

An Amazing Coincidence . . .

His childhood doctor treated his battle injuries

by Roland Giduz, 399-C

His pediatrician as a child turned up to treat Ernest Kirchheimer of Co. D, 397th, when he was injured during the battle of Heilbronn April 12, 1945.

A native of Heilbronn where his family had lived for generations, Kirchheimer and his family fled Germany as persecuted Jews in 1938 when he was not quite 13-years-old. They settled in Houston where they were living when young Kirchheimer went into the Army. He realized that the 100th Division was approaching his native city in Germany as the battle for Heilbronn raged.

The amazing coincidence, possibly one that saved his life, happened after the 19-year-old Kirchheimer was resting with his platoon at the entrance to a railroad tunnel in the bombed-out city. German artillery from the surrounding hills struck the area and Kirchheimer sustained shrapnel injuries in both legs. He was taken to a nearby hospital where the emergency room was staffed by a German army doctor and nurse.

"Imagine their astonishment when I spoke to them not only in fluent German, but in the local dialect. The doctor looked at my dog tag and I could see his amazement when he read my name. He asked if I remembered him. Of course I did. His home and office had been in the house where we lived. Our families had been good friends.

"It was a strange and emotional experience for both of us. But we spoke only a few minutes. There were other wounded to take care of. I was given an injection and when I woke up I was in an American field hospital." Later he was sent to England for further treatment before discharge.

Kirchheimer never saw the doctor again, but after the war his grateful parents got in touch with the doctor and his wife. The families corresponded for many years.