

# Vignettes of the War

by Glenn Breeden, 398-E

*Glenn Breeden came in contact with some great people including General Burress and Ingrid Bergman.*

**“General Burress, could you tell me how my son, Glenn Breeden, is doing? He works for you.”**

1st Sergeant Johnson of Company E found me one day to give me some special instructions. I hardly ever remembered seeing him during combat, although the headquarters of the company was usually not more than a few hundred yards behind the lines. But he found me this day because he had something special to tell me. He said he didn't know what the reason was, but that Major General Burress, the 100th's commanding officer, had sent instructions that I was to be at Division Headquarters at 9 a.m. the next day. A jeep would be at our company CP (command post) for me to ride in to the Division Headquarters, which was a few miles away. I believe we were in the outskirts of Stuttgart at that time and I remember that we were billeted in fairly nice apartments on a street named Martin Luther Strasse. How could I forget that name, since I am a Lutheran?! It was here that I saw the first three-wheeled Volkswagen parked in a garage next to the home in which we were staying.

I dutifully found the cleanest uniform I could. Incidentally, Sergeant Johnson told me “Breeden, don't forget to salute.” During the war, it was never the practice of anyone to salute anyone in combat. Officers didn't want to be recognized by the enemy if they could help it.

When I reached the impressive building in Stuttgart which contained General Burress' headquarters, I was ushered into an area outside of his office. There were two other GIs, one a lieutenant, waiting to see him. In our conversation, it was determined that we all happened to be from Virginia, and at least two were from Richmond. It was then that we had a clue as to what was happening.

General Burress was a very thoughtful officer and concerned about his men. He was kind enough to invite us to a brief conversation with him, individually, so that he could tell us that he had communicated by phone with our parents when he was in Richmond a few weeks before. General Burress along with some other generals, including Patton, had traveled to the USA to promote the sale of war bonds. In addition, they had a few weeks with their families, who they had not seen for about a year.

General Burress told me that he had spoken with my mother. She asked the General, “How is my son, Glenn, doing?” Mothers don't realize the size of an infantry division. She sent me her love and good wishes, and she wanted me to know that Richmond was still the same as it was when I left.

The conversation probably didn't last over four minutes. It was not the only time I had seen General Burress, since I had seen him during training, but it was the first time I had spoken directly with him. I didn't forget to salute, and he returned it appropriately. Later, after reading some documentation on General Burress, I learned that he not only had gone back to visit his family, who were then living in Richmond, but he had been born in Richmond. He attended VMI, had served in the First World War as a lieutenant and later had served as Commandant of Cadets at VMI. He had a rather large number of friends in the Richmond area.

## **The Stuttgart Area Story, and How to Be a Part of the Biography of World Famous Stars**

Obviously, compared with combat which had just ceased, duty in Bad Canstatt was actually fairly pleasant. In Bad Canstatt, a northern suburb of Stuttgart, we had a chance to enjoy some sports, sightseeing, movies, and see some USO shows.

One of my assignments as a squad leader was to put men on guard duty to keep from losing any of our stored materials. Scavengers abounded, looking for anything they could steal to sell or use, particularly fuel.

One of the men serving guard duty was Ed Clebock. Ed was a small, street smart, tough PFC from Perth Amboy, New Jersey. Whether he was careless or just unlucky, he was to my knowledge, the most wounded PFC in our platoon. He was wounded on duty three times. The first time he had returned quickly after having his wounds patched up. He couldn't have been back more than a few weeks before

he was wounded again. The guys helped get him to the medics and into an ambulance. Then, if you can imagine this, the ambulance fell under artillery fire and was badly damaged. I heard that one of the occupants was killed. Clebock was wounded for the second time on the same day. I guess he qualified for three Purple Hearts. Eventually he returned to the platoon near the end of the war, so his wounds were possibly life savers!

One evening, in late July, Clebock had been posted at a checkpoint not far from Stuttgart. At this point in the war, Germans of relatively high rank in political or military circles had been trying to get out of Germany by any means possible. The Germans would steal American uniforms and vehicles, which were later recovered in Switzerland. So orders were issued to stop, check, and authenticate that the vehicles had proper GIs in it when it passed through these check points. It was dusk on this particular evening when a standard GI sedan approached the checkpoint. Clebock and Pierce, both PFCs, were on duty and operating under the orders mentioned.

They stood in the road and held up their hands giving the HALT sign. The GI sedan slowed, but did not fully stop, and what looked like a lieutenant inside saluted to them. Whether or not he mistook the HALT signal for a salute is unknown, but the sedan proceeded through the checkpoint without stopping. Clebock yelled at them, but apparently they did not hear anything above the engine sound. A couple of hundred feet behind the olive colored GI sedan, a black Mercedes was following. They were signaled to stop also, but they proceeded through the checkpoint with a wave by the driver. At this point, Clebock was fed up so he took his .45 caliber pistol and put a couple of slugs into the Mercedes. The Mercedes stopped!

