

were pressed, escorting our erstwhile prisoners back to their car at the motor pool, and seeing them safely on their way again. And that's what happened.

I presume the accusations of the drunken, paranoid club manager were simply ignored; probably the chance of his even remembering many of the evening's events was remote. I do know that we rapidly returned our charges to their car. I had been quite vocal all evening about my distaste for, and lack of belief in, what we were being called upon to do. I was convinced that we were just helping to indulge the fantasies of a nasty, drunken bigot, and I was not hesitant to express my opinion. Perhaps this had helped to ease potential tension; I don't know. Besides, they probably were dealing in tires on the black market; nearly everyone was dealing in something.

On the way back to the motor pool I was still muttering and sputtering to myself when the major put a soft hand on my arm. Wasn't this a night that signified peace and joy to us, he asked, and should I let myself get so upset over a triviality at such a time? I had almost forgotten, it was still Christmas Eve—or rather it wasn't any more, since it was long after midnight. A little abashed, I relaxed a bit and we finally parted, friends for the moment at least. The Russians drove off, I never heard any more about the incident, and I finally got to my high school friend's billet at about three o'clock Christmas morning, to tell him a tale I'm not sure he's ever believed.

## XXVI. THE END

So ends my personal saga of World War II, much less eventful than some and yet more so than many. I haven't told it all, of course. For one thing, I don't really remember it all; for another, a lot of things I do remember are dull and repetitive, which is integrally characteristic of Army life as I knew it. However, I have tried to preserve some of my more vivid memories by writing them down, and having been enabled to combine them with the "G" Company Newsletter accounts has proven to be singularly advantageous as well.

I finished out my time in Berlin relatively uneventfully and was eventually shipped home—from Bremerhaven on the *SS Antioch Victory*—when people with 45 service points were finally eligible to go. It was on April 26, 1946 that I at last became a civilian again, ready to pick up the threads of "real life" and see if I could make something of it. Both the times and I were profoundly changed by that war, but only gradually did realization of the number and extent of the changes come.