

The Vosges



n the foothills of the Vosges mountains on the night of November 6, 1944, trucks were creeping along, bumper to bumper toward the then existing German-American battle line. There was little noise aside from the rising groan of army trucks, until even this was halted by an M. P. of the 45th Division. A Century dough foot leaned out of the rear of one of the vehicles and questioned the M. P. by asking, "Say Mac, where's this convoy going?"

"About 10 kilometers up the road", was the answer. The doughfoot looked around suspiciously and inquired, "what's up there?"

The M.P.'s reply was short, but not too sweet.

"Germans!" he said as he turned and walked away.



fter leaving the trucks that same night, Fox company marched, through a darkness that very much resembled a heavy black velvet curtain, to an assembly area behind Charlie company of the 180th Regiment, 45th Division.

The Night Behind Charley Company of the 180th

We stumbled in a single file up the eroded embankment on the left side of the road to a spot amid the dripping underbrush where we were to sleep. Orders were given and obeyed in confusion, and darkness veiled our every attempt at organization. Van Duren and I cleared a place on a steep crest, overhung with drooping pine boughs. We figured we could keep dry by lying between our shelter-halves, but the snow-chilled rain crept under us and formed little puddles that finally soaked through our once-dry bedding. After shivering for hours, we struggled out of the soaked blankets and groping in the darkness, attempted to

drive stakes and tie ropes to support our shelter-halves. Finally, in the darkness our tent stood ready, so in we went.

A bundle-like object kept crowding us, and suddenly I remembered what one of the boys was yelling a few hours before,

"Who's got me bed roll?"

"Has anybody seen me bed-roll?"

"Common, youse guys! Where's me roll?"

"I can't sleep out in the rain! Who's got me roll? Where's me roll? Me roll? Me roll?"

And now on the floor of our little tent, hours after our pleading friend had given up in disgust, we had found the missing bed-roll. With deliberation, I unrolled the orphan bed-roll and covered Van and myself with it.

"Good-nite, Van."

"Good-nite, Johnson."

— in collaboration with *E. Johnson*
and *J. Van Duren*

T

he following morning we watched tired veterans, bearing just a slight trace of a smile on their lips.... a smile of relief rather than humor, leave their holes, which we in turn occupied.

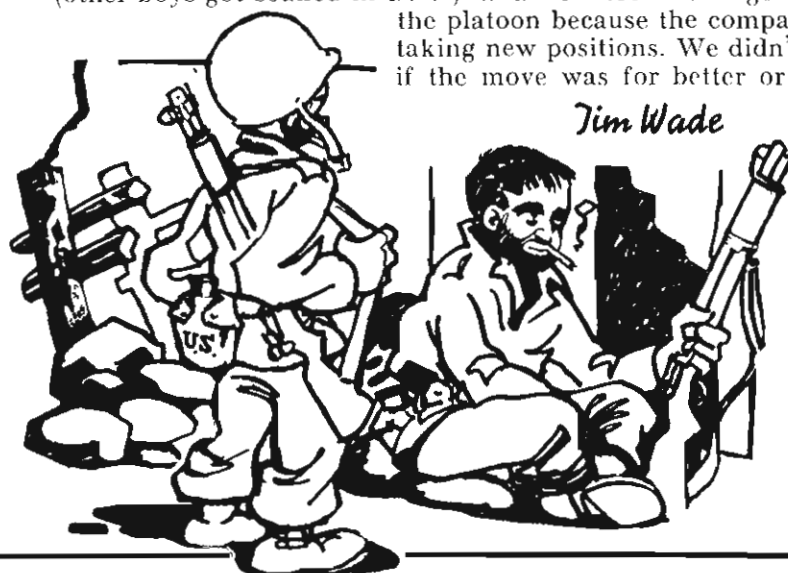
Houses Versus Fox-Holes

On November 8, just a few hours after we took over the holes of the 45th Division, Lt. Ward sent Auten, Gallegos, Rhoades, and myself into a house on the edge of Raon L'Etape, a few hundred yards in front of the Company's positions. We had a bazooka and we were "supposed" to stop any enemy tanks that came thundering down the road.

The house didn't have any windows, and we couldn't make a fire because of the observation the Jerries had, so it was a cold place. But at least we were dry. Needless to say, we were scared. At the sound of an enemy shell, we'd all jump under the beds! That night two men stood guard at the window while the other two slept under a couple of bedsprings.

Morning finally came and Sgt. Pozner ventured down to the house with some "K" rations. That day, while snooping around some Jerry equipment, I found "F" Company's first P-38. One of the fellows went behind the house to fill our canteens from a stream, and here was a shell hole big enough to bury a horse in. We knew the shells came close, but we didn't think they came that close! There were a lot of shells landing in a field to our left, and as usual, there were a few Frenchmen walking around during the shelling.