It was good that Clebock fired the .45 because it is a slower speed projectile. Had Pierce fired the carbine he was carrying, he might have done severe damage to the occupants. As Pierce was a pretty laid-back character, the vehicles probably would have been out of range by the time he decided to shoot.

The occupants crawled out of the Mercedes into the ditch yelling "Don't shoot, don't shoot!" By this time the USO occupant of the forward sedan was running back yelling the same thing. The occupants of the Mercedes were Americans coming to Stuttgart to do a USO show. They were not regular USO troopers. The people coming out of the ditch, not particularly pleased at the welcome they had been given, included: Larry Adler, the harmonica virtuoso, Ingrid Bergman, the actress, and Jack Benny, the world renowned comedian.

The USO official who had saluted Clebock was dressed almost like an officer. He was pretty shaken up but relieved since no one appeared to be damaged. Larry Adler had a slightly bruised back where the slug had almost penetrated the material in the back seat of the Mercedes. The Officer of the Guard was called by Walter Kirk, who was acting Corporal of the Guard that night back at Company E headquarters. Walt also went to the checkpoint with the O.G., and Walt explained to me that he had a chance to talk for several minutes with Ingrid Bergman. This was the most enjoyable duty he had for months. The Officer of the Guard cleared up the details and instructed the USO official to stop when he was signaled to stop in the future. That probably was a superfluous instruction.

The next night, in the huge Stuttgart Stadium arena, thousands gathered to enjoy the USO program. Sitting in the front row were Clebock, Pierce, Walter Kirk and others from our Company E. After the show they were photographed shaking hands with Jack Benny, Ingrid Bergman, and Larry Adler. "All is Forgiven" was the headline which later appeared under the photo in the Star and Stripes newspaper. Larry Adler pulled up his shirt and showed Walter Kirk the slightly purple bruise on his back that the slug had made when it stopped an inch or two short of getting into his skin. This incident is remembered in the biography of Ingrid Bergman.

### **Scotland, 1946**

At least I was not entirely responsible for the closing Glasgow, Scotland's Red Cross facility, but I was involved.

After returning from Switzerland, I applied for the next possible trip to attend a university somewhere in Europe. My first choice was Biarritz, where I expected to learn French. I didn't get my first choice, but I was very lucky to get my second choice, Glasgow University in Scotland.

Although an entirely different experience, I would put it close to the trip to Switzerland where I had such fun. In Scotland, I attended classes in political economics and psychology. For my physical education I took up golf at the local public golf course. I saved a couple of score cards, showing a 44 and a 46 for nine holes.

One cold winter day, I took a train to Edinburgh, visited the Old Castle, and walked over as much of the city as I could. It would have been a longer and more pleasant day if it had been July 23 instead of January 23, 1946, but it is a beautiful and historic city. I promised I would someday return.

The educational courses were enlightening, but the social activities were more fun. There was a Red Cross club in Glasgow in the substantial Grand Hotel, where they put up GIs who were traveling through on leave or on the way to catch a boat back to the US. Dances were held twice a week, so I learned to dance there. And the Red Cross girls and Scottish lassies were friendly. I enjoyed the bull sessions we had with the other GIs who were staying at a boarding house in Glasgow. After dinner each evening we talked and smoked over our tea, if we were not going to the Red Cross Club to dance, play pool or ping pong, or meet a date.

The Scottish lass I dated was nice, and we enjoyed the first-class theater, movies, and concerts. While I was there, it was decided that the Red Cross Club of Glasgow would close. One of the Red Cross ladies asked me to participate in the closing ceremony. I said I would be glad to participate. They planned a day of special activities. Some people from the press came. They had a substantial luncheon for the people of Glasgow who had contributed time, funds, and personal services to the Red Cross Club of Glasgow. They had an elevated dais on a stage in the auditorium where we had held the dances and where they now served the lunch for those who attended. They had me as the typical GI and another fellow as the typical sailor (but no Marine). No officer was involved as this was the enlisted men's Red Cross. We were interviewed, and our answers were published in local newspapers.

One of the speakers on the dais later became the Exchequer of England, Lord Provost Hector M'Neill. Mostly I remember the Scot seated next to me for the special lunch. Sir Harry Lauder was about 75 years old. He had lost his own son in battle during WWI. This man was an internationally-known comedian, actor, and singer. He was noted for always appearing in Scottish dress, as he was this day, January 26, 1946. You could compare Sir Harry to Bob Hope in his dedication to the servicemen, but Sir Harry did it in both world wars. In 1919 the King knighted him for his dedication to entertaining the British and Allied troops in WWI, and his contribution to the life of the people of the British Isles. I had the privilege of listening to stories of his travels. Perhaps we got along well because my grandfather was the same age as Sir Harry, and I told him that I remembered as a child cranking our RCA Victrola and playing Sir Harry Lauder records that my grandfather owned. Also, I explained that, as a young man, my grandfather played the guitar and other stringed instruments with a traveling group of entertainers in about 1891 to 1892, which was when Harry Lauder started his career in Scotland. It was a fascinating lunch experience for a 20-year-old American a long way from home. If I was asked to name the most unique individual I met as a result of my military service, it would be Sir Harry Lauder.

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