

## Chapter 6 “Happy New Year” and “Nordwind”

Happy New Year! I'll bet two to one this soldier is going to get a bigger bang out of this New Years than you. At exactly midnight every field artillery piece in this sector is going to let go with one round of ammo. (The big bang surpassed my wildest expectations because the German “Nordwind” attack began at midnight at our thinned out lines of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army. Several divisions had been withdrawn from the 7<sup>th</sup> to fight in the Battle of the Bulge. Our lines “bent” but did not “bulge” although there was the question of us almost being completely surrounded for three days, but we nevertheless held.)

Strange as it may seem, I have been busy lately. I Imagine you know why, but I think everything is under control now. The mail situation has been at a standstill for the same reason and the weather is getting worse with more snow. We do, however, have proper clothing to keep warm. I have found out there is still plenty of work to be done over here, so the possibility exists that Harry may come this way.

There hasn't been much going on compared to recent times. I think the German counter offensive surprised everyone including the big boys. From the “Stars and Stripes” the Russians are going to town, and this soldier boy says, “Power to them.” They are still hoping they get to Berlin before we so they can raise h-with the Germans.

I sure can't understand this French weather. I guess if there wasn't a war going on, one could see the beauty of this country. When you have to live with nature through all sorts of conditions, one just can't seem to appreciate much of anything.

When I think about how anxious I was to get into the Army, it really makes me realize that I didn't know the score, but valuable knowledge has been gained from the experience of comrades. I also realize that if I hadn't had the strong foundation you folks gave me, I wouldn't have made it this far. There are too many pit falls and temptations the Army offers young men, and Pop knows exactly what I'm talking about. Sure would like to have about a five pound fruit cake in the future.

Believe it or not, I'm learning how to play chess. It's quite a diversion from the war even if it is a miniature war itself. Harry said in his last letter that he had received most of the news about me through you, so that's another reason for me to keep up the correspondence.

From Uncle Roy's letter, I understand that Harry has an A.P.O., so I expect to see him over here before long. My hopes are with the Russians advancing so fast that maybe Harry will miss out. The less anyone sees of war, the better. One thing I cannot understand is the optimism back home about the war. I know it is good to believe we have a near victory, but unless the Russians change things, we still have a h- of a job with the Germans.



Dorothy asked me to request a package from her, but I don't believe I will because her letter sounded too convincing to me. She is one swell girl and I enjoy her letters, but one has to watch these women. Right? Uncle Roy also asked me to send him a request so he could send some sweets. They sure have been good to me, and one finds out that everyone is helpful if given the chance.

I received a V-mail from PFC Everette Coats, and find that he is in an anti-tank outfit not far away. We infantry Joe's welcome those boys because a German tank is awesome. I took a good shower this morning, and received a complete change of clothing. It indeed was a big morale factor just getting clean. Another morale factor was six letters that I received today: one from you, two from Fa, two from Uncle Roy, and one from Mary Jean. The job that I had at Colemans was because of your pull. In regard to censorship, the Lt.'s name that appears on the envelope happens to be my platoon leader and I know him well. Another thing is that they do not censor the incoming mail.

I understand that Harry is excited about coming over. I can understand his sentiments, but thinking and doing are two different things. I'm hoping he will be too late to see any action. The reason I said I would prefer to be in the Army of occupation is that I would rather stay here than go to the South Pacific after this is

over. I understand that you have been hearing Boeing flying fortresses going over Anthony that are being produced in Wichita. Sure could use a lot of those over here, although we do hear some of them come and go. By the way, I think "combat fatigue" is something neither of you nor I should worry about.

## **Chapter 7 Flashback - "Sons of Bitch"**

I'm enclosing another "Stars and Stripes" because it has a lot of news and the enjoyable cartoon "Up Front" with Willy and Joe by Bill Maudlin. Most of the portrayals are right on target. The reason you don't see very many infantrymen around home is because they are fighting a war! We consider everyone else "rear echelon". Pop, knows what I'm talking about when I refer to "sweating it out". (One of the old infantrymen with us on the 100<sup>th</sup> Division 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tour, Tom Maum, in a dedication at the Epinal American Cemetery described our deep feeling as a combat infantryman with the following words: "We front line soldiers develop a sense of exclusivity, a conviction that our rifle squads and platoons are a brotherhood apart, open only to those who shared with us the terrible thunder and lightening of our hell on earth. What is this sense of brotherhood? It is something which can only be known through an emotional purge of mortal combat!")

Jerry Paul's grandmother wrote a wonderful letter about Jerry and "him". She said that this world was only a temporary home for us and "up above" there would be no human con-



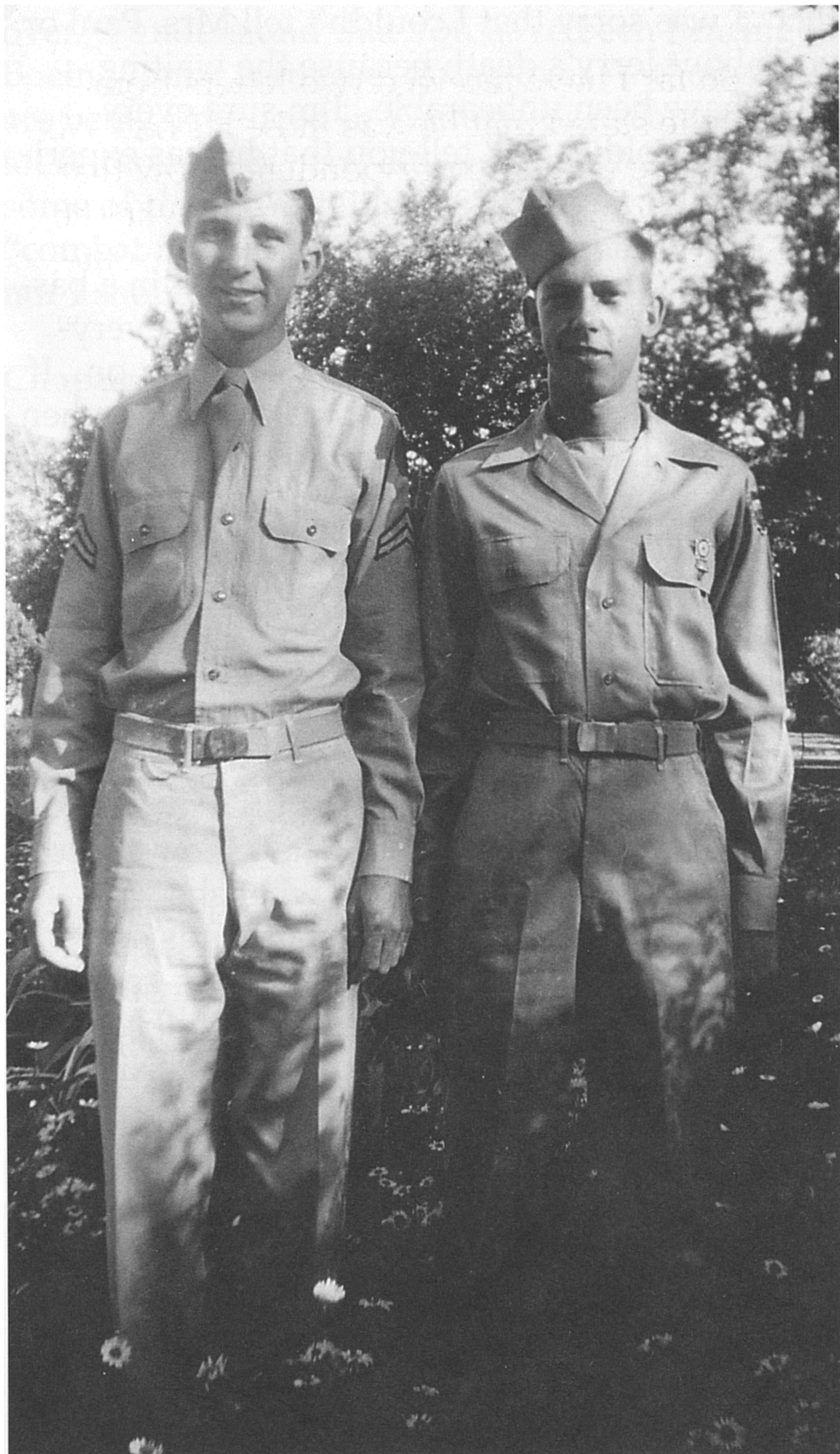
flict. I was sorry that I couldn't tell Mrs. Paul or you about Jerry's death because the waiting must have been unbearable. I'm sure every front line soldier will tell you that he has experienced "him" being near in time of need!

