

Some Fascinating Occupation Duties

by Dennis Carmichael, 399-G

Ulm

Our combat experiences obviously made lasting impressions on us. Less impressive but I think more significant in an historical sense were 100th activities after the cease-fire and during our occupation of Stuttgart just before. It was our good fortune to have been placed on 7th Army reserve in late April, following the agony of Heilbronn. Most of us were unaware that our presence in Stuttgart was a result of political differences between de Gaulle and Roosevelt. Stuttgart had been assigned as a 7th Army area of operation, but de Gaulle insisted that it should be the French Army's designated objective. The French violated Eisenhower's orders and attacked and occupied Stuttgart just a day before the 100th arrived after moving south from Heilbronn. So for a few days the 100th and French troops were busily occupying Stuttgart. I met some French soldiers in Stuttgart and though curious about their presence, had no idea that we were playing a role in a confrontation between the US and the French. The French, of course, lost the argument and Stuttgart remained in the American zone of occupation. De Gaulle, ordered out of Stuttgart, left only to disregard assigned areas of operation by attacking and occupying Ulm.

Just days before the cease-fire order we left Stuttgart and engaged in mopping-up operations, moving southeast beyond Ulm. Shortly after the cease-fire we were ordered back to Ulm to maintain security and probably to make certain the French left. Our assignments in Ulm resulted in some interesting historical events.

My platoon received a complaint from a civilian that some French soldiers were causing problems at a location nearby. Two of us were dispatched to the location. We parked our Jeep against the doorway to the apartment and ran up the stairs to check out the problem. We went in the apartment with our weapons ready. There we were astonished to find two rather attractive frauleins and two French army officers having a small party. The officers decided to make a hasty exit and took off through a rear balcony. For us it was an amusing incident but apparently not so for the French officers. It was evident that not all of the French soldiers had left Ulm.

While in Ulm we were ordered to prevent Nazi officials from escaping capture by fleeing into Switzerland and Italy. We were to accomplish this by setting up guardpost on the north side of the Danube where a temporary bridge had been constructed. (Martin Bormann was rumored to have escaped from Hitler's bunker in Berlin and headed south to Switzerland.) My platoon was assigned the task of manning the guardpost. We were told that some Nazis might be in American uniforms and vehicles. It was our duty to stop every vehicle and individual attempting to cross over the bridge. We had to be certain to positively identify each of the individuals. We gained a little satisfaction in interrogating some of the Americans because they were obviously rear echelon troops and a little arrogant when asked to show ID or to get out of their vehicle. When they hesitated they received a more intensive interrogation. The arrogant ones were mostly rear-echelon officers who disliked being questioned by a couple of somewhat unkept PFCs. We never discovered anyone trying to escape capture, but it was fun trying for a few days.

While on this assignment but not on duty, I walked on the street by the river when a civilian came up to me and greeted me in English. We exchanged a few remarks and then he asked if I might know his brother who lived in the US. Having been confronted with this question before I was a little amused and then said maybe; what's his name. He replied his name was Albert Einstein. He was a pleasant man and we continued our conversation assuring him that I did know of him. He spoke the truth as I determined later.

Sometime later and still in Ulm we were assigned guard duty at a DP camp populated by Russian and Polish slave laborers. The camp was located on the site of a park alongside the Danube. The camp had about eight barracks-type buildings and was surrounded by a high barbed-wire fence. We had a small hut that served as a guardpost and living quarters at the entrance to the camp. The Germans had obviously used this hut previously. The DPs appeared healthy and there was no evidence that they had been mistreated. We allowed them to come and leave the camp as long as they obeyed curfew hours and caused no problems among the German civilians. There were, in fact, some minor problems as the DPs had the urge to celebrate their liberation. Many of the female DPs used the Danube to bath and wash clothes and we soon noticed that they had drawn an audience of American GIs on the other side of the river. A British army unit made temporary camp in the same park while en route from Italy to England. While on guard one day an English soldier asked me if I would like a motorcycle as he would be unable to take it with him to England. I readily agreed and became its owner for the rest of the time we guarded the DP camp. Rides were offered the DPs and some enjoyed being my passenger for short trips around the park.

It was probably late June when the DP camp was evacuated and the DPs left Ulm for their homes. We accompanied them to the train station and watched them board boxcars. They were happy and celebrating as the train was preparing to leave. A couple of the DPs motioned me to climb up with them to celebrate. I complied and was offered a jar of schnapps (the schnapps had probably been liberated from some German's cellar while out of the camp). It was understood that

toasts would be drunk and in the process the jar consumed in one swallow. Fortunately the train soon pulled out and the raucous party for me was over. The effects of that one or two toasts stayed with me for several hours.

The fraternization policy was in effect and we were told that it was our duty to enforce it when we were on patrol duty. While on one of those patrols my partner and I saw an American GI and a civilian woman walking together. We stopped the jeep and confronted the GI who was in a transportation army unit recently arrived in Ulm. We informed him that he was violating the fraternization rule and told him to stop and let the woman go on. He ignored us and walked on with the woman. We followed and told him that we would use force if he didn't comply. He continued on saying to us to go ahead and shoot. My partner and I were unwilling to press the issue any further. We got back in our jeep a little amazed at the GI's courage, and the GI and the woman holding hands moved blissfully away.

Bad Cannstatt

We moved from Ulm to Bad Cannstatt where we had few duties and time to visit nearby Stuttgart. We were admonished to be very careful and only go with someone else. Certain places were noted as off limits. We asked why and we were told that Communist groups were active in Stuttgart and that we must avoid them. While in Bad Cannstatt, two of us were selected to accompany a CIC agent and a civilian to an industrial site downtown. The agent explained that he was investigating a complaint by the civilian who had been a slave laborer at the site. He said that he had been mistreated there. He was to identify the person responsible for the mistreatment. We accompanied them to the site and into the manager's office. After a short time they returned and we dropped them off at CIC quarters. We were never informed about the results of confrontation of the slave laborer and the alleged perpetrator.

July 2003 Association Newsletter