We weren't so scared the second night, but we weren't sticking our necks out. The next morning we began to like our new home (other boys got soaked in holes) and we were told to go back to the platoon because the company was taking new positions. We didn't know if the move was for better or worse.



S

gt. Levesque and his squad took up a position on the side of a steep hill overlooking the town of Raon L'Etape and the Muerthe River. On the 9th of the month, our third day in combat, we recieved our first casualty, Kinnick, who was slightly wounded by schrapnel from mortar fire.

Overlooking Raon L'Etape

When Fox Company came on line for the first time, the second squad of the second platoon was ordered to go out some two thousand yards over rough terrain to the spot where we were to make our O.P., and Levesque told us to dig in. We decided to catch up on a little sleep. They had warned us to keep one man awake in each hole. We were tired from the long march the day before and still didn't know the score about being in combat, so most of us dozed off.

As we sweated out the German artillery and mortar shells the next morning, we got a message by phone that our battalion had cut off a company of Jerries, and they were near our O.P. We were supposed to move to a new position, but Levesque decided it would be better to make a reconnaissance patrol first, so he asked for volunteers. Allen was the only one of us who spoke up. Levesque said, "Let's go, Allen and Mace." The three of us started out and covered about two and a half miles before we got back. We were very nervous and scared, but didn't hit any opposition.

When we returned the rest of the fellows wanted to know if we had seen the Germans. Levesque answered with a smile, "No, thank God!"

Kenton Mace

When ya gotta go

One mornig we crawled out of our fox-holes and started to eat our "K" rations, when all of a sudden, I got the urge "to go". I told Clay, "I think I'll go take a sun bath." So I walked out about 25 yards and saw a nice stump that I thought would be a good place. I just sat down and relaxed. Suddenly, I heard something whistling through the air. I hit the ground and the shell landed pretty close, about 15 yards, the concussion knocking me over. For a minute, I didn't know whether I was hit or not. I got up and ran for the hole. Then I felt a pain in my foot and I knew it had got me. I told Mangot that I was hit, and he yelled for "Ski", my squad leader. They brought a stretcher for me and carried me down the hill.

James Kinnick



gt. Hannigan took out the first patrol (Sgt. Stoddard's squad) to reconnoiter to the right of George company. Ellis, the first scout, spotted a road block manned by enemy soldiers, and immediately returned to the company with this information.

During our first enemy artillery barrage, Armstrong and his jeep "Nellie Fay", carrying "K"-rations to the troops, were stranded in the very center of attraction.

The First Patrol

The first squad, second platoon was picked to go on a recon patrol. Much to my regret, this was my squad and also the first patrol in the battalion. We started out early in the morning, passing through Easy company's lines. They were dug in about a third of the way up the side of a big mountain. We thought that we were doing good as we were taking the right route. We went on until about noon and decided to eat a tasty "K" ration, so two men were put on each flank about 50 yards. After we finished eating, Hannigan, the platoon sargeant, decided to go back to Easy company and go around the other side of the mountain, so we took off again, walked about 75 yards, and there I saw my first dead Jerry — what a sight to see! We continued on for about another 200 yards and stopped suddenly. I was in the rear of the squad and didn't know what was up. All at once, they turned around and some one said, "See how fast you can move." After we got back to Easy company, I learned that we had reached our objective, which was a road block.

Hannigan called back to our company C. P. and told Capt. Smith the story. We started back down the mountain to Easy company's C. P. There he told the story to Easy company's C. O. Later we learned that they had sent out a combat patrol and got to chasing these Jerries and were led into a mine field where most of the men were killed or seriously injured. This could have happened to our squad if one shot had been fired. I was too dumb to know that could have happened, but found out as time went by.

Carl Harden

The Shelling of the Nellie Fay

We went through the mountains but it wasn't near enough to the troops. The Major insisted the jeep be brought closer — a different route had to be taken. Because of this, we had to expose ourselves, which drew enemy artillery fire.

As they started shelling, the damn jeep got stuck in the mud and wouldn't budge. We left "Nellie Fay" in no seconds flat, diving into some nearby fox-holes. Steenson had a hand grenade in his pocket, and the shells were coming in so close that he heaved it a mile, for fear the concussion would set it off. Looking down the hill, we could see "Jonsie" lying flat in a puddle of water. Everytime he made a motion to move towards us, another shell would pop and he went flying back to his water-hole! The shelling kept up for ten minutes, then we ran for the jeep, unloaded the rations, pushed "Nellie" out of the mud, and took off like a bat-out-of-hell!