The other evening, you folks took in a basketball game and you couldn't see how everyone enjoyed themselves with a war going on. If I recall correctly, there was a war going on when Harry and I were part of that crowd, and you enjoyed yourselves then. Those are the things we are fighting for and hope to return to. After all, this is only a small part of our lives and instead of making weak individuals, it is making us strong so we can continue life with a full appreciation of its meaning.

Fa wrote and told me about the different types of fellows that she met when she went to Camp Gruber. I know exactly what she was talking about because there are all kinds of "characters" in this man's Army. I sure got a bang out of a recent letter Horace sent. He said, "I remember when I used to come and visit you around a million years ago." Boy, that expresses the thought of all us fellows.

We received shots in each arm today, and my body aches. There isn't any postman to catch here like there was at 1555 No, Holyoke in Wichita just a few blocks from the university campus, but they do have a modified system which seems to work.





Brothers L to R: Harry & Hal



So far I have received two letters from Harry. He stated that he was in Le Havre. We should have regular correspondence now that our mail should come direct. He said what he wanted most was something to eat, and something to keep his feet warm.

The latest news is that the Nazi's have separated from the German government, and that sounds good to me. Further, our 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Armies aren't doing too badly either. The Russians are still advancing on all fronts, and in the South Pacific the boys are pounding the Japs.

S/Sgt. Rudolph is back and that means a lot to me because as the platoon runner and radio man and he the platoon Sgt. we have been close. (We were in a retreat that Lt. Emery ordered December 7<sup>th</sup> when we were almost overwhelmed from German infantry, and being fired into by a 20 millimeter flak weapon. We ran across a valley and finally gained a position on an opposite hill where the Germans laid an artillery barrage on us. Rudy and I hit the ground beside each other, and he caught shrapnel from a tree burst then was evacuated.)

I received a letter from you dated January 31<sup>st</sup>, and another February 1<sup>st</sup>. Lt. Mallett also received one from you. If it's just the same to you, write only to me from now on. You see there isn't much he can do in reply to your letter

so he gave it to me. Fact is, all available shipping space is being taken up by “essential war” material. I finally sent a cablegram, and I hope it doesn’t take you by surprise because that would defeat the purpose. I’m sending today’s letter by V-mail, but I doubt it will get there any quicker. Parker, Starkweather, and Rogers all told me that their folks hadn’t received any mail since the first of the year either.

It seems that my university friends have become children of “him”. I had hopes that Fred King was a prisoner. The outfit that Jerry used to belong to relieved us not too long ago, and I inquired about Jerry. His platoon leader told me that he was killed, and another fellow confirmed that he was beside Jerry when he was hit. Now you can tell Mrs. Paul or not, but I don’t plan to. (I did see Mrs. Paul after I returned home in 1946, and told her the story that had been relayed to me. She was a Nurse Anesthetist at Wesley Hospital where my future wife completed her cadet nurses training and went on the staff, so they knew each other which made it easier for me.)

Osie Leehy and Chuck Robbins are back in the hospital with trench feet, but S/Sgt. Denham, S/Sgt. Karkoski, Sgt. Starkweather, Sgt. Rogers, PFC Parker, and PFC Bingham are still on line. Parker and I were platoon runners and missed out on ratings. (I well recall that back in Garrison Training, it was stated to me that the scout or runner would be one of the first in line for a promotion.)



I received a package with many goodies like peanut brittle, taffy, cookies, etc. So thanks to you and Aunt Delma for helping you with it. Incidentally, I don't know what I'm going to do for your Birthday, Mom.

Much to my surprise, the American Army is still looking after its soldiers as they took us back to see a U.S.O. show. Man when we saw those American females perform before us, it was almost like a trip back to the U.S. My luck is definitely changing because I'm headed back for a short rest and typing on a German typewriter, but you can't expect me to do well on "German equipment". They have their W's where there Y's should be. I have been told there is ice-cream, French pastries, beer, and shows. The French "La Belle" is supposed to be there also.

I'm now in the 100<sup>th</sup> Division rest center. When you first arrive, you receive a shower with a complete new outfit. They have roll call once a day, then you are free to do whatever you want. I finally got my duffel bag for the first time since we started out. I'm sending the watch home because it can't take the rough usage we give it over here. Our daily schedules include chow between 8 and 9 which is served on French silverware by French women with an orchestra in the background. At 11:00am the 100<sup>th</sup> Division Band gives a concert then chow again. At 3:00pm a stage show is presented by

special services, and afterward ice-cream and cake then chow again. By 6:30pm, an American movie then a nice clean dry bed. Best of all there is no guard duty.

I found some pretty laced handkerchiefs in a French store which I sent home for your Birthday. Strange as it may seem I feel that I belong back with my company. (I was somewhat overwhelmed by all the rear echelon gold-bricks at the rest center, and felt guilty associating with them.)

Parker and I are sharing a foxhole. He has a Purple Heart from the wound you were asking about. Your letters are taking only a week now. I received a letter from Bondie, and he said that he felt like a 4-F writing me when he hasn't even left the states yet.

Payday I sent \$50.00 home which is in addition to the \$45.00 you should be receiving each month under the "class E" allotment. I want you folks to feel free to draw on my bank account anytime. I'm in Lafferty's squad now, and Fa's fruit cake was consumed by it. I passed your box around to the whole platoon, and they think I have very nice parents.

I received a letter from Sgt. Harry Rice and he wrote something that didn't appeal to his censor because the letter was pretty well cut up. I also received a letter from Professor Cassel who was wounded and sent to England. (Cassel



was hit by a German sniper near his snow covered foxhole. I helped him get back to company headquarters where help was available. He wrote a thank you letter to my mother and explained his situation to her.)

In Harry's letter today, he tried to tell me what outfit he was assigned and where he was, but his censor cut the info out so I have no idea what outfit he is in nor his location.

I am very proud to know that I am a member of the V.F.W., and the fact that Pop is president probably didn't have anything to do with it. Special services showed up and we were able to order gifts for you that should show up in two months.

Please include Denham's parents in the round robin letter. Their address is: Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Denham, Snowflake, Arizona. He has told me that his father is the Post Master. Don't send cigarettes because we are issued a pack a day. Three cigarettes are in each K-ration which I give to the chain smokers. (One of our chain smokers was shot in the head in a fire fight, and we learned as young boys can learn that smoking can be dangerous.) At present, I am enjoying all the comforts of home in our foxhole. I heat my K-rations can of ham and eggs on the Coleman stove. Then for desert, I have a nice cookie from home plus some fruit juice for a chaser.

S/Sgt. Rudolph has gone back to receive a commission as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. I don't imagine Rudy will come back to this platoon as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Ted Matlose is now in charge. He was a Squad Leader before he received his battlefield promotion. S/Sgt. Snyder will probably be promoted to T/Sgt. of the platoon.

It won't be too long before your Spring garden will be planted. I wish I had a penny for every shovel full of dirt that has been turned by this PFC this past few months. When we enter certain French towns, I see boys our age and older and wonder why they aren't helping us fight this war.

A bird is singing a song over in Jerryland and how beautiful it sounds. The heavy artillery we send over there doesn't seem to bother it in the least. Compared to man, the birds are quite a bit above us as they seem to get along. I wonder how it is possible for us to mess up the world so much. God gave us this earth and all its benefits, then what do we do but blow it all to hell.

Everette Parker is with me as I have mentioned in other letters. You scared his mother when you said I don't mention him anymore. We are restricted on what we can write home. I'll grant you that there are certain things I don't particularly like to discuss, but when you say you worry a lot it doesn't help matters with me.



I am enclosing a March 17<sup>th</sup> edition of "Stars and Stripes" to let you know how the "front" is coming over here because I can't write about it. (On March 15<sup>th</sup>, early in the morning while it was still dark, we were joined by tanks in attacking a strategic hill outside of Bitche, France. The Germans were heavily fortified because they had a couple of months to set up their defense after their "Nordwind" attack on New Years Eve. Lt. Emery was wounded almost immediately beside one of our tanks as we entered the wooded hill defenses when a German potato masher (grenade) bounced off the tank and exploded. Machine gun mortar and artillery fire opened up on us and quickly pinned us down. "F" Company was in the lead, and we fought back from behind trees for protection. Lt. Matlose and I hit the ground close to each other and he directed me to fire a phosphorus grenade from my rifle toward what appeared to be a command post ahead on a rising. My aim was fairly accurate with the missile arching through the trees to the target. We were still pinned down and Lt. Matlose then yelled to me to get up and signal "G" Company to move up. Lead was now flying in both directions, and I quickly realized that when I got up and ran toward "G" Company I would be exposing myself to both "friendly" and enemy fire. With the Lt.'s insistence, I did get up and yelled at about "120 decibels" for them to move up as I ran toward them. Almost immediately, I heard a German "88" artillery shell coming my way and

growing louder by the millisecond so I made a leap behind the nearest tree. It seemed like the shell exploded immediately. I was not sure if I was alive or dead because I couldn't hear or see and was numb all over. In my stunned state I began to check my body parts to see if they were still all there. I do not know how long I laid behind the tree, but the battle appeared to be moving ahead so I finally tried to get up and found I was covered with dirt and limbs. I seemed intact except for my hearing. I did look around to see where the shell had exploded, and found the tree had saved my life by taking the hit on its other side. There were still mine fields to negotiate, but they were visible because they had undoubtedly been placed on the snow which had melted. I was able to catch up with the advance noting the dead and wounded as I walked forward. The Germans had retreated.)

