a weekend. (We stayed) Right under the M.P. station, seems no one wanted it, we loved it. We even got to see some of the city of Baltimore. The night before I left was Oct 28th. I got word my nephew was born, Herschel Woolman.

Pack up, carry all your gear to the train depot, stop and wait. It's a hot day. Then on to Camp Shank's. Noted my name on the latrine, as everyone else was doing, the walls were covered, like most, several names in several places, so anyone you knew might see.

Clothing and gear inspection is a must. At the last inspection, the Lt. had found a thread loose on my overcoat. It had never been worn. He didn't gig me, just took it away and got a new one. Everything has to be perfect. "Okay soldier, got anything else wrong?" "Yes Sir!" "Well, what is it?" "My shoes, Sir!" "What is wrong with them?" "They are the wrong size, Sir!" "Why is that?" I try to explain how I received the wrong size at the induction center, and had been refused an exchange in Blanding. "How do you know they are the wrong size soldier?" "Well, Sir!

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you may not believe this, because not everyone has had a chance to buy their own shoes. You see, I even had a job and bought my own shoes, I've worn that size for several years, and I'm used to wearing shoes. We even had trains where I came from, seen airplanes and all, Sir!" Maybe I laid it on too thick, but I doubt it. He asked again what size I wore and how come my first pair were 11 1/2 D. It seems too much to explain in one day, so I draw him a picture. I get 10-1/2 E. "Put them on, soldier." I did. "Feel alright?" "Yes, Sir!" Surely this is the only job this Lt. is capable of, and it took an act of Congress for him to get it.

The next day we board a train for the Port of Embarkation. Boarding the Queen Elizabeth after dark, I felt a little tricked, when the entry way I entered was unusually solid, yet was slowly swaying. I'm on board. I'm not sure, but rumor had it that there were 36,000 men aboard. Every night we would rotate from the promenade deck to the hold, making sure to move in sequence so as not to disturb the even keel of the ship. The 106th division was on board too! It was awe inspiring to see their acrobatics, and various karate moves. (They went into combat after I went to 'A' Co. and I was overcome with their casualties. No amount of training can overcome the lack of experience. It is something you have to go through to understand.) The second day out, the seas were ferocious, the screws, or propellers, came out of the water. The one of two times that happened - Terrifying! Our breakfast, one of two meals served a day because of the overload, was pork chops, thick, greasy and half cooked. The slop cans cascading across the dining room floor didn't add to the serenity of my stomach. I finally made it to the head, an old fashioned outside privy consisting of two rows of four holes, of which there were many. I am doing pretty good, and just maybe I won't lose my breakfast after all. This guy sits down on one side of me and reaches across to the hole on the other side of me, and erps. Too late. I go back on deck. It is better in the air, but I miss supper. A buddy sees my predicament and goes to the ships store and gets crackers. With this I can make it. Next day, a sub scare. The ship goes into overdrive, and the zigzagging feels like you are going to be thrown from your sling bunk. The next day we see land. Just 3-1/2 days across the Atlantic and we go into the firth, or river, and unload over the side to the boats below.

The novel British trains, coaches with seats facing each other, the curtains drawn, were like a fairy land. I think we saw Hadrian's wall, as well as other sights. Then London- I saw first hand, some of the destruction of the streets around the terminal, and some of the things the British had endured for so long. Unbelievable! On to Southampton and tent city, barbed wire enclosed. The British M.P.'s were very graciously holding the wire apart so we wouldn't tangle, warning to be back before dawn.

Daylight, and we formed up in the streets to march to the docks. The bicycles were out in force too, bumper to bumper. There we were harangued by the dock workers, about our being so long in coming, and by how we Americans think we own the whole world, and the women. We were under orders not to talk. It was a struggle. Then a Military English band started to play 'There Will Always Be An England.' That did it. When it was repeated we, as one man, sang out "As Long As There Is A USA". The refrain was magic. No more calls, no stares, only quiet. We stayed quiet

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too. No music, no song, no snide remarks. We just moved stolidly on to the waiting freighter for the channel crossing.

Two loaves of bread were issued prior to going up the gang plank. We continue on into the ship's hold, seated at picnic type tables, our stuff underneath. We sit down. This is our sitting room, dining room, and bedroom until we get off. In the lantern light, someone observed movement in our bread, after we had eaten the first loaf. We started picking out these maggots, but soon decided we weren't hungry any more. A complaint was sent to the C.Q. and the response was prompt. "You WILL eat worse than this." However a K.P. on officers' mess got a kick out of it, it seems the officers hadn't noticed them, until notified and promptly found their appetites also sufficed.

On to LaHarve. Unloading, as I recall, on a sunken ship and across to land. The streets had been bulldozed, although no form of buildings were recognizable. Hey, this is worse than I had ever imagined! Then we get to the glorified 40 & 8's. I had heard of them before. But the good ones, those with roofs overhead, were for perishables, or whatever is affected by weather. We managed to liberate a stove from somewhere, and put it in the center of the car, bound for a night of ease. The next morning we found out why it didn't work, it had burned through the floor and been dashed to pieces, during the night.

Finally it was time for relief -- only the train didn't stop for that. When we did stop we were surrounded by women and children, begging! In desperation, I tried the coupling joints between the cars, that too, is an unhealthy situation, they just snap at you, so I back out. We modest country boys, this is no place for us. Finally Rheims - where the armistice was signed November, 11th 1918. I keep hoping this one were over now too! We stop, look a Publix -- anyway I recognize it, even if I can't read it. Gratefully I enter, stoop stools, or some say squat stools, just a hole in the floor with a small grate over it. Much like being back home on the farm, behind the barn, they are out of red and white cobs. I proceed with my urgent business -- oh, oh. Here comes a woman. She is squatting right beside me! A country boy is not excited, only embarrassed. Not my last embarrassment either. I somehow failed to appreciate their culture, or was it their way of life? I finally decided it was the later. I often wondered if it was their morals (or rather their lack of morals,) that God had allowed their capture and bad treatment?

On to Epinal, the replacement depot for this area. Not bad. Here we change to trucks. Not too long and we are on our feet, we surely weren't far from our destination. These guys must be running! Maybe it will be over before we get there. I wish! Boy, the dead bodies, burned tanks, half tracks, and trucks, and the towns on fire. I hope they give up tonight.

Finally, we split up into still smaller groups. Ours must have been about thirty men. (It has been suggested that ours was a battalion replacement.) Then a sergeant came and picked us up and proceeded on. We came to a road and he had us dig in. Before I could get my meat portion opened, he moved us again. Down the road a short way and across the road,

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dig in! Boy did I complain. I thought I had left this kind of stuff in the States. "Well," he said, "This is probably the last time I'll tell you to dig in!" Well, I followed orders. A little hole again, and as I brush some of the dirt off my meat ration, a new sound, it isn't artillery, it's mortars. More quiet and quick, drops right on you. I'll never like that sound, the whistle - the calm - then the dry pop, and suddenly, poof, and they are here. The beautiful hole I had just dug down the road, and the stump 'protecting' it, were gone. I don't know if I ate that meat portion or not. By the time we got to the company area, we were told to carry litters of wounded down the mountain to the first - aid station. All night we carry litters. Often a burp gunner is waiting in just the right place. A Lt. is killed and some of our group are wounded, still we carry more wounded, tying the fellows on the stretchers with our towels, to keep them from falling off. This is a brief summary of the first day! After that it got bad! (This is the explanation I gave to Mrs. Wiseman of the first day.) The rest of the happenings that first week are a blur. It seems we were continually carrying litters, out - posting the company C. P. Just like no time lapse as day or night in between. We pulled back to a kind of hotel in the mountains for rest and re-organization. There Zammett, Rockelman, and I met Sgt. Jessie Williams. Jessie being a machine gunner and wanting to replenish his machine gun crew. Zammett and I had those two machine gunners from the Pacific, in Blanding and they had made a big impression on us, even though we never knew each other there. Zammett was tested first. He did well, but was a little slow on reassembly, but couldn't name many parts, but Jessie was impressed. He said, "I have a machine gunner now!" Then came my turn. It went well, and as I was putting it back together, I couldn't come up with the name 'sear pin'. Anyway, I took it back apart and showed how it functioned outside the frame. Jessie wondered where Zammett and I had gotten our instructions. We told him about those two guys back in Blanding, and their sweating as they told us their experiences in the Pacific. They had gotten there just in time. (God's timing is always correct.)

We also got our snow pacs about this time. Guess what? They came in sizes 9 and 13's. They were nice, but whoever figured a guy would walk all over Europe in size 13 snow pacs? I wonder if Rep. Louis Ludlow ever found out about this. He was the service man's friend! I just had a thought, maybe that 2nd Lt. who got my shoes in Shanks, got a transfer. Just maybe he is the head of shoe requisition for the Army? Maybe there was a softness for the German army, to make sure we don't to have any advantage over the Germans.