Thereafter, the Major decided it would be better to have the boys carry the rations 200 yards, than have the battalion pounded by artillery fire.

James Armstrong



"JONSIE, BOY WAS THAT ARTILLERY?"

"I DON'T KNOW ARMSTRONG, BUT AS SOON AS I GET SITUATED ILL INVESTIGATE!"



he following day the entire first platoon, along with one squad of the third platoon, extended over the ground vacated by Easy company.

Commanding the foremost view of Raon L'Etape stood the mountain we were later to name "Shoe Mine" or "Snow" mountain. Easy company had already taken position at the summit. On November 11th Fox company moved into this position after two or more hours of tedious climbing and marching over some of the roughest terrain ever encountered during our stay in combat. Reaching our destination, we observed with dismay, our new homes — muddy, water-filled fox holes!

Snow Mountain and a Promise

One morning we took off up a big mountain. It seemed to us, the machine gunners, that there was no end to that mountain, but we finally climbed it by going tree-to-tree. And, what was it we found on top? Dead Jerries all over the place! But all the same we started digging our new fox-holes in the snow and frozen ground. We were afraid of the Jerries, mines, and artillery. We saw our buddies hurt and killed. So then I promised God to go to church every Sunday and to confession and communion every chance I'd get, like my Mother and Father always taught me.

John Miller



he heroic story of how an aid man, Hungar, gave his life in the attempt to save a wounded infantryman comes with the next day's activities, as well as the story of Sass, Cleland, and Marcum, along with Ranieri, Lt. Lonsberg and all the other men who were there in the attempt to help.

THE STORY OF SGT. HUNGAR

Hungar and I entered the mine field, stepping into the footprints of Ashton, who was the first man to risk entry. When we found White and Armstrong of "H" company, both men had bandages on their wounds. Ashton had done this. When the improvised litter was brought in, we seemed like monsters, all crowding around in a bath tub, trying to make every move in his footprints.

Lt. Lonsberg, Sass, Marcum, and Ashton were at the foot of the litter as we placed White on it. "Doc" Ranieri had entered the field and was talking to Armstrong. Hungar and I helped place White, and then Hungar made a final inspection before we left the mine field. He spotted bleeding in White's right leg and said it needed a tourniquet to stop it. As he arose to a standing position to get the tourniquet out, he stepped back.

That one step brought on one of the worst disasters in "F" company's history, for in placing his foot on the ground around us in the mine field seemed to break into hell. ground, he exploded a German shoe mine. All the world Sass, Marcum, and Cleland were all on the ground from the concussion, cut, burned and shocked. Ranieri moved to aid Hungar and asked the other men if they were able to walk out of the mine field. Lt. Lonsberg and I carried White out, following Sass, Cleland and Marcum, who left, helping each other. Hungar was carried out shortly, and

I did not see him again until he was near the bottom of the hill. His mind was clear, and he was keeping a check on the time for his tourniquet with his own watch. We returned to our monotonous war with no idea that Hunger would later die in the hospital. He has remained in our memories ever since.

Ralph Johnson

We will always remember Hunger, not so much as a person but more as an ideal. When a long march was over, Hunger was there, patching up the blisters and listening to your ailments. He had a love for "his boys" in the company, and his folks. He spoke continually of all the things he would do back home. Whoever had the blues that didn't feel a hundred times better after he talked to Ol' "Doc Hunger!"



That afternoon, Rubano administered first aid to Leger who had received a wound in his left shoulder as the result of a mortar barrage encountered while carrying ammunition up the mountain.

Pains of Hell

When we first started our push in the Vosges Mountains, we really caught "hell" one day. Some of the other boys and I were carrying ammunition up the steep hills, and as we were climbing up, the medics were bringing our injured men down. Most of them were wounded in the legs and feet.

We were all sickened and at the same time angry. We didn't know what to say; we'd just look and cuss those "lousy" Jerries. But we kept going, and after we had gone about a thousand yards more, they threw in a barrage of mortar shells. That's when I got it.

I can't put into words how I felt, but I thought my arm was gone. It wasn't. I felt relieved but helpless.

Then Lt. Allen, who was ahead, called back and asked if anyone was hurt. I didn't say anything at the time... I couldn't! Then he called again. Champagne, who was right behind me, yelled, "Leger, you're hit! Blood is coming from your back through your clothes."

I knew it now and called, "I'm hit!"

Lt. Allen came down, but before he could get to me, Rubano was there. He took off my jacket and shirt. I wanted to see what the wound looked like, but I was afraid to look. Rubano fixed me up in no time at all.