We found out later that the whole 7<sup>th</sup> Army had advanced, and for the first time ever Ft. de Bitche fell to the 100<sup>th</sup> Division. We became known as the "Sons of Bitche" with exclusive membership.

There was an opening for Sgt. and Lt. Snyder put me in for it. I felt I had the experience and could accept the responsibility of a squad, besides there was a raise in pay. General Ike had issued a non-fraternizing policy to all American troops once we advanced into Germany.



You folks are the only one I'm writing now as that's all the time I have, and you probably understand by reading the papers. It's only two more days until your Birthday, and I'm hoping the gifts that have been sent will arrive on time. (My mother's Birthday was March 27th, and we were meeting little resistance except for pockets here and there until outside Heilbronn.)

It's hard to realize that the Germans caused the world so much misery. They appear innocent and friendly, but they aren't fooling us one bit. As for the food situation, they have more than enough. In fact, this appears to be a very prosperous country. So it's beyond me why they used the excuse that they were so poor that they had to expand to accommodate all their people. (On a recent trip to Poland, we stopped at Auschwitz Concentration Camp where only 10% of the prisoners who entered survived. It seems impossible that the Germans could be so methodically cruel.)

Happy Birthday, Mom! You sent me an article about mothers and fathers always being on the front because they never know when their loved ones are back behind the lines.

To answer your questions, I have changed squads three times, but still remain in the 2nd Platoon. At first, I was a messenger in Platoon Headquarters where I apparently had little chance of promotion, but once I transferred to a

squad I had a better opportunity of working my way up. I went to Denham's squad as his assistant then transferred to Lafferty's squad as his assistant. Finally, I wound up in the 2nd Squad as its leader. Ralph Karkoski is Squad Leader of the 1st Squad, I lead the 2nd, and Lafferty leads the 3rd. My assistant is cowboy Sessions from Texas who is about 30 years old with a Bronze Star for bravery under fire.

We receive replacements who find it tough going initially. We older combat troops have seen worse, and have that to compare. Experience is always the best teacher. McEwen was a replacement. When he got into a fire fight he hit the ground out in the open. After we gained fire superiority, I went over where he was still lying to pick up his dog tags thinking him dead. When I bent over him, he moved and complained the he was just too tired to go on. He was a little older, but I told him to get cover the next time.

We overheard the same rumor that you did on March 27th about the war being over, but we didn't put much hope in it. If you bear with us just a little longer, we will have this situation under control. (After we swung south from Mannheim where we crossed the Rhine River, my squad had the honor of holding down the right flank of the 7th Army. Ed Webb was the flank man in our squad. We were all proud of him!)



(Grossgartach was the last big town before Heilbronn. After riding the tanks south from Mannheim, fox "F" Company struck it with tanks at night. After a tough four hour battle, it fell on April 4th. The following day, Heilbronn was attacked across the Neckar River and one of the most significant prolonged battles of the 100th Division had begun. The 2nd Battalion was in reserve, but later crossed the Neckar River in assault boats and rafts. I remember paddling rapidly with all my strength to get out of the fire that was coming at us as we crossed the river. Once across the river, we headed for cover. Early the 13th, we kicked off down the railroad tracks. "I could look at dead Krauts all day long and feel no remorse, but the fallen G.I. almost always caused anger." Years later, I returned to Heilbronn and looked down at the Neckar River from the bridge over it. I was amazed that it wasn't a mile wide because it certainly seemed so when we paddled across it in great haste years before!)

(Lt. Martin Quinlan censored my letters at that time, and was mentioned in the "Power Horn" 399th Infantry book as leading the attack down the railroad track.) In my letter to my parents, all I commented on is the news of President Roosevelt's death. I also said it was hard to believe, but we didn't feel it would hinder the war. We did feel concerned that he couldn't see it to the end because he had been a strong leader for the free world!)

The war situation keeps looking better all the time, and I'm sure the Germans can't last too much longer. Although, they seem to be a determined bunch!

I heard from Harry, and was sure surprised to find out that he had been wounded. He couldn't have been on the line very long when he was hit. I tried to get back through Red Cross to see him, but so far there are too many details. Maybe when the war ends, we will have an opportunity to see each other.

(On April 20th, the entire 399th Regiment jumped off driving straight south toward Stuttgart in a three battalion pincer. The 399th in one day had cut off 270 square miles of Germans between Backnang and the Neckar River. April 22 was the clincher with "F" Company on the right they stormed Rotenberg after Lt. Quinlan's platoon captured 100 Germans.)

My squad was down to nine men, and we were scouting the woods above Stuttgart when a German soldier appeared waving a white cloth tied to his rifle. I signaled my squad to hit the dirt because I thought it was a trick. He yelled, "Comrade surrender." I told everyone to get ready, and then told the German to drop his rifle and advance which he did. He then pointed behind him that there were more soldiers. The next thing that occurred was the appearance of



many German soldiers and a German officer advanced out of their midst. I told him to halt. Then in perfect English he asked if I were in command because he wanted to surrender, but also asked my rank. I told him that I was an acting Squad Leader. He told me that he would not surrender to me, but would surrender to my commanding officer. I told him that my Captain was down in Stuttgart at a collecting point, and my squad would escort the Hauptman "if" he would order his soldiers to stack arms there and now. We were still cautious because we were badly outnumbered, and hoped he was serious in wanting to surrender. He must have understood that the American Army would give him and his troops fair treatment as compared to the French or Russians.

He gave his troops the order to stack arms and fall-in. I then placed my squad on either side and in the back of the German soldiers, and took the lead just ahead of the officer. I gave the order, and we moved out down into Stuttgart toward the collecting point. This was a high point in my military career! The members of our squad were as follows: Stidham B.A.R., Alphonso Gill and Romero - two good Hispanic soldiers, McEwen from Iowa, Pisconvick from Pennsylvania, Moring from Minnesota, Patty from Oklahoma, Webb, and Sessions.

Tomorrow, I go to Paris on pass. Most of the guys have German pistols that were "given to us" by the German prisoners. I am broke, but my buddies came across with sufficient funds. I neglected everything while I was in Paris except having a good time. I was at Rainbow Corner when we heard falsely that the war was over. All the kissing and hugging that went on was enough to last me quite a while. The French girls were dancing in the streets and went wild. I guess I did too!

When I returned from Paris, it took me about two hours to read all my mail from you folks and several others. Hopefully, it shouldn't be much longer that we will have to worry about the Krauts. The news reports that Hitler is out of the way, but they will have to produce his body before we will be convinced. I really came out ahead on the money situation in Paris because American cigarettes are worth their weight in gold. The Supply Sgt. gave me a whole carton for trading purposes. The Grand Opera in Paris was free to me, and I had a box seat. Mussorgsky's "Boris Godunov" was presented, and I enjoyed it immensely.

Our job surely won't end when the E.T.O. and South Pacific wars are over because there must be a government that will "insure world peace". Each afternoon, we have a report by Puggy Knight and Everette Parker on the progress of the war. I wonder what the "super-men" think of their ideals now.



We have been listening to the radio, and it sure sounds like Germany “is kaput”. The emblem you received for your Birthday is the “Cross of Lorraine”. Remember, we were in Alsace and Lorraine for a while this past Winter, and the Cross of Lorraine could be seen everywhere.

## **Chapter 8 E.T.O. - V.E. Day**

The war is over here in the E.T.O., and we are still alive and in one piece. May 8, 1945, will forever live in my memory, but the actual victory (V.E. Day) celebration will be tomorrow. The V.E. Day ceremony was attended by Major General Burrell, our division commander. They played our National Anthem, and we heard President Harry Truman’s speech. Be sure and let me know about the reaction of the citizens of Anthony.

The V.E. ceremony impressed me when I remembered the price that had been paid in friends and buddies lost. There was a tremendous effort put forth by everyone especially the soldiers that had been fighting since Africa, the China Burma India (C.B.I.) Theater, and in the Pacific since Pearl Harbor. I am thankful that my combat experience didn’t occur until several months ago!

We heard about the point system and demobilization, and it looks like we younger soldiers are going to be 90 year wonders. The married men receive points for a wife and family. Most of us have about 33 points which falls short of getting out and coming home. It was surprising that combat infantrymen received the same points as rear echelon troops in calculations. Guess I should have gotten married and had a couple of kids because I sure need the points.