As we pulled back for the battle of the Bulge, all I remember was a time of riding in trucks. Was it a show of strength? Did they wonder what to do with us? Were they just looking for an opportunity? We did set up some secondary positions. Some we barely got started with a large pick, some were started with dynamite by engineers. At times we were strung a long way between foxholes, and even a blind man could have gone through unnoticed. Ammo was hard to get, often a box a day. Not even enough to start a fire fight, let alone get out of one. It was also a time when the Germans were trying to capture jeeps, etc. and even turning signs around. The K rations from N. Africa were not too appealing after sitting in the hot sun a couple of years. The malted milk balls could

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make a well man sick. Then the continual digging a secondary line for a back up. It must have been in this time period that we were seemingly walking in circles. It was night, there were tracers, and artillery everywhere. Major Crouch was leading, and I was tired. Seemed we had been walking continually, and I complained. We would even get a break back in the states. The Major stopped the troops and quietly explained the situation, tanks and artillery are being abandoned, bridges being blown, and we may have to fight our way out if we can't find a bridge open. We kept on, I'm not tired anymore.

We soon had other places to go. Is this the place that Kunze joined us? I was ordered to shave, but had no razor, I was given one and proceeded to the town horse trough, broke the ice and proceeded to shave. The blade broke. A G.I. came out of a nearby building wondering what army I was with, and how I had gotten so unkept? I told him that somewhere around here was a whole company just as tidy (or untidy) as I. He insisted to take me into his apartment, warm and cozy, and with hot water proceeded to soak my face and to shave me. That was a treat. I don't remember having shaved since leaving England, and it smelled like it had been that long since I'd had a bath too, yet I believe we had already been to that coal mining shower room. Johnny came back about this time, so we took turns getting haircuts.

Along about this time we got invited to go to Sessenheim to relieve the French, only they had been gone for three days, and we weren't told, nor were we that far away. As we went in, the 3rd. Bat. and seven tanks had nearly been destroyed. The one tank with the 76 came furiously backing out, stopping long enough to tell us the situation. The other tanks were not adequate to knock out the enemy self propelled, so instead, they were knocked out. We made several attempts to strike, but received heavy artillery barrages. We stayed a day or two, trying to help the wounded. It was weird. We saw several wounded try to get up and walk back, only to be shot down again. Crawling was permitted. Then came what I thought might be a German patrol, real quiet and crawling low. I informed Capt. Hebert and watched more. This is the place and the foxhole where I was trying to cut a tree to log it over more. A 20 mm cut the tree just above my hand, I left the tree and didn't linger. It soon appeared the one in question was one of ours and had a leg off. A few minutes later I tell the captain that I believe the guy has lost both legs. Jessie volunteered to go after him, and soon came back with him on his back. The mucous from his nose all over Jessie's back and neck. He stops right in front of my machine gun. I can't shoot even if I have to, but I'm glad I didn't get to go! The fellow had apparently wrapped his own stumps, crawled about a half mile, and determined to make it! I think it may have been Kunze who said that he did! Finally orders came to pull back, boy what a relief...NO! Bartlett and I were chosen to stay, while the others left. The most scary thing is to be left alone. Misery loves company! We were both frantic, but Wayne was continually trying to light up. I finally offered to knock him in the head if he didn't desist. He did. The Germans were sending several scouts or scouting parties, probing our lines. Finally came our time to leave. A heavy snow had fallen and it was easy to follow their tracks. Once on the road, we ran. Soon a figure appeared ahead, now what? It turned out to be Sgt. Stevens, mortar man, looking for us. We stopped at a cross road, or a five intersection,

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and waited, and waited. Finally I settle down and went to sleep... you guessed it. I awoke alone. It was easy following in the trodden snow. I was running, as usual, at a pretty good pace, then a figure appeared... Sgt. Stevens again, I could have hugged him, he is looking for me again.

Again, as I remember, there was a string of towns, and we were relieving troops in logged over positions. In one of these towns the people were starving. The Germans had cleaned them out as they left. Captain Hebert received word to give out a load of army flour. I was given the privilege of dispensing it. We were trying to give so many cups, or scoops of flour per person. Very quickly the word spread, and the merchants hear it too. They come in hopping mad. "Just sell it to us," they demanded. "But it is army flour and can't be sold." I understand their view, but the people are starving and we won't be around long. I call the captain. He doesn't like it either. "Things are less complicated in combat," is his reply, "Give it out if you can, otherwise just send the truck back where it came from." I send it back, thinking "These guys are something else!"

In another place we are observing a larger town as many civilians are streaming into the town from an enemy held one. Are they going to attack, or do they think we are attacking? We are to look for troops out of uniform, trying to sneak through. I have a whole squad, all dug in, a machine gun, bazooka, and others. About mid-afternoon a convoy of seven tanks appear, with no infantry, our tanks. I call the Captain, there is no known unit in this location. Find out who they are. They drive right up and would run over me, don't even want to identify themselves. They are in a foul mood and just don't want any nonsense. Neither do I. I call Zammett to load and show his machine gun, call the bazooka man to ready his weapon, and yell for the rest to keep quiet and down until needed. This cools them down a little, and they show me some identification, only it is an officers ID. And I have never seen an officers ID before. I call the C.O. again. Army still can't identify the tanks. I ask where they have been, they say up in some valley receiving artillery fire. I tell him we have been here for two days and have heard no artillery, were they just hiding, or were they Germans with our tanks? That had happened before. I couldn't find out anything to my satisfaction, so I call Company again. Army has no knowledge of any such unit, but say if no infantry is present, and there are no stragglers (possibly soldiers out of uniform) with the civilians, to let them go through, and they would search for them. I'm glad to let them go.

Later in a small town Kunze came to us. It's the same town we were in when we went for the night raid on Rothbach. Kunze was a real blessing and constant companion to us. I guess that is a good description of him. He was in on everything we did, and his tommy - gun was a welcome sound. We continue out-posting towns, some, more or less, logged over holes, and then back to town. One such town was something like Engswiller. We were billeted in the home of Momma, and her three daughters. Marta was the eldest, the middle girls' name was something like Lydia, and the youngest was Gretel. Marta had just been released from a German brothel for soldiers, because we had taken the town. (All 19 year old girls had to serve 1 year or more in these brothels). The father and son had been killed in the German army. They were our home

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away from home. Momma could always take whatever we could scrounge up and make a most delicious meal out of it. We went there as often as possible. If Momma would hesitate at the door or appear not to understand, she was shielding either us or Kunze. When we left to go back to the line, they cried. Kunze and Williams did get some word back to them.

We go back to the town where Kunze had joined us and have our night re-cons for the night raid on Rothbach. We truck most of the way to our kickoff point. The machine gun section is assigned to the outer wall to keep the SS from entering. We also ring the side above us with extremely heavy artillery fire, which burst just over the wall above us. We were moving along. For some reason Jessie, Cothran, and I were together. Cothran had just gotten back from the hospital. Cothran and was talking a mile a minute.... I prefer to keep silent in times like this... Then a German threw a hand grenade, hitting Cothran in the hip, his clothes must have held it. He took the entire force and shrapnel. One day out of the hospital and back again. Jessie and I are unhurt. "It's a million dollar wound," says Cothran, and he is on his way home. One of the smaller guns firing was leaving an oval pattern, as if it were worn out. (I have since talked to one of the artillery men, and he confirmed the bad gun, not even wanting to use it.) We continue down the wall and the rounds are falling close. Soon a round bursts too close, and Kunze is hit in the cheek, not too bad, so he stays. Not long after that, Jessie motions Zammett and I to move. It's pretty dark and we moved toward a house with many excited German voices. We are not supposed to be on the attack, but maybe they need our help. Just as we hesitated to go farther, Jessie grabbed us, because we were pulling back. These were supposed to be SS troops that night. What happened to those in the house? I don't know, but they never took Schillersdorf again. Zammett and I were glad Jessie came just in time to keep us out of that particular house. As we pulled back we had to cross that bridge, a wooden plank with a wire twisted underneath for added support. Artillery was coming in regularly, and three were to cross between shells. Zammett was the second one to cross, but he stalled mid stream with water to his ankles..."Hurry Zammett" "I can't, My time is running out." So I took to the bridge, pick Zammett under one arm and proceed across the bridge. The rifleman on the other side was in the way, so I told him, "If you can't run get out of the way and let me show you how." I had just set Zammett down when the round went off, was it late, or was I in a hurry? Looking back, I'd say I just panicked, and the round was late.

We trucked back to town, settled in and then got up for breakfast at the usual time. The villagers proceeded to 'accuse' us of the raid, and even told us details that we were not aware of. They had no phone, radio, or any way of finding out, that we knew of, of course we denied it all. They even checked our chow lines, and seemed confused. They couldn't discover any missing. I wish our Intelligence was as good as theirs. Remember this was out of their hearing range. They were constantly finding out things that we didn't know, much of it dependable. This is the action where we started across that flooded valley, where the ice was about half an inch thick, and the water was gone from underneath, and we were supposed to go silently? Remember the Lt. Col. who fouled up. He was regular army, so of course he was transferred out. If it had been a GI he would have been court martialed. He didn't even

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lose his rank. (This information from a former intelligence man from Indianapolis)