Then the company moved on. Champagne said he would stay with me until someone could take me back to the aid station.

But ever since that day, I vowed I'd never cuss again, no matter how much I saw.

Paul Leger

The snow, for which the mountain was christened, came the following morning. With the snow, came the loss of a much-needed Texan- when Daniel accidentally hooked the trigger of his sniper's rifle while in his hole, discharging a round into his foot.



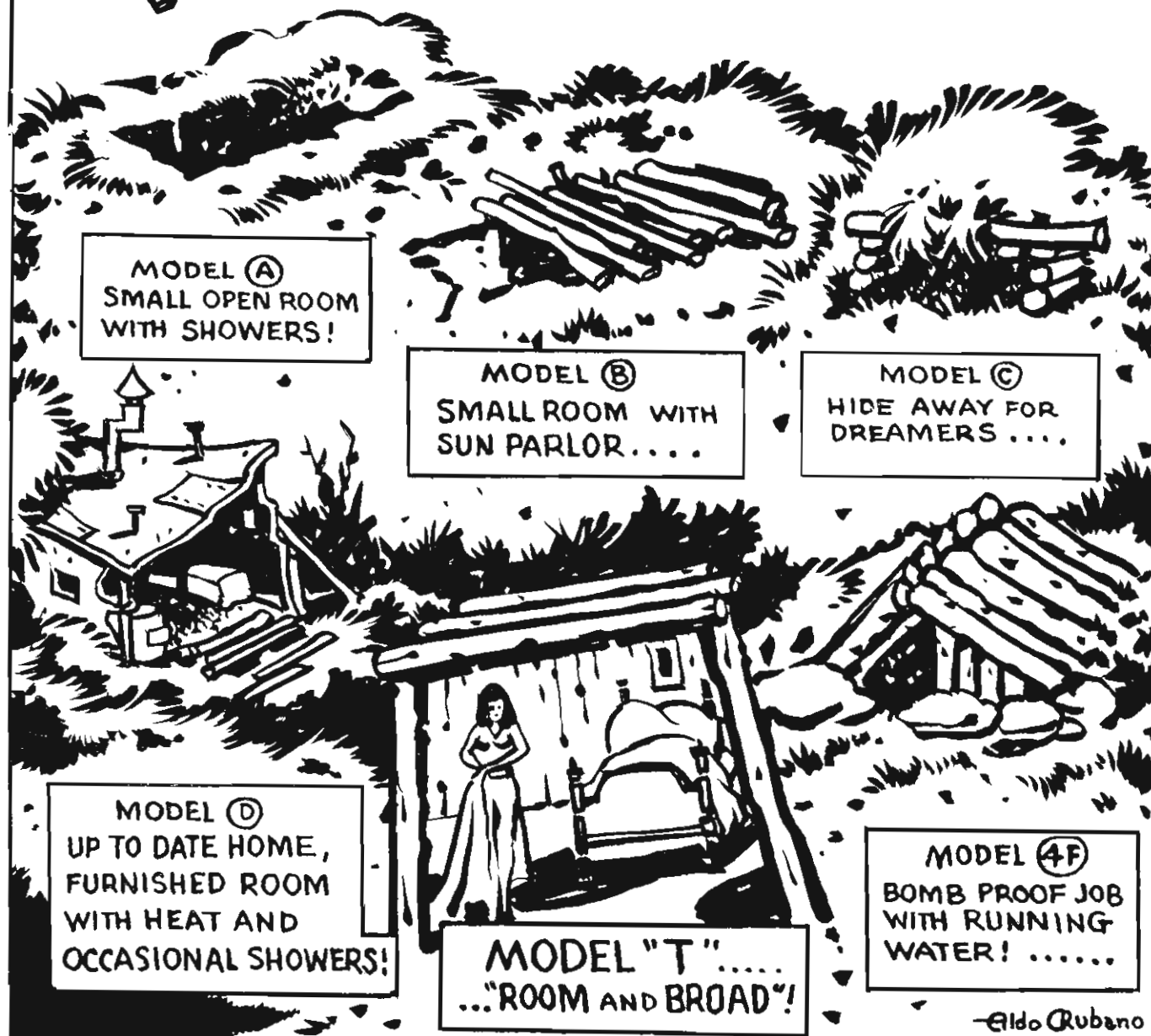
“Snow Mountain” holds the memory of cold, unappetizing meals, muddy, water-filled foxholes, dripping, snow-laden trees, and seemingly endless trips up and down the mountain. However, the country was beautiful, although no one was exactly in the mood for admiring beauty at the time. This scenery is best described by Lt. Allen in his story of Capt. Smith’s observation.

