

An Act of Mercy

by Art Byrnes, 397-C

One night during the battle in Heilbronn, our platoon was dug in on a hillside adjoining a railroad tunnel. Getting up that hill was particularly difficult because, apart from small arms and artillery fire, it was apparently a part of a vineyard and lots of small regularly spaced fences, to get over, under, or around.

I was dug in with Clarence Dracker, the company wire man. Above the sound of an incoming 88 or mortar rounds we could hear a moaning coming from just ahead of us.

I made my way to a couple of adjoining holes to try to find out who was hit, no one knew, and the groaning got louder.

About ten or so yards ahead I found a badly wounded German soldier. Because earlier in the day we had passed a German hospital we decided to try to get him back there.

Clarence and I managed to drag him down the hill and then to the hospital, but getting him over all those low fences (I wasn't that strong, and he was writhing in pain) was more difficult than we figured on, but somehow we made it.

Clarence spoke a bit of German, so when we got to the hospital, he searched around until he came upon a doctor in a room with a nurse. I recall Clarence shouting out what I figured to be pretty dire and direct orders to them. They got him on a stretcher and moved him to another room.

The last I saw of the German soldier, he was lying on a table. I could see with the light of a flashlight, that he had from the amount of blood flowing, a pretty serious stomach wound. We often wondered if he survived, and if so, what became of him.

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