Soon we go back to outpost Schillersdorf again. This town was taken and retaken many times. We sat in foxholes over the crest of the hill overlooking Mulhausen. Here the thawing in the daytime would run in the foxholes and collect until it could be dipped out at night. It was here that I hung my pistol around my neck to keep it dry. We would alternate back and forth to the houses in town. Here again we had use of the kitchen, but rations were low. We often picked up bread and peanut butter and returned to our houses. We were lucky, in our yard were a bunch of beehives, belonging to an American who married a German after WWI and moved here. Kunze had observed it as well as I, but someone was keeping them disturbed. We finally decided to get some. Kunze held the box while I filled it. All went according to plan. We were sitting around the pot bellied stove, enjoying our bread, peanut butter, and honey. Knock, knock. Answering revealed this lady. She is in a huff. She really dressed us down. I wanted to jump down her throat. Kunze calls 'ATTENTION.' We freeze. He is the most serious guy you ever see, asks all kinds of questions. She melts a little, but offers to take it farther. Kunze grasps the moment and asks us if we had seen anyone in the beehives? "NO SIR," are the replies. Addressing the lady again he said, "They don't know anything about it!" She is still wondering about it, when he finishes it off. "If I ever catch any of you doing this I will have you court martialed!" he roars. That does it, she is satisfied. As she leaves Montessi had put his foot in the box so hard, that the honey is oozing out, sticky and sweet. Crowell and Dick can't get the stuff off their sleeves. Well, we have enough to last until we get back to the holes. Is this the same place where we pulled forty eight hours on and twenty four off? We went back to the spider for showers and clean clothes. It sure looks familiar. We would scoop the water out at night, but the next day it ran back in again. The weather at night would drop back to freezing. This is the start of my foot trouble. Freezing and infection. The last day I was on line, I saw the first tank rockets deployed and fired. The building they hit just melted. I get on the phone and call Headquarters, asking, "What in the world was that." "You are not supposed to ask on this phone, you know?" "Yes sir!" "Well, what did it sound like and what did it do?" asked the Captain. "It sounded like an automatic 105 and then the building just disintegrated." "That is a good description," says he.

Anyway, here we are March 14, 1945, and get a call for Protestant chapel, We know immediately that the push was to start Sunday the 15th, while most of the civilians were in church. Some insisted I go too. I don't know why I went, but I did. Maybe it was Rockelman who encouraged me. I had spent hours trying to read the Bible, but couldn't find out anything, besides, I had now broken most or all of the ten commandments. What could I do now? Finally I agreed to go, still not knowing why. We go down to the church with no roof, and Rockelman don't get to play the organ. The chaplain actually spoke from the Bible, unlike all that I had ever heard before. He had a message. He explained a miracle. He explained that Jesus dying on the cross was God's Idea, something He and Jesus had discussed and agreed upon long before He made man. So it wasn't a mistake or an accident after all, it was designed by God! He, Jesus, was

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the one promised to Adam. Genesis 3-15 the seed of the woman (how He would come) promised to Adam, to come through the lineage of Abraham, and David. The One whose shed blood satisfied God's demand for the death penalty, (what He did) and because Jesus actually paid that demand with His own blood, paid in full... The Old Testament required a blood covering (such as God provided Adam) until the Just One should come. This is He. I, a sinner, unable to help myself, can believe that because He says so! I can be freed from sin because He paid for it! Most important, I can have life because He provides it.

Quite different from doing my best at keeping the law, which I was not capable of! I couldn't believe it was true. I didn't deserve it. True! That is the fascinating Truth! It was free and provided because He wanted to provide what we needed, even though we weren't aware of our need for it. Now I was on God's side. Remember the Old Testament stories we used to hear, one shall chase a thousand, two put ten thousand to flight. I guess I never saw that, but other promises I did see. 2nd. Chronicles 16-9...." The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." As part of the miracle above making my heart perfect is part of that operation, didn't hurt, just a fact because He said so, and provided it.

March 15 we know was coming, it was the place, and certainly after Chapel Call was to be today, Sunday. Always Sunday on a big kick-off, civilians were largely in church. The news came as soon as we got back. Clean your weapons, draw three days rations, sleep good? Move out right after the artillery bombardment and before the tanks and TD's get there. Kunze will mark the mine fields. Sounds easy!

Just as I was leaving, I discovered that whoever cleaned the muzzle of the machine gun that I had, had not done it properly, nor was it adjusted. So many men crowded into a foxhole causes a lot of confusion. My shoe lace was loose, by the time it was corrected the tanks were close, as well as close together. I tried to figure out what to do. Finally I just dove back into the foxhole and had it crushed on top of me by a tank. They passed, so I follow... I wouldn't have had a chance. Those guys couldn't see a man on foot. I'm lucky, it could have been tragic. Soon the tanks stop and I have to dodge between... made it. There is Sgt. Stevens again... looking for me? Maybe another of my guardian angels.

Then a loud explosion. Two men in a mine field. The Medic, Walter Clark, was trying to extricate Ed Arendt. Bang! Walter got his foot off too. The artillery had forced our guys into the mine field. Wait a minute, I have to cross too. A heavy pelting with machine gun fire in a straight line is always something I prefer to do, at least it settles my nerves. Whatever, I make it through.

Here started the nightmare - The Fire Platoon - three machine guns, twenty BARS in a line and when any part of the battalion gets in trouble, just lay down a line of fire and move. - Sounds simple, I am too, I fall for it. It's effective or was for us, yet always starts you out as a Zombie! Within a day or two we are down to one machine gun and a

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few BARs. That is no excuse, we continue on. The BARs were all too dirty to work, only a few were able to care for them. Kunze was a wonder, his old Thompson Sub-machine gun, though slow, was usually wherever it was needed. I remember "permanently" the one time he wanted to let another use my machine gun, I refused. This guy Dick (not his real name) and his buddy, as usual, had thrown away their muzzle bearing and had no sustained fire. Anyway the tommy sputtered, sputtered. I really hated myself. I thought Kunze was gone. Guess what? He was right here, I'm not alone. Wonder why I'm sweating?

This is maybe the same day we were 'looking for trouble.' A sheep herder was in this pasture near a grape harbor around a cemetery. He said he had seen no Germans. We moved up to the grapevines and the cemetery, apparently trying to decide which way to go, when suddenly a German machine gun opens up. No time to dig. My machine gun opens up and then it is quiet. The grapevines were strung on wire, and there was little space to crawl through. I asked the riflemen to crawl through. Just then a shot. I answer. Word comes that Sgt. Sweet was hit. When I answered the shot, I thought... maybe? No, he had a single shot between the eyes. I am relieved, but mad. This is the best friend you could have. He surely pulled me from many problems. This small, redfaced, baldheaded man was the one who I could always recognize and he was always there! I felt that cold wet feeling. I'm alone again.

When we finally started to leave, I and Zammett walked up to Greider, with his BAR (or vise-versa), and we started off together, as I thought he was part of the fire platoon. (Some forty years later I found out he wasn't. He and Cole had just talked about that and he (Greider) wasn't aware of any such unit. Cole was a part of it, I found that out the same day.) It happened that the mortar men were also carrying ammo for me. They had their hands full. This is probably the big day of change for me. We had used all of the old ammo with the tracers removed and had new boxes of ammo with tracers in... Boy what a change - you can actually see what you are shooting at, and correct your aim, so you can shoot and zero in quickly. Capt. Hebert came by and inquired of Jessie how things were and told him to be sure to remove those tracers. Like usual my big mouth opened, explaining, "I can finally see where I am shooting, and as for the tracers, the muzzle blast gives away the weapon with its hot flame too. It has to scare the other guys just as much as it does me!" "Leave them in," says the Captain and goes on his way. If this is the first day, and I think it is, it seems like a drunken week. It can only be a nightmare, but after tomorrow, I begin to see what getting tired is. "Next day it's up early and away, so get a good night's sleep"

The krauts are as determined as usual, hanging on to the last moment, then fading away. The only changes are, there were no counter attacks. Now comes Gumbrechthoffen, the strong point we had heard rumors about. If the Air Force hadn't been homebound, and bombed and strafed so close, maybe fifty feet, I don't think we would have made it. We were really hard hit, no one moved. I finally tried a flank movement, through the bushes, and found a six log cabin unit, probably a headquarters unit, supported by a good infantry unit, plus artillery. After three tries, and going back for three boxes of ammo, they are apparently allowing their headquarters unit to move left to our B company

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area. Good. A roadblock is also being put up, plus on the last trip, the buildings were being booby trapped. When I got back, Zammett and Scott were trying to shoot those fleeing Germans... I'm appalled. Fortunately their machine gun wasn't working properly; they just got off a few shots. You never shoot a surrendering man. Of course, they may not have known they were surrendering. Most gave up to 'B' Company. In their confusion, few came our way to surrender.

We soon started away from the road block, into a timber cleared creek area. Stopped for a re-con? A dog ran past us and soon ran back again. I started to shoot it, but one country boy talked me out of it. In just a few seconds we were zeroed in by a lot of heavy artillery and or mortars. A piece of timber serving as a foot bridge, was my place of hiding. The water was cold, but who cares, besides I did get a good drink. When it was over Kunze called and I finally came out.

On again. The rifle platoons are moving out. We approach another town, on the way is this strange German soldier, acting like our sad-sack. He had his full uniform, rifle and the works. He wanted to surrender, but just wouldn't put his rifle down. Followed us for some time, rifle at right shoulder arms. It was comical. We were under observation. I wonder now if this comedian was their source of information. They would at times mortar heavily. We had just passed a creek area with logged over holes, when our men went inside, the artillery 'closed the doors'. As we got to the town, the heavy artillery started again. I never remember seeing sad-sack after that. We were trying to look the town over. Zammett and I got into a shell crater, feeling safe. Hebert was to my left, and Jessie was slightly behind me. They were really throwing it in. Then came this shell, it moaned and groaned and became silent... oh oh. It slammed in between Zammett and I. We waited and waited. It never exploded. Was it a dud or was it not in God's timetable?