“Capt. Smith went over to take a look from “E” company’s O. P. out on the promontory nearest the Muerthe River. From this point, between the clouds that drifted by below, the mountain could be seen to drop away precipitously for nearly a thousand feet. Along the river far below, small industries were scattered above and below Raon L’Etape. Straight across the river from this point, was a small town located near the mouth of a tributary valley. Over the upper slopes and far beyond, over the wrinkled mountains, the wintery forest stretched, showing clearly what sort of country we would be fighting through. When fuzzy clouds drifted by, obscuring the view, one again felt the solitude of the mountain, cut away from the generally peaceful appearing river valley below, which the enemy held.

Further up the valley and just out of Capt. Smith’s view, the little town of Baccarat was being taken by the French. The following day we were to move into the fox holes around Baccarat guarding our only bridgehead across the Muerthe River. Our exodus from “Snow Mountain” and entrance into Baccarat was primarily by truck. Yet, in the descending of the mountain and the final searching for dug out positions around the city, all was done on foot and this meant spending many weary hours sloshing and stumbling through murky darkness.

For some of the men, the memory of Baccarat means showers and our first opportunity to sleep in houses. However, most of the abodes were of the usual models A, B, and 4F as in the illustrated fox holes on the opposite page. Our first experience with “Hot Chow” made us wonder just what satirical wit gave it that name. At least it was a change from the “K”-ration, chopped pork and egg yolks, cheese and pork loaf.

FOX HOLES



Tell me, seriously now, do you think, according to anything you might have picked up in high school Physics, it's humanly possible for two men, of full growth, local drugstore scale size, to sleep (that's sleep, spelled, "Move over and get your damn feet out of my mouth") in a black hole in the ground? Dimensions: two redeployed French shovels long, by one B. A. R. wide (rusty chamber preferred). Some whiskered, wise old man once said, "Two solid objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time".

... Silly boy -- he's got a lot to learn!

R. Gabriel

"Foxholes" — That one word embodies many of the remembrances of a G. I. in combat, and every member of "F" Company has his own memories of good and bad, wet and dry, and warm and cold nights spent in underground dugouts. They were of all sizes, shapes, and description — some for protection from rain and some from artillery. Each one was home for a few hours or nights, and it was always with a slight feeling of regret that we received the order to "Saddle-up"! Each little shelf for your M-1, ledge for rations, and puddle of water in one end — all were familiar parts of a log-covered apartment and could be found in no time flat, even in the dark. (Wasn't it always!)

Yes, just mention "Foxholes" and it'll bring back beaucoup memories.

G. Tuttle

A

fter only two comparatively blissful days at Baccarat, Saturday night brought us again on line. Our orientation by Capt. Smith was merely, "The enemy is a thousand yards to our front".

Sunday morning, Lt. Ward's platoon lead the company in an attempt to set up a left flank defense for the regiment. Aided by a squad of company mortar-men, the third platoon was moving rapidly to support the first when a merciless barrage hit amongst them. Due to the courageous action of the platoon medic, Cpl. Ranieri, five of the nine casualties were treated and removed to safety. But, four of the men, Yakimetz, Clutter, Ashton and Keel, were killed in action on this day. The wounded were Hintzel, Olinsky, Seratt, Ewing and McClenahan.

One Sunday

It was a typical fall day, cool and sunny, but like every other day we were busy digging holes. It was just then that our runner, Surmanek, came to the mortar section, located on the side of a wooded hill, and called for one of our squads. The unlucky squad reported to the C. P. and were told that they would be in support of the third platoon, whose mission was to contact the first platoon.

We got about twenty feet up the road when the air shrilled and the ground trembled as mortar shells pounded the area we were in. It was terrible. One shell scored a direct hit on the men walking. We hit the ground. Men were wounded. One man was groaning, and others lay dead in the roadway. Olinski came running across the road holding his arm which was spurting streams of blood. Manzi and the medic went to the aid of the injured men. In the midst of all this tragedy and shelling, we withdrew from the road and dug in behind a low stone wall for protection.

Meanwhile, further down the line, Ashton was instantly killed, and Hintzel and others were badly wounded. I don't think I'll ever forget that gruesome and tragic day.

Bernard Freid



ARTILLERY BARRAGE

The sub-conscious mind running wild

".... Will it get me? Bury your head, bury it! What'll Mom Oh, God, please, please That was close!! Where the hell is everyone? How come those damn Jerries are throwing it all at me?? Aw, Honey, I gotta get back to you, I GOTTA!! We're going to have great times together Geeziz, that schrapnel came close!! How I hate the thought of the next one. Will it get me?? How? Will it?? Will it?? Aw honey, hold me to you, hold me tight, Hold me Hold me. I'm not afraid to die in your arms. MMMMMM, How nice that feels, You're so warm Who cares about cold, wet mud, freezing hands, numb feet, beating heart Who cares now what comes? What goes? Who lives? Who dies? I have you Honey, You're sweet I love you. that's all that matters, You're sweet I love you Kiss me Hon, Kiss me...."