Here is a run down of the A.S.T.P. boys: Parker is in the 3rd Squad as a Rifleman, Bill Rogers is its Squad Leader, Starkweather has a bad knee and is back, Karkoski is back with yellow jaundice, and Webb is in my squad and going strong. We were not allowed to write home when a soldier was wounded.

Harry is located in Linz, Austria, which is about 200 miles from Ulm, Germany, where I am presently located. There is a Red Cross man working on our getting together, and I am still hoping to see him!

Incidentally, I have lost all contact with Mary Ann Beal. The last time I knew where she was when I was home on a furlough. Sure would like to know if she is still at Wesley Hospital.



I read in "Stars and Stripes" where they are not going to send anymore 18 year olds overseas because they are just too young. I tried to tell them I was too young, but they didn't seem to understand. Ha! Even though some people may think we are coming home, the Japs are still fighting and some of us may to go over there to help.

I received a letter from you written on V.E. Day, and you wanted to know if your sons were safe. I sent a cablegram which you should have received by now, and I am sure you have also heard from Harry. Bondie, Sherry, and Betty Lou also wrote. Betty Lou was concerned about the male shortage at the University of Missouri.

Lt. Ray Snyder just returned from Officers Training School just outside of Paris. He learned about squad tactics after going through six months of combat. I received a decent haircut today, the first time since coming overseas. One of my men in the squad is ill, so I plan to take his place on guard like a good Squad Leader.

The "Stars and Stripes" comments that the troops coming through the states for duty in the South Pacific will receive eight weeks of special training on Jap warfare. If the soldier also obtains a furlough in the U.S., it will be almost four months before he may see action. Harry and I are not sure if the troop reassignment includes us or the Army of Occupation.

You asked about my feelings on V.E. Day. They were concentrated on the past as well as the present. How does an 18 year old feel when he leaves home and enters strict Army discipline? Initially, he doesn't quite fit into the picture of a soldier. After he ships overseas with a unit he has trained and experiences combat, he fits into the picture. He has seen his buddies blown to hell, and shared the terrifying experience with those that made it. Each day holds fear for him. Then all the sudden victory comes! No more fear of the future! On V.E. Day, I felt mighty proud to be out there saluting "Old Glory"! I sort of felt Jerry Paul, Fred King, and all the others were right there saluting with me. As parent, I imagine you had just about the same thoughts even though you didn't share my experiences. You were there at the front all the time with Harry and me.

I use the German language quite a bit, and it has not been hard to learn. However, if nothing works sign language will suffice. I am enclosing a Volkstrum Arm Band which was worn by the civilian army Hitler attempted to muster near the end without much success. The word "Wehrmacht" means Army.

Each man in the 100th Division received a booklet that tells the story of the division in combat before we hit the Rhine River. You may understand why I said to mark down March 15th. We pushed off early that morning, and



ran into hell on earth. My squad started out with ten, and ended up with four. We were the ones who attacked Reyeswiller Ridge just above Bitche, and the Jerries had decided to keep it.

Presently, we are in Langenau about ten miles from Ulm. We are guarding an ammo dump, water works, and a check point that requires 24 - hour guard duty. I do not have to stand guard because of my rank, but I do have to make sure that someone does. Pop, you hit the nail on the head when you said the Army has probably changed since the war ended. It is about as "C.S." as it was back in the states. You know inspections, close order drill, squad problems, and parades. Someday, Harry and I will be out of this man's Army, and we hope it won't be too long.

I have thought a lot about our church since being away from it so long. It holds many beautiful memories for me, and I will always remember it as a part of my foundation in life.

Tomorrow we are moving from Ulm to regroup and be closer to Stuttgart. I don't know what that means, but I am about to give up on the idea of occupation, and hope we come through the states on our next assignment. To report on the A.S.T.P. boys: S/Sgt. Rogers is still in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon but leader of a different squad, Parker is still with him, Webb is still in my squad, Starkweather is back with a bad knee, and Chuck Robbins is working in a hospital in England.

We are now guarding some displaced persons (D.P.'s) that are Poles, Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians. After they were liberated, they had to be rounded up and contained again to keep them from killing the Krauts. We guard them around the clock. My relief is Sessions, my Assistant Squad Leader.

Harry and I seem to think alike on the fraternization policy, as he is escorting a beautiful Austrian while the German Frauline I am seeing isn't too bad either, of course. This is all undercover because the only Germans we are allowed to speak to are young children, but then again she is only a child of 19. She is trying to learn English, and I don't know any better teacher than Prof. Bingham.

Ralph Karkoski returned to the platoon today after being hospitalized with jaundice. He said that he lived the "Life of Riley" in Nancy, France.

On our most recent move to Windlengen, just 20 miles southeast of Stuttgart, the platoon is guarding factories and checking passes. Ralph Karkoski and Gene Roth are in charge of a submarine factory, Bill Rogers is in charge of a furniture factory, and I am in charge of a textile factory. None of the factories have been bombed because of the excellent camouflage. Our job is to see that the factories operate productively for the Allied Government. My squad



is quartered in the kindergarten of the factory where the mothers used to bring their children when they worked in textiles. It's really a sweet place, and we are lucky to get this break. All I have to do is keep the squad on the ball, and make out the guard roster. My present squad that are all PFC's and numbers twelve men: Petty-First Scout, Gill-Second Scout, Stidham-B.A.R., Webb-Assistant B.A.R., Romero, McEwen, Black, Pisconvuck, Hull, Slater, Sessions-Assistant Squad Leader, and myself-Squad Leader.

The Neckar River runs by this factory, and you may remember that we had to cross it at Heilbronn. I was in one of the assault boats of our platoon, and "88's" were coming in at intervals. Needless to say, we paddled furiously to get across. The Neckar River here doesn't seem quite so wide as we have been swimming along with some Fraulines who swim there, but of course we believe in non-fraternization.

Denham wrote and told me that the left side of his face and left ear are not working well, but he feels lucky to be alive. He wanted to know about his squad, and thanked me for writing his mother.

The Air Corps is sure active today. They must fly around to let the Germans know they are still there. I expect Pop is helping out in the harvest this time of year. I sure would like to try my luck at scooping wheat for Uncle Claude, but right now I'm in fairly poor shape.

I'm sending home a parachute from a flare that had been fired, and was used in defensive position to light up the area in front of us at night to see if any Krauts were out there. It has all the names of the members of my squad. Sessions just brought in his Bronze Star, and it's a beauty. Harry must also be proud of his! Our General has stated that we will almost surely be here until November and possibly until March next year, but I'm still very pessimistic.

This is the Fourth-of-July, and the 399<sup>th</sup> Infantry is going to make the new 7<sup>th</sup> Army Commander General Haislip, a "Son of a Bitche" which is our exclusive organization for taking the town of Bitche, France. Ernie Pyle said, "The only reason an infantry Joe keeps going is because his buddies do and there is not much else he can do." There is much truth in that statement.

There is a German woman that stops and talks to our guards, and discussed politics. She keeps telling them that it wasn't the German peoples' fault only "Hitler's Gang". Boy, that really makes me mad deep down. I personally don't like to talk politics with these people because I don't even try to see their side, if they have one.

I received a letter from Harry, in the 4318<sup>th</sup> Army Hospital which is the same one where Ralph Karkoski was treated. He seems to

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be doing O.K., nothing serious. Drunk on duty was the charge against Sessions, so he has been relieved as my assistant. Webb has been assigned in his place.

The whole 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion has moved to a German garrison above Pforzheim. Karkoski, Rogers, Webb, Knight, Roth, and I are living in the same large room for non-commissioned officers with considerable privileges. The town of Pforzheim has a Population of about 80,000 before the war, but is now 40,000. As we understood it, the British bombed it in retaliation for the V-2 bombings of London. We walked for a full hour, and saw only buildings that were either partially or completely destroyed.

The news in the South Pacific is good, and we hope it continues to be that way. What a wonderful blessing it would be to have that war over, and the world at peace. General Ike is on our side because he has now allowed us to fraternize with the Fraulines in public.