On again, the rifle platoons are moving out. I have to catch up again. A river, another town and on we go. 'C' company takes over, and they soon get stopped in a long valley, a mile or so between two hills. They call for help. 'A' Company fire platoon to the rescue! We are numb, so what, they are being riddled by machine gun bullets. Fire from all around, from straight ahead, and from the hills to the right... A Lt. wants us to stop to help one of their badly wounded Sergeants. We can't, if we don't go on, they won't get out. About that time, we are bracketed in by mortars. My feet won't stand still, and head off toward the machine guns. The mortars follow, they can't shoot at us and 'C' Company too. The mortars follow Zammett and I. They try to see just how fast we can run. We are zig - zagging, sprinting, and just trying to keep out of the way. Maybe a half mile, and the mortars bracket us again. We are right onto their machine gunners. They get up and run. I see them leave, but to this day I don't know if I was too tired to shoot, or out of ammo, or was it God intervening? Whatever, we fall. Kunze soon urges us over into the woods, and we drop again.

We start again, we have to catch up, then tie up an ambush. We fire across a creek, to set the leaves on fire, so that the rifle men can go. Now we have to cross that creek. No help, don't even stop for water. We

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move on, no trail, no sight, alone. Again.... Terror! Finally we spot them on a road march about a mile away.

They finally stop for a break, maybe they have been relieved? Now is our chance to catch up. My feet are lead. We just mope along and finally stagger up to the company and drop. Major Crouch, like usual, is everywhere. He says to wait and give us a break and let us catch a breath of air. It isn't long enough. We stand. I can't pick up my weapon. Kunze picks it up, and wonders if I can make it. Later I take a box of ammo he is also carrying.

We reach Bobenthal. Good, we get to sleep in town tonight. I find a stove to heat with and start to settle down when C Company calls for help again. Away we go, this time I'm carrying the machine gun. It's dark when we reach the dragons teeth, and there is a conference on the bridge. A German command car comes up. Too many people around and too dark to see it all. Some are searching Germans. About this time the officer jumps back into his vehicle and backs full speed toward his lines. Zammatt and I, as usual when replacing C company, just ran after the jeep until he turned the corner. No shots were fired, we just faded into a prepared German trench, just past the area marked mined, and past the 75mm. There were apparently C Company and A Company men already in the trench. It was soon apparent that they had provided the trench for us. Several groups of machine guns fired into it most of the night. Fortunately you could dig into the sides and find some safety.

Daylight arrived, along with Gen. McAuliffe and a lot of other brass. A Lt. Col. was moving up 'our' trench and a sniper got his hand. "Look no palm." I finally got some bandage around his hand to keep the dirt out, but he wouldn't take his water with his sulfa. Said he was too exposed. He soon went back. 'A' company rifle platoons continue to probe. Only an occasional message of progress was relayed to us. McAuliffe called for an air strike from the bombers overhead. Pull back, came the orders.

Before we got out of the trench, BOOM, they had dropped it maybe only a hundred yards away. That beauty landed near a pillbox that soon gave up. "McAuliffe captures a pillbox," says the Stars and Stripes. Whatever the case, some did give up. Ward and his buddy, who had been captured during the night, brought them in.... no barbed wire for them tonight. In the probing, Greider and others were caught 'out'. Artillery smoke was ordered to hide their sneaking back, but none was available. I'm not sure what source of smoke was used, whether rifle or smoke grenades. Evidently it didn't amount to much. (Much later I learned that upon their return, Greider had asked who had lighted a cigarette.)

Up came three tanks, at the time I didn't know the rifle platoons were busy, Kunze just said fire platoon forward. No one else available. Impossible! Well, there goes the first tank, if they get knocked out we will have it alone, guess we had better go. When we get behind the tank, Cap. Hebert is firing the 50 cal machine gun at the first pillbox, up the ravine. The 50 cal. stopped.... so Zammatt and I start for that pillbox, trying to keep it silent. The tankers were trying to find the other targets I had tried to point out earlier. Zammatt and I continue up the

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path toward the pillbox, it is marked mined, so we strip the path as we aim toward it. We keep it buttoned up. Kunze is to throw a grenade into it, but if he misses it will roll right back on us. It is steep uphill and had only a small opening, maybe a 6 by 12 inch hole. I shoulder the machine gun and Kunze goes under my fire to lay it in. Scott and Rockelman were holding my feet, because I kept slipping and losing my balance. About that time someone spotted a German with an anti-tank gun. I don't know who got him, but we continue on. Kunze gets the go ahead and drops it in. It is time to check out what is in the trench above the pillbox. Zammett and I dash to the top. We had not even straightened up when two or three machine guns targeted us. That was the first time I couldn't hit the ground, seems like we were suspended, the bullets whizzing from side to side. Then a noise like it hitting a log. Then between us, then another thud, and more bullets. FINALLY we can fall into the trench, were we hit? I wondered. I just supposed we were gone, we felt no pain and we weren't hit. I guess I finally concluded that if we had guardian angels, He surely must have taken our hits for us, just as Christ had taken my sin penalty for me. (That probably doesn't meet everyone's theological scrutiny, but it doesn't disturb the sovereignty of God, He rules and over - rules!)

On down the trench to the right we go, possibly a half mile. Kunze and Montessi looked over the top to what they thought was another pillbox. They decided to search it out and we were to keep quiet and out of sight. A few shots came from across the valley. What do we do? No call for help. We stay. After what seemed an eternity to us they reappeared, unhurt. It was probably the town water supply from the river below. That may be why they hadn't used artillery.

Soon we attract mortars, several a minute, all within a few feet of Zammett and I. After a while they suddenly stop. Is it a counter attack? I look over the side and there is an SS officer with a satchel, a Red Cross arm band, and wearing a pistol. Just seconds to decide. I shoot and miss, he doesn't give up, so, I pour it on. Boy can this guy do a jig. I fire in earnest, he dodges and goes back down the hill into the brush. I rake the area, supposing he has help. The gun is empty, and nothing to shoot at anyhow. Here come those blasted mortars again, they have blood in their eye. I hope they are not addressed To Whom It May Concern. Zammett goes back for ammo, and to see if we go back or forward a few feet to get away from the mortars. We go back a few feet and are not endangered. Our last known address is being pulverized.

Night came, and the company is collecting canteens to get water from the river. We find two jerry canteens and send them back too. Zammett and I are at the end of the line, in the trench. Only two cans of corned pork loaf with apple flakes, in other words, it is the last resort. You don't eat those until you are desperate. I give Kunze one and start eating the other. It just don't want to go down: it must take most of the morning.

Midday, and the company is milling around, so I too get up to see about my water and canteen. This big new man wants to know what I'm looking for. I tell him, and also about those two German canteens. As I came back to this spot, behold, there are the two jerry cans. I proceed

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to liberate an American canteen full of water and return, angry, tired, frustrated, and mad at myself, but not mad enough to keep from drinking about a quarter cup of water. Then we waited again.

The next morning, I think, although it may have been that same day at dusk, I don't remember clearly. (The constant smoke and haze made it difficult to tell the time of day.) We take off back down the trench to the pillbox, to the road and on toward Nieder Schlettenbach. 'B' company is really catching it, even though they still have two tanks left. We join outside of town on the left side of the road, and the dreaded mortars start again. Any digging noise draws mortar fire. They are really working over the supply lines. The safest place is between their infantry and their mortars. If they get any closer we move up. Our mortar men are catching it now. Then Zammett wasn't at my feet when we hit the ground. I look for him and he is on the ground, no helmet and hollering. I grabbed him and strapped him in my arms. Kunze asks "Is it bad?" There is only one hole in the top of his head (through his helmet) There is one hole, no blood yet, and his brain covering is intact, "MEDIC!"

The one hole means it is either good or bad, looks OK! I don't dare cover it, wait on the medic. Wait, here comes Hutflitz. Just then we get orders to move on. Zammett says, "Hersh, don't leave me." Again that same reply, "If I don't go, you won't get out." This is where Cole is selected to get Zammett and Sgt. Stevens out of there. I never know until Zammett rejoined us in the Brenner Pass that Cole had been severely wounded going back, and that Zammett and Stevens had to help him back. A short time later, as we are scattered as much as possible, trying to find cover beneath the blown over trees, Holsomback is hit directly by a mortar. If you didn't know who it was you would never recognize him. Hebert, Kunze and myself were close by.

At dusk that evening, Kunze asks me if I would go with him for ammo, food, water, or whatever. "Okay, only let me try to get a carbine, I don't feel safe with a pistol." Johnny is agreeable to my use of his carbine, and will sit on my machine gun while we are gone. Using the road below, we encounter several patrols. We just duck into the brush and wait until they pass. Near town we get another scare. A GI is in an upright sitting position on the berm of the road. An ambush? Booby trap? Kunze covers while I check it out. No answer. I touch him and jump back. He is cold.

We continue on our way. As we pass the broken bridge, the tumbling water reminds me we need water. We proceed to fill our canteens and I drink liberally. "Are you drinking without halazone?" "Of course, I'll double on the next medication." We go on to the largest stone building in town. It's the C.P., I'm not sure whether it's battalion or regimental.