Aldo Rubano

YAKIMETZ: "Yak" was from Brooklyn and he figured the heart of the world beat there. He was a swell foot-ball player and the kind of a guy you'd like just to "bat the breeze" with. You didn't have to be around him long to know what was nearest his heart... his mother, his sister, and his girl.

JAMES CLUTTER: We remembr him lugging that twenty pound B. A. R. in the Vosges. Even when we had a particularly difficult day he was anxious to do something for the boys. He kidded and joked when everyone else was blue, and soon he'd have the whole squad feeling better. Ask a Fox company man about Clutter and he'd answer, "Clutter? He was a damn good JOE."

ROY KEEL: Roy, quiet to all outward appearances, was a friend of many. He was chummy with the boys and always ready for a good bull session. Roy, who spoke often of his wife and his home, Maryland, was a fine man who will live in our hearts for years to come.

ROGER ASHTON: A 19 year old Iowa boy, was one of the most friendly and best liked boys in the companie... A good athlete and possessing a fine mind. Roger also enjoyed church, music and a good book. He was a sincere, considerate, and wholesome even-tempered boy with a warm personality... one that will not be easily forgotten by his buddies.

In the afternoon, our company by-passed a farm house which later produced ten surrendering German soldiers. For hours, these Nazis had watched file upon file of American soldiers slowly advancing across the open field, but had been afraid to open fire with their two light machine guns. The amazed sixteen men, to whom the Jerries surrendered, were a ration crew lead by Lt. Allen.

Fox company's first prisoners

Fox company's first prisoners were flushed from a desolate farmhouse sheltered in a fringe of pines. We were returning on a ration detail when we fell upon these "supermen" who decided the "Fuhrer" had stepped off on the wrong foot. Of these ten, half were wounded and half still had a semblance of their "superman" state. As bad as they looked, however, we green troops, still held to the idea that they potentially were dangerous.

After looking for pistols, watches, and the like, we began the long trip to battalion through the errie darkness that was closing in on us.

Oh, yes, that slimy mud! Much of the way was through a pine woods which was held by our forces. We lived in constant fear that some sentry might see the file of Jerries and mistake it for a Kraut patrol. We kept our rifles at the ready and walked like close descendants of Daniel Boone and warned the Germans to do the same.

Everthing was going along with a minimum of falling over limbs and dropping in unseen holes, when suddenly — I saw stars! In the pitch black I had stumbled over a stump, and down I slid into the ooze. My rifle departed in one direction and my helmet in another. My heart vacated it's normal position and "dug in" in the vicinity of my tongue. I thought I had "had it" for sure.

Gently, a hand reached for my shoulder, and I found myself being raised to my feet. My helmet found itself resting on my head, and a mud covered rifle took shape in my hands. It seemed to me that my wishes were being answered by an act of God. However powerful he may be, that wasn't the answer. It was the Kraut prisoners. They were anxious to get back to an area of safety and decided now was no time for their guard to be rolling in the mire.

Sheldon Kofod

During these attacks many times we were unable to carry blankets or shelter halves, and this night found us in shallow holes, partially covered by rain coats. (These rain coats came equipped with rain.)

The march over the next mountain lasted late into the night of November 20th. Twelve hours of darkness and rain. No time to dig holes before dark... no sleep or rest. The chilled November wind blew our wet clothes against our chillblained bodies and brought with it more down-pours of rain to assure our continual discomfort. The morning didn't bring relief, it brought only daylight. The reason for discribing this night in particular, is that although many nights compare with it, none surpass it in actual physical wretchedness.

F

or a few hours after dark, a burning French house in the valley before us defied the rain and gave us a dark shadowed illumination. The house had been set afire by Lt. Silk of Easy company, when he and a few of his men roused the enemy from this position with almost hand-to-hand fighting.

The Night of the Burning House

The night of Nov. 20th, like so many other endless nights spent in the depressing Vosges, found the men of the company with the then all too-familiar feeling of coldness, wetness and never-ending fatigue. The month of November possesses a wind that, when you're already soaked from continually drenched clothes that cling to your body, cuts through your skin, leaving your bones stiff and sore . . . The Vosges Mountains, bad enough during the day, were a horrid dream at night . . . a blackness that seeps in during late afternoon, reaching out and clinging on to leaves, trees and undergrowth, and finally settling back, fully aware of its intensity, to await day-break that seems centuries away.