## **Chapter 9 Flashback - December 7, 1944 - Lemberg, France**

(You have asked for some more details about some of our battles, and this one took place around Lemberg, France on or about December 7, 1944. It had rained all night and the clouds were still hanging low when we moved out. The jumping-off point was about three miles over hilly terrain. When the dawn

broke, we formed in attack with "F" Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon in the lead. There was a mushy bottomed valley that had to be crossed to get at the hill where the enemy had fire superiority. S/Sgt. Iglowicz was hit in the leg, and I gave him first aid which amounted to pouring sulfa into the wound and dressing it with a pad that every soldier carried to keep it clean and slow down the bleeding. He ordered me to find the Captain to direct some artillery fire on the hill occupied by the enemy. As the platoon runner, it was my job to contact the Captain so I ran back looking for him only to trip over a stick and fall in front of him. He helped me get up, and I gave him S/Sgt. Iglowicz's recommendation. Captain Heuberger pulled out his map case, and showed me the terrain to point out the correct hill. That was the first time I had seen any since basic training, and had to admit that I wasn't sure which topographic hill the artillery should target. The artillery was deferred, and I went back to where the shooting seemed to have slowed. Some of our platoon had made it across the valley, but were pinned down at the bottom of the hill where the Germans had the high ground. The valley had to be crossed to get to our men at the bottom of the hill, but there were still some snipers so I ran like h-. Nothing happened and others followed until Lt. Emery felt we had enough men to charge the hill. He ordered fixed bayonets, but they had been discarded. We charged up the hill, and out of the corner of my eye I saw condensed breath coming out of the ground. Two Germans immedi-



ately Popped up with their hands held high and knocking off their helmets. They don't know how close I came to blasting them because adrenaline was pumping full tilt, and the safety was off my rifle for just such a surprise. Although they did scare the hell out of me, I held my fire and told them to get the f- down the hill before I killed them. They completely understood and ran down the hill with their hands held high yelling comrade to the platoons following behind. Why I didn't pull the trigger, I'll never know. We continued the attack, and secured two more hills without enemy resistance. We later hit the ground when we saw two German soldiers coming down a path out of Lemberg. They had no idea we were there, and walked into an ambush. One was killed outright, and the other was seriously wounded. He pleaded "comrade, comrade", but was silenced by Lt. Emery. We then dug in for the night with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon prepared to take the brunt of the attack by the Germans coming out of Lemberg.

About 1:00am, the German attack began. It was directed toward the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon that was backing us up. The Krauts had taken another way out of Lemberg, and circled around to hit us from the opposite direction with the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon taking the attack instead of Lt. Emery's 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. We tried to help as much as we could, somehow the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon held against three assaults. At dawn, more German infantry backed by a mounted 20 mm rapid fire flak

wagon exploded every object it hit established superiority of fire which changed the course of battle. The Krauts began yelling, "Pigs give up or die!" I couldn't bring myself to believe we were being beaten by those bastards. Those that could, ran from the deadly fire. Lt. Emery finally gave the order to retreat, and we got the hell out of there with them firing right into us as we crossed the valley to the opposite hill that we had taken the day before. I had buried the 536 radio, fearing capture.

We had been exposed to the intense cold most of the night in our holes. Our limbs were numb, but we made them work like they had never worked before. One can make numb legs run fast when his life is at stake.

T/Sgt. Rudolph was right behind me along with Lt. Emery, and we made it safely to the other hill. We immediately began digging in for another attack. A German artillery barrage came in on us, and we hit the ground. Three burst occurred above us and shrapnel hit Rudolph. I gave him first aid, and he was evacuated. I continued digging a foxhole, but Lt. Emery told me that we were going to counter-attack. However, nothing seemed to be happening so I kept on digging. The snow began falling, so I gathered some branches to place over the hole. As time passed, it became obvious that no counter-attack was going to be ordered. Lt. Emery later suggested that he share the hole with his platoon runner, and we stayed



in the hole that night. The next morning, we moved out to retake the hill we were driven from the day before. We found no resistance. About 10 German soldiers and 14 of our troops had been killed. I lost Cooper there, and I'll never be able to describe the feeling I had when I saw him lying there with a bullet hole through his head. There were three young A.S.T.P. boys lying side by side apart from the others, all with bullet holes in their heads and arms tied behind them with signal wire. They had been assassinated! We surmised that their deaths was a payback for the ambush of the two German soldiers two day before. The total dead or missing in action was 57 men out of our company with a normal roster of 120.

We had gone three days without rest or much sleep, and were exhausted. We were moved back to battalion reserve. As we were marching back, I cried like a baby between hurling profanity at the Krauts. When we finally make it back to reserve in a house, I sat in a corner by myself and didn't want to talk to anyone. I don't know how long I sat on the floor in the corner, but after a while Karkoski and Rogers came and made me go with them. We were all still dazed, but I learned to "hate" from that experience.)

We had a regimental combat team parade today with 5,000 men marching together. It was inspiring to see all those troops in one place. A couple of days later, we rode about 35 miles to

participate in a parade for the 7<sup>th</sup> Army Commander, General Haislip. On the way, we observed the German people bringing in the harvest. Much to our surprise, they were still cutting wheat with large sickles. There was essentially no motorized equipment, but their productivity from the rich farm land had yielded abundant crops for many, many years.

A combat infantryman wears three bandoleers and a full cartridge belt of M-1 ammunition plus three hand grenades. I also carried four grenades that could be launched from my rifle, two or three K-rations, a canteen of water, a 536 radio until it was buried, a blanket roll, a rifle, and a helmet. Sometimes I wonder how we climbed mountains, waded streams, and marched as far as we did.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Army ordered a 2:00am start on a search of their entire area for black market contraband, A.W.O.L. soldiers, and undercover weapons. Our assignment for the search was the large area of Pforzheim. We found many bombed out buildings and climbed many stairs, but in only one partially standing apartment building did we find anything which was some pretty Fraulines that were living there.

On July 27, 1945, I received the Bronze Star from General Withers A. Burress on the Pforzheim Garrison Parade Grounds, and later the Good Conduct Medal from Capt. Heuberger. I also have the Combat Infantryman's Badge,



and the European Theater of Operations Ribbon with two stars. Incidentally, Harry has one more decoration that I wish which is his Purple Heart. It is a very beautiful medal, but I do not wish to have it.

We had a class in sabotage this afternoon to keep us alert for any German attempts against the Army of Occupation. It is surprising what a little planning and explosives can do toward utter destruction.

The Colonel personally inspected our 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon which is very unusual as the Captain is the highest ranking officer that usually does it. We passed with flying colors. Colonel Maloney is always with the troops on hikes, in sports, and whenever we are on the drill field. This means a great deal to us.

Lt. Rudolph invited Ralph, Knight, and me over to Company "E" where he is now assigned since receiving his battlefield commission. He is a gentleman for whom I gained a lot of respect. We sure miss him!

In your letter, you mentioned Mary Ann coming to see you with Hubert Johnson. I was glad to find out about her. I lost interest when she never answered my letter, but one can't entirely forget the past and from time to time I wondered what happened to her.

Tonight, we heard about the atomic bomb being dropped on the Japs which we all thought was a great idea because it might force them to give up. We subsequently heard it took a second atomic bomb to convince them.

## Chapter 10 V.J. Day

Today, August 12<sup>th</sup>, we heard that the Jap war is over. However, it has not been confirmed. If it is true, then all we have to worry about is getting home. There are many rumors flying around about our division heading for home. Our Battalion Commander does not believe we are going back to the States. There are too many other divisions over here with "high point" men that will probably go home before we.

The Jap situation looks damn good with the 3<sup>rd</sup> fleet steaming toward Japan to sign the official surrender papers. We have heard that if re-deployment to the States isn't halted by tomorrow, we will go. When it happens, I will believe it. The guys are betting 50 - 50 now, and it was 25 - 75 that we would stay here.

Back in October 1944, when we were shipping over, our ship's rudder broke. We almost ran into another ship in our convoy. Guess they somehow fixed it. Later we sailed past two freighters that were burning and beginning to sink near the Straits of Gibraltar. We thought

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they had run into each other because the sea was still rough. We later found that they were torpedoed less than six hours before by German subs. Our ship was General George Washington, and we should have drawn submarine pay because we were 20 feet below the engine room and waterline. We were stacked six deep with little or no room to slide into the bunk space, further turning in the space was almost impossible. If the guy on the top bunk got sea sick, it was too bad below.

The orders were canceled this afternoon, and we are not coming home. I'm afraid that we low point soldiers are slated for occupation duty. We had a V.J. parade this afternoon. A program was later dedicated to all the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion boys killed in combat.

(The highest point in my military career came on April 22, 1945. Our mission was to eliminate all German resistance in 11 towns and three hills surrounding Stuttgart. We no sooner jumped off onto one of the forested hills above Stuttgart when we saw a German soldier in the woods waving a white flag on the end of his rifle. He wanted to surrender, and indicated there were many others who wanted to give up. We finally wound up with 185 prisoners to guard, and march down into Stuttgart where there were many German civilians who cried and carried on as we marched by. A great day for American combat soldiers and my squad.)

It finally happened. I obtained a furlough to see Brother Harry, and I am leaving tomorrow, August 31<sup>st</sup>. I have seven days plus travel time so no complaints. I catch a train in Stuttgart and travel straight through to Paris in 24 hours.