Kunze puts me in the basement to get some sleep. It's a good snooze. Kunze wakes me and there is more brass than I have ever seen. A Lt. Col. from the third battalion 410 wants to know if I can find my way back. How do you answer that when it is pitch dark outside and its two to four miles out in the bush? "I think so...." "But I want you to know I'm trusting a whole battalion to you." "Well sir, If a hand full of men can

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keep on going, we'll be raising enough hell with that many men, that you will be able to hear it clear back here." "On your way," he says and we do just that. Kunze and I check regularly, we never agree completely. Finally I quietly exclaim, "I think this is it." "Well, check it out." I was afraid of that, but who else? So far up the mountain I must have smelled body odor, who's? "Johnny?" "Yea, Hersh is that you?" "Yes." "Did you bring food?" "No." "Water?" "No." "Ammo?" "No." "Then just what did you bring?" "The 410th, Johnny, we are going back." "Come here I want to kiss you." "Sorry Johnny, I don't have time now." (I reminded Johnny of that at our 103rd reunion in Nashville, Tenn. in 1975. Johnny, Cartter, and Cole had gotten in touch with me, and we had a ball that night with our families.)

It was quite a task for me (the first time) to instruct the 410th of our whereabouts, the dangers, not being able to dig, keep close together, and at the same time have our guys keep contact and fall out on the road and start back. We move back down the road through Nieder Schlettenbach toward Bobenthal. Just as we approached, the bombers went overhead with the fighters. They bombed and strafed not too far away. We will see, in a few days, they wrecked havoc. (A few years ago I located a K. company man who said they had no opposition that morning.) With the bombing that same morning did the Germans see an apparition? They didn't see us, yet we ere always there. What happened? Whatever the cause, it happened.

Back in Bobenthal, the houses we were to stay in had been taken for visitors who came to see the hole in the Siegfried Line! Go to the Red Cross and get plenty of coffee and doughnuts. Sounds good. I had tanked up on water from the river just after dark, and now food sounded good. We find the Red Cross doughnut wagon and it really is good. "Sorry, no seconds." "You gotta be kidding." "It's for the celebrities who want to see the hole in the Siegfried Line." "But we are the ones who punched that hole!" "Sorry, no" I'm mad, as usual, and would take the joint apart, but one of the guys insists that I cool it! Major Crouch hears, and he really shows me how to pitch a fit, only he has the power to make it stick! Just sit down fellows, and they will bring your breakfast and get you a place to sleep. Within an hour Griffin appears and gets to frying hot cakes and making coffee. It seems that the Red Cross have requisitioned company rations, so he is short. "Don't be a pig," yells Griffin, "Two apiece, the rest have to eat too!" That is okay, my stomach refuses more, as a matter of fact it isn't standing prosperity well right now. Griffin wonders where the rest of the bunch is. He has counted seventeen. "That is what is left," someone exclaims. (It is now evident we have left some in the hills or they just don't want to eat now.) Griffin is really broken, tears come. But he is more astounded that I refuse seconds. As a matter of fact, I have to leave in a hurry, the GI's have arrived again! Hot food after K rations are murder.

Here comes headquarters or service company. They dig holes behind the mountain, straw it, and cover it with tents. Luxury!

It doesn't last long. We are back on the trucks again, go through the valley where the air force devastated that valley and on to the Rhine. We cross at Mannheim. It seems like we did some mopping up, but

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are soon on our way to Bensheim, Army Reserve. Fantastic: houses, food cooked by our cooks and served by p.o.w. girls from Russia and others. These girls are young and have been badly mistreated. A pair of Stars and Stripes reporters, possibly from division, are interviewing us and will put the interviews in our local newspapers back home. That's a treat. Whoops... they just got to us when a call came in that a convoy near here had been strafed by machine gun fire. Kunze wants the machine gun. Montessi, Woolman, and about six others. It looked like hundreds of trucks pulled along the road. All having machine guns, rifles, and an extra driver. Looks like they were just asking for trouble. As soon as they see us they yell, "Here comes the infantry!" and just get in their trucks and go on their way. We are pointed to the direction from which the fire came, search the ravine and find nothing. They have picked up all evidence. We search the closest town. Most of the people are in church and we find only an old .22 rifle. We must make an impression to stop this sort of thing. We get the Burgomeister. This official knows everything and everybody. He pleads innocent. Will we continue to be plagued by this sort of thing? We are supposed to be resting.

Pete and I start an argument, even getting vicious. Now Pete is a little guy, but we are really getting with it. The Burgomeister takes notice. Kunze whispers that we are arguing to see who gets to shoot the offender, or the varmints. It is a good show, because the Burgomeister agreed to make sure it never happens again. It didn't. We still chuckle at the thought of this.

Finally all good things must come to an end, and we must go back to mopping up operations. About this time my feet start complaining: frozen, trench foot, athlete's foot, and the constant pounding in size 13 snow-pacs, and are now complaining loudly. They are swelling, cracking, and infected with yellow pus. The medic sends me to the hospital about a half mile down the road. I walk to it. Just as I climbed the steps, here comes Tusing in the jeep. "The Captain wants you." "But my feet are killing me." "How bad are they?" "Doc says they may have to come off." "Would you rather get shot than have them off?" "Let's go!"

We start walking, but my machine gun is on the jeep. We are mostly on the roads. The medic, a Lt Col, is very threatening about the neglect of my feet, even threatening a court martial. Several men were already in the hospital for this. "If you would just wash your feet, keep clean dry socks, and take your boots off at night you wouldn't be in this condition," he ranted! True!

I did explain the facts of life as far as we are concerned, emphasizing the impossibilities of changing to dry socks in a three foot mud puddle, and even taking our boots off too! This was evidently news to him, and he became a real friend. It seems as if twice a day he would drive up, take my socks and shoes off and dress my feet, and put on clean socks. That, from an officer, takes real courage. Thanks! With the constant walking and care, they soon healed. The numbness from the freezing lasted for several years, the coldness still remains.

As we went into one of the towns, Kunze had me just walk down the street as the civilians were in the streets. I just wrapped a couple of

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belts of ammo around my shoulders, and took off. Just as I rounded a corner in the street, the kids jumped and screamed for the doorways. Must have surprised them, but the thought of kids running from me still bothers me.

We were soon on the road which Lt. Kunze will still remember, where we really got caught. The whole company was in the ditch by the roadside. Machine gun fire from three or four places were sweeping the area, including the jeep. I never understood why they would come so close to the jeep and not hit it. Were they expecting to capture it? My machine gun was still being carried on the jeep and I thought Jessie had gone back to get it. (I asked Jessie last year, and he didn't remember.) Anyway two squads went back to get it and had not returned.

I finally took a back loop to it and find everyone of my gang around the jeep and Tusing doesn't want his jeep shot up! He even orders me not to come closer. Well Captain Hebert outranks him and he ordered me, so I pay no attention to Tusing. Tiny Walters is next to the jeep, so I have him hand me the gun, and told the crew to bring the ammo and keep twenty yards between them and to follow me. Now back around the back to the road. The ditch is full, and no one wants a machine gun next to them to draw more fire. No choice but to go to the high edge of the road on the other side, with no cover. Crowell was sent to take Zammett's place, to keep the bullets straight. We are soon under fire and he panics. (perhaps I should explain his position; he is 17 years old, new on line, and if others panic, he surely has the right to.) I, of course, was too bothered to do anything but curse him out. We were in a pickle, and couldn't return fire because of a twisted belt. And we were the object of their wrath! I talked so bad, that I would still like to see him to apologize. I've had to do a lot of apologizing! Finally we resume firing and were doing good, two down and one to go. I looked up and there is Kunze doing the job, he is always there! He sends Tiny Walters and we proceed to finish the job. Tiny is also new, but is older and has spent four years in England, and is not happy to be in a job like this. (I have recently examined my memory and have come to the conclusion that the Germans were all able to shoot at the same targets from each of their positions, and the spot where I was, was possibly the only spot where I could reach all of them)

The company now is able to move across the hill away from the road, and call for us to follow. We move half way across and there lay two of our men, really getting their rumps tore up. They can't do that to our guys. So Tiny and I lay down in a shallow depression and return fire. The company retrieves those two and call again for us to follow. I have Tiny take two clips out and tell him when I go he is to shoot one clip, then reload, and when I holler, he is to get up, firing as he runs. "What do I shoot at?" asks Tiny. "It doesn't make any difference, just shoot." I'm gone and he soon follows, "What do you mean, it don't make any difference what I shoot at?" "Well, they are green men, and shut up every time you shoot." "How does an old man act?" he asks. "Well, you remember Kunze asked me to ease up several times, but I was just too scared to quit." (I think it's okay to be scared, you never get over it, but may react a little differently. Any man with any sense would be

scared. You just realize that there are times when if the other guy gets knocked off, and you are left alone, you really have problems then.) Tiny isn't sure yet, so we soon run across this bunch again it is a group of Hitler Jugend. They are thoroughly trained, but not experienced. That one guy is so sassy and brash we put him to carrying the 300 radio. That night, as we tried to sleep on that corner of the road, it's cold, and I discover that I have lost my sleeping bag. (the supply man, probably Hilaris, had picked it up and returned it the next day. It had been shot off as I was moving with the machine gun and I never missed it until night.)