Such was the night of November 20, when the men saw in the distance a light that would dance in and around the thick trees of the forest . . . to see a light in the middle of all that darkness and rain was something! . . . something penetrating and shattering the blackness! We continued moving forward like moths attracted to a lamp . . . what was it? Could we get warm, dry our clothes, read, by its light, some of our old mail? Funny the way your imagination can work . . . you see a straw, reach for it, and your mind plays with it . . . as we drew closer, we saw flames shooting sky-high . . . crackling timber, sparks, and the sounds of exploding bullets . . . strange and out-of-place here. It was good to see that at least fire could get the better of the rain. The fire, that of a ramshackled old French farm house, lit up the sides of the surrounding hills. The company made only a halfhearted attempt at digging in on the side of the hill facing the burning house, as it was too wet, cold, late and dark to make any kind of headway on sleeping holes. Those that did were soon discouraged or rained-out. Some buddies

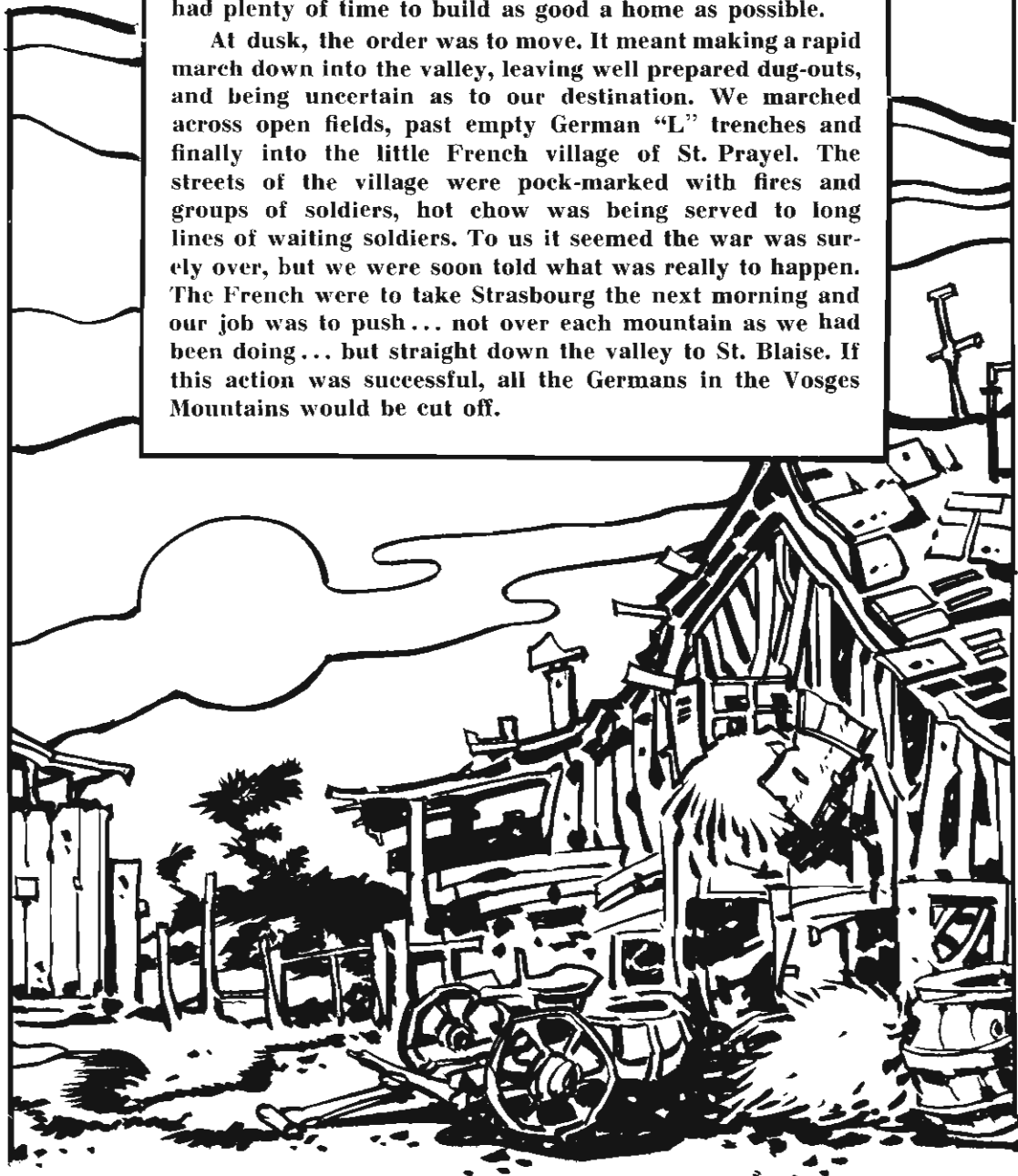
cuddled up in their raincoats and tried to get some rest, while others just sat watching the fascinating flames of the fire until dawn. The night was long and miserable. Sleep was impossible . . . you don't sleep when you're wringing wet . . . you smoke, wet, crumbly cigarettes, think about the times you've been in the hot sun, or maybe just grumble at your wretched existence . . . Dawn finally came, and with it the relief from a long, miserable night.