We met at Rainbow Corner where there is a Red Cross Canteen for servicemen in Paris. We soon after sent cablegrams home to let our parents know we had finally reunited. Harry had a few scars, but was otherwise in good condition. Our ideas about combat were much the same. Both of us realize we were very lucky to survive with the help of God. Harry couldn't have found a better place to be assigned just outside of Paris in Ballancourt. However, what he went through deserves the very best. We rode the Metro and transportation free. Harry was an able guide in pointing out landmarks. When we were riding on the Metro, two young innocent looking French girls seemed to be eyeing us, so we moved over and started talking to them. Our French was poor and their English was almost non-existent, so we tried communicating in German. We believed we had managed to make a date for 6:00pm at the base of the Eiffel Tower. We took a positive approach and arrived 15 minutes early, but were doubtful they would show. Much to our surprise, we eagerly watched as they approached smiling and laughing. As they drew closer, there seemed to be a third person walking with them. The older third person turned out to be their



mother. We realized that she was a important part of the date. Harry and I accepted their Mom as part of the bargain. She seemed to enjoy the evening at the "Follies Bergere" as much or more than her daughters. We bid them "adieu" after dinner, and went to the Grand Central Club, a hotel leased by the Army, where we spent the night.

My return trip was uneventful, and I don't believe Harry or I could have had a better time together. It looks like the 100<sup>th</sup> Division is going home, but we low pointers aren't going home with it. We are now waiting orders for transfer to another outfit. In effect, my acting S/Sgt. rank will in all probability not transfer with me, and I will revert to PFC.

I have become an official member of the "Sons of Bitche". In order to qualify, you had to serve in the division before March 16, 1945, the day the 100<sup>th</sup> took Bitche. They named our chapter "Spitzburg Hill" which caused the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion so much misery in taking Bitche.

Our old buddy S/Sgt. Melvin Denham wrote us from Okinawa, in the South Pacific. He said that his Army Postal Unit left Marseilles before V.J. day and took 61 days going through the Panama Canal before reaching their destination. (Earlier in the manuscript, I mentioned Snowflake, Arizona and a call to Denny years later on a family vacation to see how he was getting along from his battle wounds.)

Ralph Karkoski is being transferred, and I hate to see him go because we have been friends since joining the 100<sup>th</sup> as A.S.T.P. transfers from Ft. Benning. I don't believe they come any better than he. Harry is going to the University of Manchester in jolly old England. Leave it to brother to work out an educational opportunity like that.

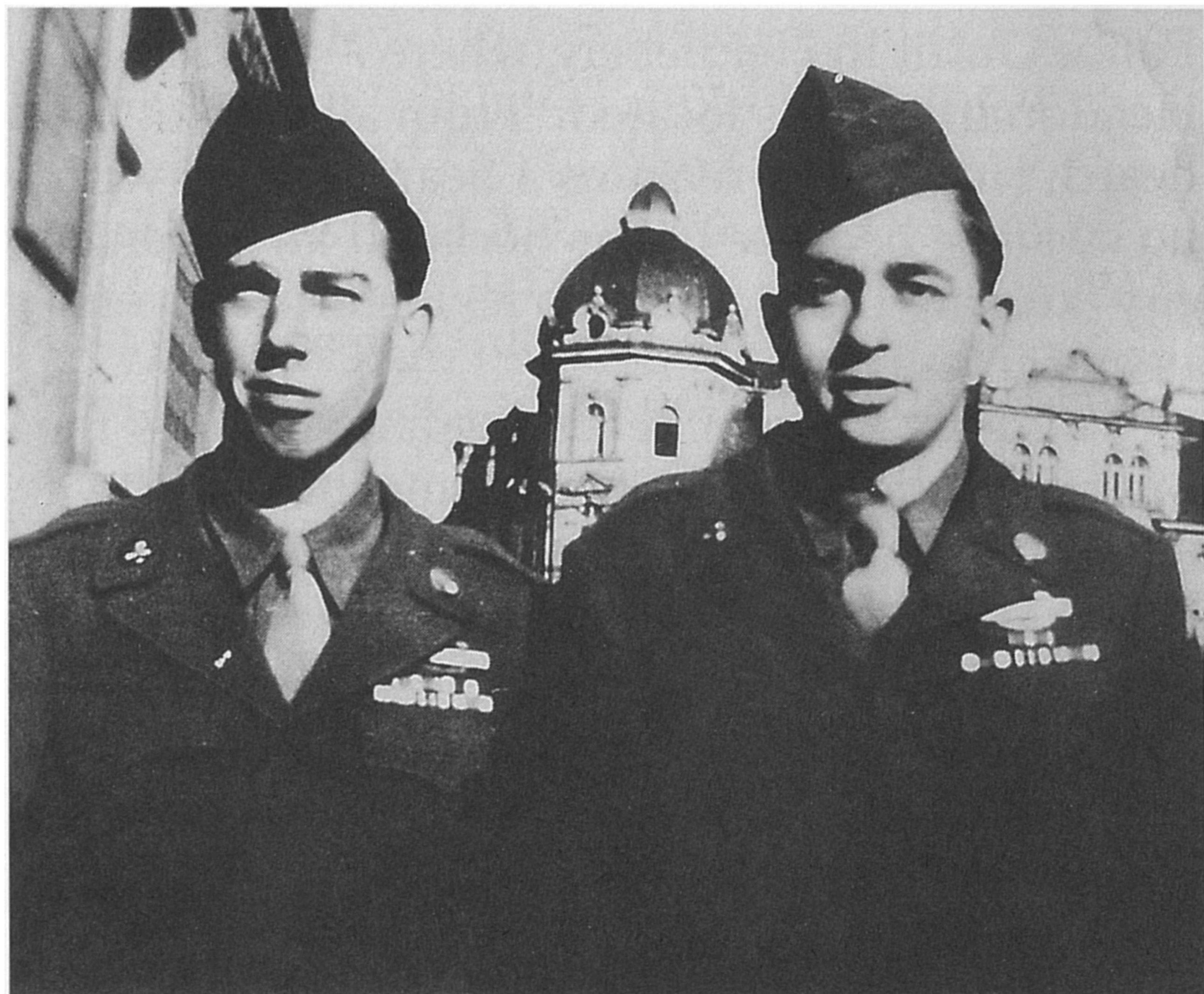
I received a five day pass to the Rhineland, and the tour was wonderful in such beautiful country. The German National Monument overlooks the Rhine Valley, and on the mountain side there are vineyards that face the sun in terraced stone patterns that probably took centuries to build. I recall from my study of Latin, that Germanic tribes gave Julius Caesar's legions trouble in this area back about 100 A.D. The town where we stayed was Assmannhausen. Our hotel was on the banks of the Rhine, and across the river was a large castle. The main event aside from drinking mucho wine, was a boat trip down the Rhine toward Coblenz.

