

# Front Line Dentistry

## (My Day at the Dentist)

by H. Foster Mitchem, 397-C

We were dug-in outside Urbach, a small battered and abandoned French town, which was between our lines and the German lines. The weather was miserable. What a surprise to hear someone call for four volunteers, one from each platoon, to go to the dentist. I didn't mind a dental visit, although some of my buddies had an awful fear of any type of dentistry.

I soon found myself, with three others, working our way up a hill to some high ground in back of our fox-holes. Here the weapons platoon had set up their machine guns. We now headed down the back of the hill and came upon a deep crater. We began to speculate as to what could have caused a hole that size. It was as big as a small room. Could it have been an airborne bomb, or some large railroad cannon or mortar that the "Jerries" were using? I am sure we were all wondering what would happen if something like that should hit our foxhole. Walking on down the hill, and continuing about a half mile, we came to the forward aid- station which was set up in a large barn. The divisional dentist was busy, along with his technician who supplied foot power for the drill. He filled a couple of cavities for me, after which I watched a movie in the loft while waiting for the others.

Upon returning to the company position, I discovered that there had been a firefight with the "Jerries," who had infiltrated the town. A member of the weapons platoon, SSgt Ed Williams, was killed as well as Jim Ackers from my squad. Two other men from my squad had been captured, Bill Stoewer, and Eric Weingarten. Our squad was now down to four men. That night four of us climbed out of our foxholes with a stretcher to recover the body of SSgt Williams. His carbine was still aimed in the direction of the enemy, and we had to remove the weapon from his arms. Needless to say, we tried to be as quiet as possible.

The next day some of us riflemen went into Urbach looking for Bill and Eric. We found two smashed rifles. The Germans had apparently bashed them against the wall of the building. I seem to recall the stock of one had Barbara carved on it and I thought it was Bill's rifle.

A few years ago, I noticed a request for information about the death of SSgt Williams on our website. I placed a call to Florida and spoke with his nephew. I was also pleased to see Eric at a couple of our reunions. He filled me in on some of the events that occurred that day when I was getting my teeth fixed.

Perhaps that dental appointment influenced me to become a dentist. It certainly proved to be a day that will be forever drilled into my memory.

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