One more action probably was Ulm. We were approaching the town from the end where the city sets in a large bowl depression. Our scouts had seen a German machine gunner among the trees on top of the hill. I was to keep him covered. We were trying to keep silent and only shoot if necessary. I face this German in the dusky moonlight about maybe thirty five feet away, we both were behind trees about eight to ten inches in diameter. No safety, just imaginary. I never knew what his orders were, so was uneasy to say the least. We both had our guns off safety! Then there was this movement below, sounding like a tiger tank, someone got the bazooka man and he made one shot down at an angle, after dark and he shoots. It hits! no more noise! In the morning we find it is a small dozer, just a feint. The scary part for me. My German gunner and I are still pointing at each other and the call comes to break off. How do you do that? Well it seems funny now, but we both started to back off at the same time. I wonder whatever happened to him.

As I can recall no further action, I assume it is about time to board tanks for Brenner. One place we stop, possibly for gas. It is a meat packing plant. Someone brings an arm load of salami, sausages, and etc. and toss several on each tank. With twenty or so men on each tank we soon gobble up this delicacy. We didn't intent to pressure the guy for more but I guess our very presence was pressure enough. We soon got more. I'm sure he was pleased to see us leave. Somewhere about here, near Landsberg, were those death camps, those low buildings, surrounded by barbed wire fencing. Most of the dead, or nearly dead, were in the buildings, naked. It was gruesome. They got us out of there, for our mental stability, right away. Then came those other D.P. camps, or more accurately, death camps, where they had those many young people, probably under fifteen, and weighing only about fifty to sixty pounds. It was really sickening. We just opened the gates, those who could, followed us to the nearby dairy, and we had them give all the milk they wanted. The road was full of these starving skeletons. Anger can't describe our feelings. We disregard any sense we may have had, and probably caused many of these to die. The army really reprimanded us for this, "Don't ever try to feed a bunch like this again." Fortunately we never had the chance.

It's a nightmare, what kind of people would do this? This is 1992 and it's going on everyday in this country, only we declare it legal! Even argue loudly and persuasively amongst ourselves, whether if it be moral or not. If God held the Germans responsible, then who do we think we will answer to? Even our politicians are threatened if they vote against it. I'm talking about killing unborn babies, saying a mother has

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a right to her own body. Millions have been killed over the past twenty years and are still being killed. We also owe Germany an apology, because they were so small a perpetrator.

We go through beautiful mountains and valley. Ober Ammergau, where the passion play is held, was a stopping place, and we stopped right in front of the main places. I guess we may have been waiting for gas. Then on to Garmisch Partenkirchen, where the winter Olympics were held in 1936.

It may have been in this area where we were stopped to investigate poison gas dumps. They were there. It was true we were in no danger, just warned so as not to explode them. It is important to note that we may have been tempted to, if we had not been in the area. Then on to the little burg where we spent the night in an SS officer's house. His frau kept looking up at the ceiling. Later we found it contained many souvenirs, and valuable pieces of art. She was very outspoken as to whom our relatives were, and that, at best, we were pigs, and to be hated above all people. In the morning, as we were leaving, she continued her unkind remarks. I remind Jessie and Montessi that it's okay, because we are just pulling out so that the Russki can come in, as it is in Russki territory. She hears and immediately wants to go with us. No way! She doesn't want to be in our outrageous company. She begs, we leave. There may have been a few snickers.

One place we stopped may have been Mittenwald. Some displaced people from a nearby camp came to seek help, from their SS guards. About a half dozen tanks and riders went over, we dismounted about a half mile from the buildings and raced in. Not many people around. The D.P.'s start with pitch forks in the hay mows. I went to the railroad and look on the other side at the large hay field or grain field. There was some movement, there are bobbing heads. I send a lot of shells over the field. The gun is firing in small circles. That last shoot-out had evidently finished the barrel. It still worked, just wouldn't fire into an eight by twelve inch opening. I returned to Kunze, Montessi, and the others. As I round the corner, an M-1 goes off. There stands a P.W. with a smoking rifle that he had snatched it from someone. Anyway the SS officer is dead. The P.W. said that this man had killed his wife a short time ago, and he had vowed to kill him at the first opportunity. He had his chance, and took it. Wondering what our reaction would be he said, "You can kill me now, if you want to." I just walked over and hugged him and thanked him. I felt it was an end to our predicament, we didn't have a prisoner to contend with, and who wants an SS officer around. We load up and return to the rest of the group. We are having it pretty easy, but without our long johns, riding tanks in the mountains can be freezing. We scrounge up some blankets and cover up. Nice! At one place we are reprimanded for such atrocious behavior: We stashed them until we get going again, and would you believe it, we found them again, and used them, tucking them in nicely, so as not to lose any. Just like home! I think we even stopped at Going, in Tyrol, Austria, where Kunze now has a winter home.

Whatever night it was, we go down the steep mountain road to Innsbruck, in the valley below. There are lights in the streets, (this is night) people everywhere, even German soldiers with arms. Of course, GIRLS, all acting like they are delighted to see us. We continue on

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toward the Brenner Pass. Going up the switch back curves, we come upon this old German truck, really slowing us down, and he doesn't move over. After a while the tank ahead catches him just right and turns his turret with the gun barrel going toward his window... and over the side he goes (for a short cut down the mountain.) On to Brenner, the single striped gate at the border to Italy and Tyrol, is lowered, and the tanks have the barrels pointed toward, or rather over into, Italy. The German tanks do likewise, only their weapons are toward Tyrol. We understand that this is for our protection against the SS.

We post guards along with our tanks, and the Germans do likewise. The valley is possibly a half mile wide, with railroad tracks. The houses are mostly on one side. There are rumors of an armistice. I understand now that it was initiated by the Germans. Were they hoping for an easy way out? In any case, it was a start, and only a little ruckus took place on the German side.

By the next morning, a group consisting of Captain Hebert, Tusing, (driving the jeep) a few others, and all kinds of Brass, formed up to go into Italy to meet the 88th Division of the Fifth Army.

The only three men left in the company (that I am aware of) that were sober were Kunze, Montessi, and myself. We proceeded into the town of Brenner to arouse the Germans from their beds and start them by trucks to the processing centers, whatever that was. We try to sort out any fanatics. The rest were to be shipped home as soon as possible.

Montessi and I also used this time to look for weapons and other souvenirs, and headed back to our quarters. Kunze took several pictures of us crossing the border, and some of them are in the Division book. We made numerous trips, at least until we had an abundance of weapons, surely we had a hundred or so apiece. A whole corner of the room where we should have slept, was filled.

One German Lt., in charge of a company wanted to give a formal surrender, so we had to get Kunze. This was a precision unit. Now I realized afresh why we had such a hard way to go, they were a magnificent unit. We talked while we waited and even after Lt. Kunze got there. The Lt. had a lot of questions; one was, if we are joining the Americans to whip the Russians? "No." was the answer. "But you'll have to fight them sometime, and we are willing," he replied. I gladly inform him that if we do have to fight the Russians, I sure hope that they are on our side this time. He smiles, and agrees. There is no tension what-so-ever. Is this really happening? But then the Wehrmacht were often very human. Any-how, I'm glad they decided to be good today. (Remember there are just three of us present.) The 88th finally move up to the border, and we retrieve a few of our guys, drunk, from south of the border. It is a mess, but finally is accomplished. We finally head off to bed. I think it had been forty-eight hours since we slept, but maybe it just seemed that long.

When we awoke, the rest of the guys are sobering up and there are visitors in the street, mostly air corps, looking the place over and buying souvenirs. I look back in the room for mine, and mine and Pete's are gone! Someone had stolen them and sold them while we slept! P-38's,

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lugers, Waltham's, the works, all gone - at one hundred to one hundred-fifty bucks apiece. My wealth had disappeared! Some slimy you know what. I believe I would have killed the guy if I had known who it was. Oh well, I had stashed a bunch in my barracks bag when we were in Bensheim, and the division band was guarding that. (Little did I know that, that too was gone.) However, Sgt. Sabato had heard of my predicament, and in his maneuvering about, was able to supply me with quite a few honorable guns, even though they were not the quality that I had lost. I really appreciate him for that.

We settled down to a quiet routine of playing ball, climbing mountains for SS, retreat in the evenings, and an occasional formal guard. I thought I never got formal guard, because I was a machine gunner and had a pistol instead of a rifle. (That wasn't the total truth, so I found out from Jessie last year.) Montessi, Kunze, and I usually went in the jeep about once a week, looking for SS, but picking up goat butter and cheese, going a little higher each time. Of course we ate well! We did make one trip somewhere, and found a man plowing his field, badly wounded, and freshly. We talked to him and finally took him away from his family. I guess I regretted that the most of anything we did. The war was over, he is trying to care for his family, wounded as he was... but he could have been a fanatic. I wonder how long he was away, when he got his crops in and if he got treated for his wounds. He had, as I remember, his arm in a cast. Tragedy of War!

I finally got R&R to Nancy, France. I had a bath, got clean clothes, saw the castles and parks, and most of the town. The red-haired cook went with me. We had different tastes, and after we started we soon parted for the rest of the day. I did get my wife a fine scarf and some perfume and make-up and sent it home. Sorry, that is all I can do, there isn't much in the way of supply, and it's a black market. It's a good thing we have cigarettes. The time sped by and we are back on the trucks headed for Brenner. We couldn't help but notice the difference, as we left France. The broken roofs, houses and litter everywhere. Just enough tiles put back on roofs to cover one room, no gardens planted... filth! Just across the border the chaos ended. It had been such a short time since we tore it up, but much of the litter was gone. The roofs had been repaired; at least there were no unbroken tiles on the ground. Their gardens are planted and some edibles are ready. It makes you wonder!