## Chapter 11 504th M.P. Batallion

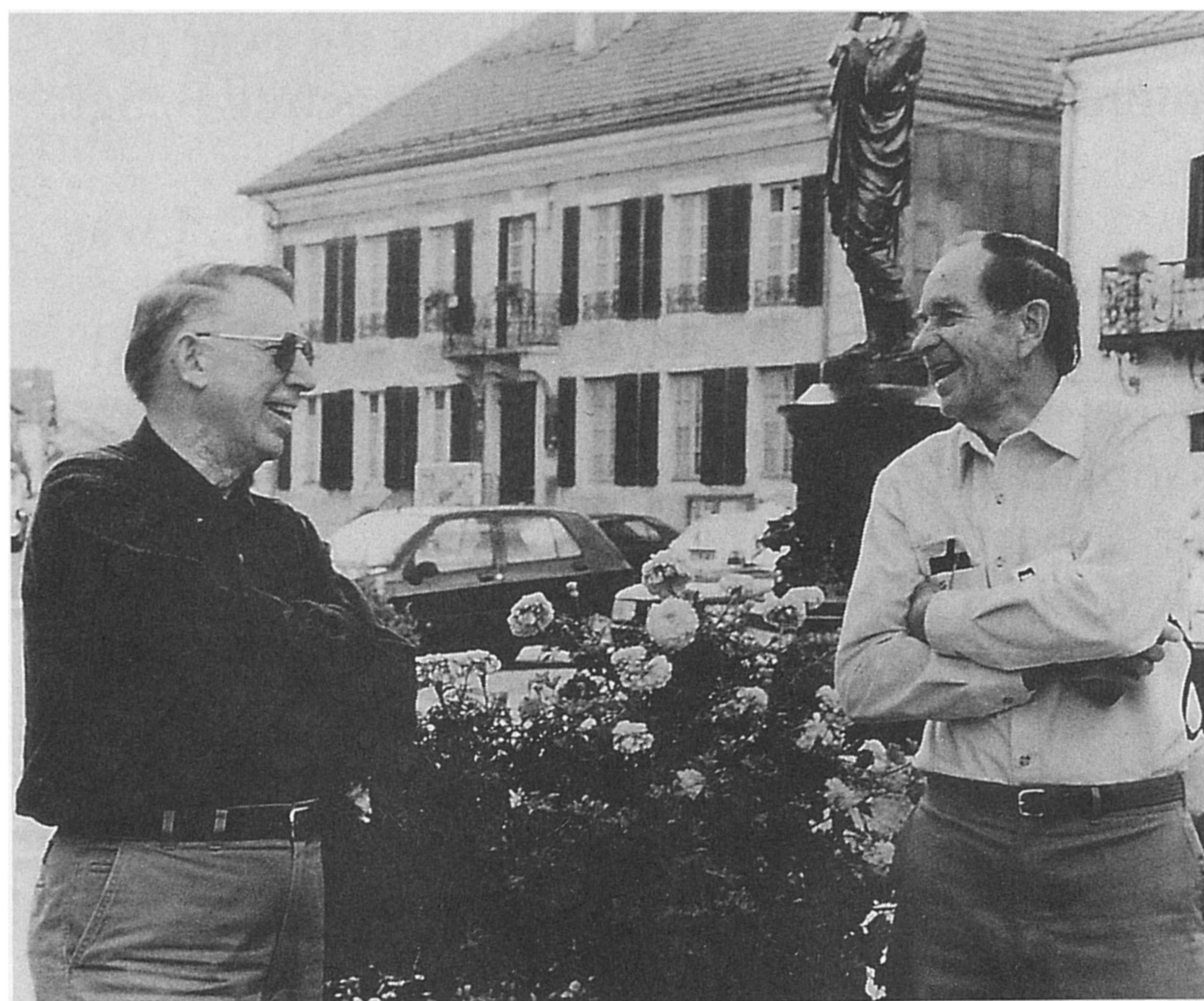
When I returned to the German Garrison in Pforzheim, the only 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon soldier that remained was Bill Rogers. Everyone else had shipped out or was on pass. The following day, October 15<sup>th</sup>, Bill Rogers, Will Rice, and I with 46 points received orders to report to a Military

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**M.P.'s L to R: Bingham and Rogers**



**IN France 50yrs Later - L to R: Bingham & Rogers**



Police Outfit in Heidleberg where 7<sup>th</sup> Army Headquarters was located. From all I have heard, Heidelberg remains a beautiful city with no damage because it was declared an "open city" during the war due to its historic university and interest.

I don't know if becoming a member of the Military Police will agree with me, but no one asked me about it so I guess I will like it. In a way, I am glad to leave because there is Beaucoups guard duty to pull now that no one is left in the platoon.

Before I transferred from "F" Company, Lt. Nicholson, Present Commander, told me that there was a good possibility of my rating going through. Colonel Maloney must have taken some action for me. After a week if I hear no more of it, I will bust myself from acting S/Sgt.

In the process of becoming an M.P., I was asked many questions in Heidelberg where headquarters was located. I told them I could type, and the next thing I knew I was sent to Göppingen. There, I was introduced to the job of Provost Clerk which entailed typing reports on accidents, arrests, and traffic violations. This is the first real break for me in this man's Army, so you can bet I am going to try and do my best. Bill Rogers and Will Rice are assigned to platoons, and will pull guard with patrol duty which I am exempt. Further, my quarters appears better than theirs.



Tomorrow, I bid my teens good-bye forever when on October 22<sup>nd</sup> my 20<sup>th</sup> year commences. Bill and I went down to the showers this afternoon which was next to a swimming pool. We later visited the Red Cross Club that must have been a full fledged Nazi home because of its elegance. So far, I've lived a fairly fast life, but think it's time to slow down and take my foot off the throttle. Hope mail catches up because it's my main morale builder.

Another day in the office, and soon I will be wearing a white collar after the combat dirt comes off my mind and body. Only three mistakes were made on a three page report which is prima for me. Some of the fellows are going back to Heidelberg to M.P. school, but that doesn't include me because I am working in the office. Time is passing rapidly now that I have something to do besides thinking of home.

A wonderful invention "war"! It makes so many common people miserable. I have to clean my "45" automatic pistol tonight for tomorrow's inspection. The "45" is the official weapon of the M.P.'s which excludes the trusty M-1 rifle, the standard weapon of the Army Infantry. A "45" weighs about 2 pounds compared with 9 pounds for an M-1 which increased to 11 pounds when loaded, a bit of a difference.

The inspection went O.K., but didn't compare with the ole infantry. It gave me some time to consider the human mind that forgets all the trials of life, and remembers only happiness and pleasure. In a way that is good, but the American people forget too easily the price paid for victory. There are many that will never forget, but will the majority remember? Now there is an impending threat to our future security in Russia with her communistic trends spreading too far over the earth's surface. Will there come a day when this "ism" will try to interfere with democracy for which we have fought so long and hard? If so, why not try to stop the menace before it gets too much Momentum?

My new address is PFC Hal Bingham, Company "B", 504<sup>th</sup> M.P. BN., APO 758, C/O P.M., N.Y., N.Y. Incidentally, while I was still in the infantry, my whole squad was PFC's just like their Squad Leader. I will admit that when my Lt. said to go ahead and put the stripes on my uniform, I began using Sgt. on my return address. Needless to say, I jumped the gun. However, I did my job as Squad Leader and believed I deserved the rating.

You spoke of the 71<sup>st</sup> Division, and asked if I had contact with them. We remember them only too well because after the 100<sup>th</sup> would attack and gain ground, they would occupy our positions to relieve us so we could attack again. No offense to them because they came on line March 14<sup>th</sup>, and March 15<sup>th</sup> was the day of the big push and we were a veteran outfit.



A C-47 plane crashed outside of Goppingen with ten men on board, and we were called to investigate. All personnel on board were killed and burned to some extent. The plane was flying in fog and hit a mountain. There have been four plane crashes in the general area in the past six weeks, so there have been significant investigations. Seven Poles were brought in and locked up because they had a "pistol" and were firing flares. The plane may have mistaken the flares as a landing signal.

The M.P.s are supposed to set an example for the rest of the soldiers, so we have four complete sets of uniforms. In the infantry, we only had two sets and most of the guys had only one. Further, the M.P.s get more and better supplies because they are a 7<sup>th</sup> Army unit and do not have to deal with passing supplies down through echelon. Conversely, the infantry line companies are the lowest echelon in the Army after division, regiment, and battalion.

I received a letter from Webb that was written when he returned from pass on the Riveria. He went to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon Quarters, and there was no 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. Boy, that must have been some feeling with all your buddies gone. After all, most of us guys were like brothers to each other for about a year and a half, so when the group broke up it was sort of like leaving home.

Today is Armistice Day and 27 years ago the war to end all wars was over. Pop sacrificed in that war, and his two sons sacrificed in the second world war. The way things are going, we are already beginning to lose what we paid a high price for. Maybe I am looking at the pessimistic side of the picture and here's hoping I am wrong for the future of the world.

A jeep was stolen from the 504<sup>th</sup> Motor Pool right under our noses. Things are getting bad when the M.P.s cannot secure their own property. The C.O. is really burned up with the result that we may receive a week's restriction.

I told Ranny, the cook and my roommate, about my hopes of becoming a doctor someday, and found that he has an uncle who is a doctor. He told Ranny that the going was tough, but if a fellow likes his work, he will make it all right. I received a Christmas package from Mary Jean today. It was very thoughtful of her.

It is getting colder and colder which would make a tough winter outside in a foxhole. The German people tell us that there is a heavy snowfall here because of our close proximity to the Bavarian Alps. My ole buddy, Bill Rogers, returned from two week's training in the M.P.s in Heidelberg. I asked the First Sgt. if Bill could bunk with me now that Ranney has been temporarily transferred. Bill told me that he had seen Parker, Webb, and Knight. They all seemed to be in decent outfits after transferring out of the 100<sup>th</sup>.



Bill and I ate turkey dinner together, and we remembered our Thanksgiving dinner a year ago which was the first real meal we received after going into combat. Just as the cooks started dishing it out near our foxholes, it began to rain so we had watered cold turkey. S/Sgt. Iglowicz and S/Sgt. Rudolph were with us then and they were the “best morale” builders in the company. They kept everyone going when things were the toughest, but it turned out that they were both wounded within a couple of days of each other. (My wife and I visited them and their wives in New York six years after the war.)

Bill and I work together when he is Provost Sgt. He just came in with a traffic violation, and I helped him process it through the Civilian Police. We are about as good a team as they make them, “first in combat and first in occupation”!

We are moving to Giessen, Germany which is about 50 miles north of Frankfurt. Why? It has been said of the American Army that the only reason we won the war was because we were so mixed up the Krauts never knew what we were going to do next. The first foxhole I dug behind the artillery placements before we went on line, must have been 6 feet deep.

