

Move Out!

by Albert E. Holm, 399-D

“Load up! We are moving out. Grab your gear and load up. We are moving north and go back into combat. On your feet . . . move out!”

The whole company was loaded on six-by-six trucks and a convoy of the first battalion was on the move. Except for us four GIs. My jeep driver could not get the engine started! *Gerer . . . gerer . . . gerer . . .* but no *vaaroom!* The trucks headed out, one after another, but not us. Just more *gerer . . . gerer . . . gerer*.

It’s flooded! Maybe it’s not getting any gas. Oh no, I can smell the gas! Then, it must be flooded! How do you start the engine when its flooded? You let it rest and drain out the extra gas. But, we can’t wait!! We have to go with the convoy!

Whitey, where are they going? Up north! How far up north? I don’t know, just follow the trucks! That was all the brass told me. I’m just an acting sergeant. What do I know?

Well, finally we got it started. Let’s get going and catch up to the convoy!

Out to the main road through town. There was only one road, so we had to be right. There was an MP wearing an MP arm band pointing “That way.” North. . . .

Off we went, trying to catch up. Not a truck to be seen! Faster, faster, we have to catch up with the convoy!

Then there was another MP to signal the way, turn here, go that way! Faster, faster, I still don’t see any trucks! We must have gone six or eight miles, maybe more, but no houses or trucks, no other crossroads either, so we must still be behind the convoy.

Finally, we saw another MP and turned to the east on another blacktop road. There was a sign-post with the name of the next French town, down that road. No trucks in sight. No MP either. Step on it!! Faster, faster. We have to catch up!

Nothing on the road at all. No trucks, no carts, no people either. If we go too far we will be in Germany! Yeah, maybe we will find Hitler! Faster, faster, we were going as fast as that jeep could go!

We went at least five miles east down that road. Then, there was another town just ahead. We blew into town and there was no one to be seen. All the shutters were closed. Not a dog or a cat outside. Nothing—nothing—we stopped after a block or two. It was all too strange!

Then, a shutter opened! An American flag appeared, then a French flag, then more shutters and more flags! People came out of the houses carrying wine bottles and glasses, and cheering. Welcome Yanks!!

In my best French, I asked, “*Vou est le Doiches sol-dot-en?*”

“Two blocks over” was the reply.

“MOVE IT!” I ordered. We went slowly to the end of the street and looked in the direction the Frenchman had pointed.

Oh my God! There was a convoy of German trucks loading with black uniformed SS troops! We saw them . . . they saw us! “Get us out of here!” I ordered the driver. Of course the order was not necessary! He was already going backwards at a fast clip. He pulled a U-ee, . . . and out of town we flew.

What was the most improbable to me is that there must have been a rear guard at the outskirts of town. Particularly SS troops! They could have taken us out so easily on our way into town. Why didn’t they shoot?

Maybe they didn’t want to reveal their position until they could see our strength. . . . I guess they thought we were a recon jeep, or whatever. They could have shot us on the way out, too. Maybe they wanted to join their convoy and not fight alone. Fight, that is a laugh! Three carbines and my Colt .45 was our total armament! We didn’t even have our 81mm with us.

When we got back to the right town we saw our convoy trucks leaving a small wooded area on their way back to the motor pool. We pulled in from where they were leaving. That was where the last MP should have waved us off the road. Evidently, he had left his post a little early. Maybe he didn’t know

how many trucks and jeeps there were in the convoy. Anyway, we flew right by that spot a half-hour before, or maybe it was a lifetime ago! We found our outfit.

The chow trucks were there and we made it in time for a hot meal. Another lucky day! It was God's will that protected us. Leonardo Sevierie was rubbing his rosary, and Eddie Youngmark and I offered a Lutheran prayer of thanks. I think the driver was Jewish, so we had all the bases covered.

A "SNAFU" day. It could have been worse! We could have missed that hot meal. I guess we were really lucky! At least we were the first US troops in that town!

July 2010 Association Newsletter