We didn't go back to Brenner, the company had moved down the mountain, maybe twenty miles. The village folk, old men and women were starting to cut hay in a long valley, maybe more than a half mile across. This cutting is by hand scythe and cradles. (A scythe with a carrier to catch the hay and drop it in bundles.) This is something I never had to do. We used a scythe to clean fence rows, but we and the French had horse powered mowing machines. Anyway, they continue day after day. It took a week or more to even notice anything accomplished. We loafed around and finally were given the task of cleaning a swimming pool. The pool was fed by a mountain stream from melting snow. We nearly froze until the sun could start warming it up.

One evening at retreat, we formed up, and the bottom dropped out!  
"The following men will be dressed, packed, and ready to move at twenty-

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two hundred hours. You will fill needs in 'A' Co, 11th Infantry, 5th division. You will go home for thirty days, and then be a part of the invasion of Japan!... "We complain, but Captain Hebert informs us that he had already volunteered us as a unit to go direct to the Pacific, but the Army insisted they were running the show!

### **HEADED HOME?**

Now three hours isn't much time to eat, say goodbyes, get addresses, etc. My barracks bag hasn't shown up so I draw a new one. We are the lucky ones; we get to go home first. Thirty days at home and then on to the invasion of Japan... at least we get to go home first. Williams, Crowell, Moore, and myself were together. The others I don't remember seeing. We got to Camp Lucky Strike, spent about thirty days waiting for a ship. You walk a half mile to the latrine. I don't remember where we ate. Every place is hot and dusty, very little entertainment, unless you walk to the end of camp and view nature. It really isn't bad, much better than we were expecting in just a few weeks. I guess we are just natural grippers, no wonder we're so good at it.

And the time came for us to embark, and the opportunity to sell some of our booty to finance our stay at home. It was a quiet trip on board the supply ship to the Graf Spree. The ocean was like a mirror, not even a ripple for most of the way. How can it be so calm, and have been so rough going over? The porpoise played along the ship, it was nice and relaxing.

New York harbor lay close by, and rumor again is true. Five divisions are entering in at the same time and are being welcomed by several boat loads of bands and celebrities. What a welcome! Rumor again rears her head... We are going to march through New York City. No! How far is that? Then on to Camp Shanks? We gripped! Guess what, because of time, we were trucked through New York City, ticker tape and all. We didn't complain about that. Before debarking in the river, we were given real milk by the Red Cross as we waited our turn to go over the side to the barge below. I wondered who gave up their milk so we could enjoy it!

Arriving at Camp Shanks we were treated to real food! A full slice of round steak, or more if desired, and all the things which we had forgotten about, to go with it. I am beginning to feel welcome! The next morning the usual rush to the bathrooms, also to find your name on the latrine walls, and or writing it freshly, the date of debarkation, and the day of return. The usual mustering with luggage, and then lining up for the proper trains. Bound for Camp Campbell, Ky. We are to return there! After a night of rest we again board trains, my destination..... Indianapolis. I'm not late this time. The train spends several hours on a siding in Indianapolis. I want to get off and go home.

No need to mess up now, so I wait, and soon arrive at Union Station. I'm in a hurry. I just grab a cab and take off! It's probably not many minutes faster than a trolley, but the lady I've been waiting to see and the two children seem to have a real drawing power. Before the cab came

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to a complete stop, I'm out and have my bags in hand. The cabby refuses pay, so I give him a bill and jump up the steps to the front door. I take time to open the screen. One of my sisters was there. Mary had gotten a telegram the evening before, and they thought something bad had happened, and they didn't expect me so soon.

It got a little quiet; the kids were not sure what to do, so we just slowed up a little. It seemed so strange. There were times I wondered if it were true, or if it were a dream, me having a wonderful wife and two children... It wasn't. Am I dreaming? No, it's true. We start getting reacquainted. Mary has had all her teeth pulled, and just has the new teeth in. "Do I look funny?" she asks. "No, honey, just different," I can't help noticing the new teeth and am glad she has taken care of that, as she has the other necessary decisions.

In the morning we feast, and start the next 29 days. I have close to a thousand dollars total from my pay and gun sales. My boy has never had a bicycle, so we find a used one, but it looks good. (We find out later it has washers instead of bearings.) I have a lot to learn about how things are done, and the connivery! I may have spelled it wrong, but it sounds better than some other words I might use.

The good things happen too; my brother takes me around to visit many friends and relatives. He then loans me his car and gas to use. In a few days we get word that my brother-in-law has fallen from a load of hay and needs help. We return the car, grab the milk train to St. Paul, In. The station man, rather woman, calls Ed and he is able to pick us up. Ed and (my) sister Evelyn have been very special to Mary, and a haven when money runs short, or when time is heavy on her hands. It was good to spend a week or so plowing corn, milking, hauling manure, and etc. Maybe some of the edges got brushed off a little. We had a ball, seems like the thirty days was no more than a week. The time of my leaving looms ahead. We have just three days left, and go to visit an aunt on 927 S. West Street. We eat and wonder when we should leave. The news on the radio and the honking cars in the streets say Japan has given up. We know about the first bomb, but hadn't heard the news about the second one, and Giving up? Incredible, but good news!! We finally start for home. No trolley is running. Traffic is nearly at a standstill. Every GI on the street is on the fender of a car, holding a bottle. I have my family and it is a good excuse not to join the others. We finally decide we might as well walk the mile or so to the car barns, maybe the trolleys will be running from there. Otherwise it is another mile and a half. Even the sidewalks are crowded. We continue on and arrive at the car barns, and are able to get a trolley home. What a relief! Now the big load is almost gone too, at least there will be no invasion! Time flew quickly, what a time.

I board a train and go back to Camp Campbell, broke... So what, it isn't the first time. They tell us our orders are to ship over for occupation duty. That falls flat. The Division is called to the parade ground for a speech (raking over) by the General. He does rake, I think he had spurs. "You will go to Japan!" I become scared and afraid of what is going on. The ranks are supposed to be at parade rest and they are sitting down. Called to attention. They stand and melt. Officers are



instructed to raise their men. It is like a field of blowing grain, they are up and down like yo-yo's. It is a situation I hope never to see again. Nothing prevails, even the General realizes the anger of the troops, so finally gives another direct order, "You will not write your Congressman." We are dismissed. The order might as well have been to write our Congressmen. The next day those orders came off every bulletin board in camp. The next day, we who are close to having points to get out, are given thirty day leaves. I think they just had to get us out of their hair, but who cares... we go! We get paid, receive our leaves, and off we go.... That couldn't have been thirty days, but we are back in camp again. I don't investigate after I am offered another thirty days, so home-ward bound, again. It isn't even getting old, being home that is, I like it. Again someone has messed up the clocks and calendar. Back to Camp I go. This time most of the guys who are eligible for discharge are gone. "How or when do I get discharged?" I ask. "You have to get on charge of quarters." I volunteer. Within a week I am in a convoy bound for Camp Atterbury for discharge. November 11, 1945 finds me a free man again. Now we can tell that officer why we won't re-enlist.

November 12 finds me back at Kingans, working and enjoying it, even if it is our wedding anniversary. You can't celebrate much broke. The next week I'll have money again, and no more being away from home! I remember thinking I must be in some kind of heaven. Mary has to learn not to bend over me silently when I'm asleep. I still go to sleep with my ears covered, just as I used to do with Zammett, when we were standing guard in our holes, when it wasn't my watch. We found if we covered our ears when off watch, we could go to sleep quickly, and if we would wake up, could be reassured we weren't on duty if our ears were covered. We would also know if we'd slept on duty if they were uncovered. (It is something I still do, it seems relaxing.) It doesn't bring back old memories, it is sort of childish, like having a security blanket.

### **REMINISCING**

Several years went by, and thought of 'A' company kin came to mind. I had lost all my papers and notes from our farewells, but some names and addresses were very clear in my mind. Kunze probably contacted me first. He had gone back to school and even if I knew his old address, it would be different. My address did not change until 1951. I asked about the young lady whose letters seemed to electrify him. Just a scented letter would wipe away all traces of fatigue. He replied with an invitation to their wedding. We didn't get to go. He later notified me when they returned to Chicago. We got to visit several times. We were both busy at our work, paying our debts, and raising our families. We usually wrote, especially at Christmas time. How we treasured their pictures, letters, and glimpses of their lives during these years.

We used our vacation to see the sights and to visit people. In 1960 we went to California to visit relatives and stopped on our way back through Paris, Tennessee, to see Earl Scott. After much persuasion we found them, and had a wonderful time and picnic on Kentucky Lake. Wonderful! In 1961 we went to Treasure Island, Florida for a few days, then on to Tampa to try to find Jessie Williams. No known address, just

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determined to find him. We didn't. We finally gave up and went home. (He may have moved about that time.)