The past few days, we have been packing in Goppingen and unpacking in Giessen, where the billets are not as nice as the ones we left. This supposedly is a former hotel, but there is only one bath. I am beginning to wonder what these people did to keep clean. Tanglefoot Gormsen and Milton Bloom are my new roommates. We do not have a basin with hot water or cold running water. Tanglefoot is going to be Company "B" Club Manager, and Milt is the Company Clerk. Bill Rogers, is assigned downstairs one floor.

Harry's letters describe happiness in Manchester, England even though he received a "Dear John" letter from Georgiann. Advancement in my present Provost Clerk job is unlikely because the 504<sup>th</sup> has an excess of non-coms. It is sad, but after all I am not a regular Army man and I do not plan to make this my life's work. If and when my discharge comes, I should have more experience and better capacity for using my head. Right?

Yesterday, a guy who works for the Red Cross showed up, and wants to organize a band. He will furnish all the instruments including a sax and clarinet, so I will probably join.

Bill wanted me to go on a raid with him to a small town not far from Giessen. Some Negro soldiers were breaking into a jail to liberate some of their Fraulines who had been jailed



there on suspicion of venereal disease. It turned out that there were no Negro soldiers and only one girl had escaped. The old jailer didn't seem to know too much, so we went through the cells trying to find more info. The condition of the female prisoners was bad. They were all jammed into small rooms and sleeping on the floor with no blankets. They had not had a bath for a week or two. They called us every name in the book, and had few clothes on. My education of the fairer sex was greatly increased. We then went to the Burgermeister, and asked why he had called the M.P.s. His evidence was hearsay at best, and I told him we were not going to ride 20 miles to protect his jail on such slim provocation. My greatest pastime is giving the Krauts a hard time.

I have "vielen arbeiten" because the M.P.s have brought in many reports. It seems everyone is in a hurry to get somewhere because most of the violations were speeding. Tomorrow evening, Doc Walker, Red Edwards, three others, and I are playing for a Christmas Eve dance. We played for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division officers last night, and I hope to get into better shape on the clarinet and eventually play sax.

Harry wrote two letters, one from London, and the other from Dublin, Ireland. Quite a globe trotter that son of yours.

Giessen is located in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division zone and one of their battalion headquarters is just around the corner from us. They are strict on uniform and military courtesy. They have given us a hard time, but now we are beginning to pick up as many of their men as they have ours. I just sit back and get a big bang out of hearing our guys bitch about the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division.

Bill is Provost Sgt. today, and together we have processed many different cases. Some of them take quite a bit of discretion, but we stumble and fumble forward with a gradual learning of how to be "good" M.P.s.

We just received shots for influenza and tetanus which have temporarily put me out of action. When tomorrow morning rolls around, everything should be in order. I just do not seem to fly on an even course when they punch those damn holes in me.

(The New Year's Eve attack on the 7<sup>th</sup> Army last year became known as "Nordwind", and the attack on the 399<sup>th</sup> Infantry came out of Bitche. The "screaming meemies" they threw in by the dozen sounded like a freight train and caused a tremendous explosion on target. They scared the h- out of us, but fortunately were not too accurate. The 399<sup>th</sup> Infantry "bent" under the attack, but did not "bulge" as the Armies did up North in late December. There was no New Year's Day meal one year ago, but the



January 1, 1945 meal by the 504<sup>th</sup> M.P. BN. was great. The meal consisted of turkey, potatoes, gravy, beans, ice-cream, cake, apple, candy bar, and a cigar for every man.)

It seems that since the band started, we have been rather busy. Last night, we started at 7:00pm, and played for the Red Cross until 9:00pm. We then played at the M.P. Club from 10:00pm until 1:00am. We are scheduled to play again tonight, so with practice during the performance, my ability on both the sax and clarinet is improving. We have a lot of fun playing, and it keeps our minds occupied.

An older U.N. female employee believes the American public is not too concerned about the situation over here as long as the boys get home. I had believed that most of the Americans were very conscious of our foreign policy because we are determining the future of the world. What surprised me is that the lady from the U.N. doesn't seem to see the big picture, and the condition these people that is placed before her every day. A new article has stated that the average German does not like the Americans, and I can't say that I am very pleased with that opinion. Not that I have any particular love for these people, but they are one of the most important nations in Europe and their economy is critical to the stability of this part of the world.

The telegram from Harry to you sounded good. You must understand that he has 59 points, and I have only 46. This makes the difference in his heading home in January.

There are three fellows getting married in the company next month to Latvian girls, and I do not envy them. I don't understand why a guy would trade his chances at a wonderful American girl over here. It is not that they don't have personality, character, and shape, but they were brought up to appreciate one thing and we another.

## **Chapter 12 Point System & Redeployment**

We just have difficulty believing that the Army has done it to us again. On the front page of the "Stars and Stripes" it states, "Re-deployment Program Stopped." Fifty pointers may get home by March, and the "close out forces" will be home by July. As a member of the close out forces, I keep thinking about all those guys back home that never served. I do realize that we need to keep a large occupation force overseas to straighten out Europe and Asia, once and for all.



As far as work is concerned, all I do is type and look important. Occasionally, I give out some information to some G.I. who has gone astray or to an unsuspecting German for speeding or causing trouble. You should hear some of the pathetic hard luck stories to which I have become hardened. We also guard the railroad station, and from 3,000 to 5,000 people go through there a day. After 10:30pm the people that arrive cannot leave the station because of curfew, so they sleep on the ground until morning when we open the gates. A carton of cigarettes supposedly will sell for \$30 to \$50 on the black market there.

Another one of our duties is V.D. control. We get some interesting cases. We sent M.P.s to pick up the Fraulines that cause trouble, and take them to the "Kronkenhausen". I book all of them and receive the results of their test, which are positive approximately 30% of the time. Most of the girls incriminate the French troops, but it is harder to control here because personal hygiene is difficult to maintain without soap and water.

Bill and I went to Wetzlar, a town about 12 kilometers from Giessen. We were trying to straighten the provost work out with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division because we are attached to them for operations. In the Provost Office, there is significant information of the American Military Government regarding occupational operations

and laws. I just typed a bulletin from Military Government which stated that many German Nationals will be returning to this area that settled in Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary after Germany occupied those countries. I don't believe they liked leaving those nice homes which they acquired by fair means or foul to return to their native land which is rather "kaput".

Lt. Rudolph is just 30 miles from here in Marburg as a German Prisoner of War Discharge Officer. He speaks fluent German, and is undoubtedly doing a good job. There is a going away party tonight for Tanglefoot, Bloom, Doc Walker, Sgt. Byrns, Red Edwards, and about 30 others. This is the largest shipment this company has had since I joined. If the "Stars and Stripes" prints the truth, the 45 and 46 pointers will be about three weeks behind them.

Lt. Gunn requested that I travel with him to Friedberg which is about 15 miles from here. The 10<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division is taking over command of this area. Presently, we are responsible for the "landkries" of Giessen which is equal to a county back in the states. By working jeep patrols over the area and keeping close contact with the local police of the several small towns, we have been able to control the region. All the surrounding towns are in fairly good shape, but Giessen University has been bombed.



The March 8<sup>th</sup>, "Stars and Stripes" stated that all men with 45 points and 2- years of service will be out of the E.T.O. by April 30<sup>th</sup>. Our Battalion Headquarters called and told the 1<sup>st</sup>/Sgt. to prepare the 46 pointers for shipment into the "pipeline" by next Wednesday.

Bill and I started together at Ft. Benning in the A.S.T.P. The first time I met him, we were pulling early morning K.P., and he was whistling while mopping the floor which made me wonder if there was something wrong with the guy acting like that so early in the morning. We transferred to Ft. Bragg, went overseas, saw combat, and subsequently transferred out of the 100<sup>th</sup> Division to the 504<sup>th</sup> M.P.s. We have the same points, have been Honor Guards at weddings, played basketball on the same team, and ran the Provost Office together. It looks like I am not going to get rid of the guy until we go home.

We made it into the pipeline on March 13<sup>th</sup>, and traveled to Schetzingen about 10 miles from Heidelberg. The latest is that we are leaving for Le Havre, France in about three days, and will travel by train (boxcar). No troops are to stay at the Port of Debarkation over ten days. We have been restricted the last couple of days, so no telegrams.

(The last letter that was preserved for posterity was dated March 13<sup>th</sup>, and was received March 18, 1946.) We shipped across the Atlantic on a victory ship, and I remember seeing the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor which brought tears to my eyes. I was not home, but certainly a lot closer than I had been for some time!

Camp Kilmer was our destination, and where we spent a few days before I caught a train to Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas.





At End of War II Bingham