1964 found us headed for the World's Fair in New York City. We spent a couple of days there, and then headed for Agawam, Mass. to see Peter Montessi. Kunze had given us their address and we had written them. Pete was working when we arrived, and I waited while Mary and Pete's wife, Julia, were inside cooking. It is the Italian thing to do, to have your family come in and meet one of Pete's buddies. Pete came out in the yard very subdued. Finally he burst out, "Boy, Hersh, you have changed!" I know that I had been quite a character, but didn't think anyone had noticed or would remember. He explained what he meant, still with his usual smile and asked what had happened. "Pete, you don't know it but on that March 14th when the call came for Protestant Chapel, the chaplain introduced me to Jesus. If there is any change, it is because of him!" Pete was all ears, we had a long heart to heart talk and hugged again. Pete too, is a friend of friends. We are in a hurry to get on to Zammett's in Ovid, New York. We finally found Ovid, and got directions to Zammett's house. How do you start a meeting with a friend as close as Zammett and have had no contact with for so long? We slowly get reacquainted and catch up on the news. Of course we rehearse our experiences in Europe. His injury is still quite a problem, the cold from the steel plate in his head, the nervousness, and tension still there. Combat had left its ugly mark on him, this best of buddies. We went fishing a little while, but all good things must come to an end. We have visited a few times, and corresponded some. We even made a date for him to stop over when he was going to visit his daughter in California. Somewhere, it fell through, he never went. He was working in ordinance during the Viet Nam era and was told to ship ammo that was unusable, just to get rid of it. That really bothered him, he didn't want to lose his job.

We had a long chat that day and visited about many things. One thing John wanted to be sure to tell me. He wanted to know if I remembered De Fulvio, who had been accused of rape in Brenner Pass the first day we were there. I knew about the conditions, knew the guys who were there, and had witnessed the woman and her actions. We had to carry him back, he couldn't walk and was out cold when I left. I told Zammett that I was sure of his innocence. Before I left Austria, I even had to report to Captain Herbert about it and had told him the particulars that I knew. I even suggested that Tiny Walters was the culprit. Zammett was surprised that I knew. He wanted to tell me that Tiny Walters was the man, and was scared of being suspected so he laid it on De Fulvio. Now I explained to the Captain that I had no thought it was rape, but what else can you do? I explained why, and the Captain agreed. So De Fulvio got thirty days in the can and came back to the company. Zammett was relieved to get it off his chest. It was if he knew we wouldn't meet again and he felt burdened by not telling me before. Little did I know that we had enjoyed our last time together. When I started to come to the company reunion in 1988, I called to see if he could come, his son answered. I wasn't prepared for the answer. John had been dead since 1985. I really thought it had been no more than a year since I had seen him.

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In my first summons to Captain Hebert about De Fulvio, I had forgotten to report. I soon remembered and deserved the chewing out I got. I did explain that only a short time ago he had demanded that I not address him as an officer. I knew that too, but I forgot. Anyway, he was very gracious after that, and he continued our business. The next night I was summoned again. Now what? He wanted to recommend me to a ninety day O.C. School to be an officer, a Second Lieutenant. I declined. The war was over and I only wanted to go home. "But wouldn't you like to be a 'gentleman?'" "No Sir, if I'm not one now I don't want to be." "Why not?" "If I agree it means at least another year in service."

The war is over, and I want to be with my family. Besides, I'd probably make a miserable officer." I knew it was a high honor and had to admit I would like it, but no thanks. The Captain was very gracious again. I'm glad we had him as C.O. Our company and battalion officer, Major Crouch were really tops. It's been a privilege to serve under them.

I have really enjoyed my times at the 'A' company reunions, the stories, the times together, and the families together, too. I've appreciated the wives who have helped Mary, as she struggles with her near blindness, and the way they make her feel a part. The time so many of you have spent contacting people and cataloging information and material so we can all enjoy it. I think this writes a fine chapter to remember to this niche in our lives. I have a special thanks to Cole, Cartter, and Johnny Richard, for inviting me to the Reunion in Nashville in 1975, and the good time together that night.

#### **Corrections and observations to Memoirs 1-19-97**

Last September as I attended the 103rd re-union, I visited with Walt Clark, medic, he told me that Ed Arendt wasn't the one he was trying to get out of the minefield at Mulhausen (page 15). I wrote the name on a memoir, but have since given it away. Records show Burlin Covington, Charles Dia, Thomas Horton, David Reed, and Albert Sweet as KIA 3-15-45. These are original company men, now having 135 casualties as of 3-15-45, and showing 158 replacements as of 3-31-45. With replacements as yet not completely documented. Walt also explained that as he was picking this one up, another mine exploded, taking Walt's foot and mangling the other casualty. Ed Arendt did lose a foot here.

Talking to Hans Uberseder brought to mind another subject. We have talked about many subjects over the years, and I appreciate his friendship and the thoughts he has shared with me. This year the subject was the Bible, and the Commandments; especially "Thou Shalt Not Kill". Hans transferred to Intelligence about Christmas time, was fluent in German and was greatly needed there. He stated that he was glad that he hadn't broken that commandment, and wondered if it was a problem to me?

Many people, over the years, have also noted this: so I took a moment to be illuminated as to how to answer. I am now convinced, that I am free from all penalty for sin, as far as being accepted in the

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Beloved. Some do not accept this, and I wonder what they are depending on? The answer I gave, as it was given me, is that "God, through the ages has raised up countries, and kings to end corruption, and in turn, put down these same people too, when corruption takes over, and in His Timing!

He usually gave power to the powerless people to accomplish this, as in Judges 6:12:14:16 etc. These scared people are freed from fear, because God is with them, and God then gives the victory.

I was as scared as anyone I know, and being brought to the Cross 3/14/45, I am now sure that this is the only explanation there is. To be able to move so freely at times. Before each engagement, I remember how terrified I was, yet upon command to move, I did, and the terror seemed to disappear. I seemed to be following an unseen person. Maybe I thought it was an angel: now I'm sure it was the Lord Himself. I was never led wrong, and seemed to be given minute instructions, correctly, yet never seeing anyone. This never bothered me, though sometimes I doubted this strange happening. For this I received the Bronze Star, the Silver Star, and various commendations. These I gladly accepted, yet knowing it wasn't really me, but not knowing how to express it when people bragged about my bravery. Now I can say, being freed from fear is real liberty. I can no more take credit for this, than I can for allowing God to flood my heart with Love, Joy and Peace, occasionally!

My first embarrassment happened when my brother took Mary and I and the family round to friends, when I came back home for thirty days, prior to reporting as part of the initial invasion force on Japan. One dear friend's bragging, embarrassed me to no end, and I stuttered a very poor explanation. I had tried to explain that it wasn't really me, but surely didn't give God the credit either.

This I tried to communicate to Hans, that I now consider it a privilege, to be used of God, in this small part in liberating a small portion of people from a very vicious enslavement. The thought of breaking this commandment never entered my heart. Rather, even if I hadn't broken this commandment, I still would have been condemned to Hell for breaking any part of all the other commandments! God wants us to know we are born sinners, and will stay sinners until we accept God's Son!

This is part of what the Chaplain, a Southern Baptist, shared with us 3/14/45, If this 'the taking of life or not' was all we are depending on, soon even this crutch may be taken away. I had spent my years six through ten in Sunday school, under some fine older women, learning many fine Bible stories, but never the truth about Jesus and what He accomplished on the Cross. But these did give me a background of The God and His dealings with man, opening the way for the Gospel. In order to trust in someone or something we need some information to base our minds on. God wasn't bashful explaining how He made the heavens and the earth, and the day and the nights with the moon and the stars to show up His creation, and His other work on earth, as he told of making the animals and then man, but it wasn't to impress us, but rather to assure us of any doubts as to His intentions, and to assure us of His Love, and the things He would accomplish, to draw us to Himself. So we find that He is the

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Creator, making the universe by speaking it into being, because there was yet nothing to make it from. Quite a feat. His most precious creation was apparently man, not another god or part god, but man, capable of sinning, which didn't take long to happen.

Then the tender scene in the garden, and He taking an animal, killing it shedding its blood, then dressing Adam and Eve with the offering's skin. This was to last until He provided the payment for sin, the seed of the woman. Gen. 3: 16. The covering was now replaced by the payment. All through the ages are various stories of His dealing with man, especially His beloved people Israel, through whom the Savior would come. This Savior was the one to whom we are directed, although he didn't explain it in this detail. This is to be a relationship, through which His Spirit can provide the life that only He can provide, and also make us full of Love and Joy and Peace: otherwise, the flesh takes over and all the other attitudes take over. The world has yet to see a person totally walking in the power of the Spirit. God, the physician, cleans our hearts without surgery as we know it, that in turn, cleans our mouths. Luke 6:45. As we recognize our condition and ask for His cleansing, He does that!

I was taught to memorize the 23rd Psalm in public school, and quoted it often, overseas, when danger terrified me. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the Shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me. Looking at this now, not then, I am convinced that what I experienced then: that after starting to move from my small hole or other small place of hiding that, being freed from fear, I must have been following Jesus. He could now direct me as needed. You can't steer a stopped car, neither can God give peace and direction, until we start moving after Him!

Hans still had doubts, and commented how good I was. I had just squeaked by as a marksman. Although I did have those two machine gunners from the Pacific, who were a great help to Zammett and I. But as I explained to Hans, it is humanly impossible to run a half mile or so, firing at a small object and not missing: or running up a steep hill to a pillbox two or three hundred yards uphill, and never missing an eight by sixteen inch opening: when it takes two or three buddies to hold my feet from slipping. Humanly impossible, no question in my mind that I wasn't in control of my machine gun, then Who was?

On the Judgment day of Christ, where all believers will appear, to have our 'works' judged as to whether they were performed by the Spirit, or were the works of the flesh. 1 Cor. 3:12:16. Isn't it possible or probable, that these Citations that I have received, will revert back to Christ, through the Spirit, and He will finally accept them as His Work?