Richard Gabriel

T

he first platoon led the company to the crest of the next mountain. The rain had gone with the night and our bodies had dried our clothes. This was November 21st and we reached the objective with no opposition. The defensive was planned and everyone had plenty of time to build as good a home as possible.

At dusk, the order was to move. It meant making a rapid march down into the valley, leaving well prepared dug-outs, and being uncertain as to our destination. We marched across open fields, past empty German "L" trenches and finally into the little French village of St. Prayel. The streets of the village were pock-marked with fires and groups of soldiers, hot chow was being served to long lines of waiting soldiers. To us it seemed the war was surely over, but we were soon told what was really to happen. The French were to take Strasbourg the next morning and our job was to push... not over each mountain as we had been doing... but straight down the valley to St. Blaise. If this action was successful, all the Germans in the Vosges Mountains would be cut off.



Surprise! St. Prayel!

Crash! Another tree had been dropped down to provide logs for our dug-outs. All around the hill one could see men shoveling dirt, chopping down trees, moving logs over to the holes being dug. Fox company was digging in for the night. It was starting to get dark, and many of the dug-outs were almost completed when the order came down from battalion to move out. To the men, exhausted from a day's hiking up mountainous terrain and digging foxholes, this order came as a shock. The men were disgusted.

"Dammit! Wha'da they think we are?" exclaimed more than a few as they started to pack up.

Then it was down the mountain in the dark. You were tired. You stumbled and fell. You cursed everybody and everything up and down the line. But somehow, you made it.

Not caring much where you were going, you were surprised to find yourself entering a small French town. St. Prayel was the name of it and it was on the night of November 21st, back in 1944. You were even more surprised to find other outfits in the town. But your surprise reached its climax when you found that you were moving into houses to sleep for the night. That was almost unbelievable! You had never slept in a house since hitting the line. Mud, dirt, and holes, had been your beds up to now. What a break!

The houses were pretty broken down at that... dirty, shabby, but they seemed like palaces that night! Sleeping on a mattress or on hay in a barn... it was Heaven!

Best Bless



he part Fox company was to play in this strategy was told us after breakfast in our thatched roof domicile. Our sleep had been in the hay loft above, and we felt refreshed and in the rare mood of wanting to do our mission.

The company was to be the division point, moving on trucks, and the second platoon roared out in front, piled on the front and back of armored vehicles of the 100th Recon Troops.

Hardly had the task force started than we were stopped by a mined road block. A German 50 mm. mortar zeroed in on the head of our column and immediately we dispersed...but too late to prevent casualties. Of all the wounded, none were from Fox company. Late in the evening the second platoon moved past the road-block and into Senones. The citizens were in the streets, smiling and shouting, "Vive la Amerique". The young mademoiselles were laughing and kissing the grimy soldiers as they climbed down from the armored cars. Senones was quite a town and the second platoon was to sleep there. The remainder of the company stayed in Moyenmoutier, the village before Senones.

Happenings in Senones

"Do you 'avez-vous' a 'chambre' for us 'soldats'?" the weary American soldier asked the elderly "Madame" when she came to the door.

She looked confused at what he said, then smiled in comprehension, "Sure, I got plenty of room! Come on in boys!"

The soldier leaned far out from the top of the armored car and pulled the beautiful young "mademoiselle" up toward him. She rubbed his dirty, bearded face with her hand, then laughed and kissed him on each cheek.

An old "Madame" was talking loudly in very rapid French to a confused American soldier (who hailed from the deep South). After she halted her mad jumble of French lingo, the soldier, recalling a famous Sgt. Montgomery statement, said with a smile, "If you do, lady, you'll have to clean it up!"

Oscar Beaman



efore day-light, the second platoon loaded on the Recon troops' vehicles again and began the confused push from Senones to Le Vermont. After a day and night of perplexed doubling-back and rapid marches to locate the enemy, the company was finally assembled in Le Vermont on November 24.

Task Force

One morning in St. Prayel, France, the men got up bright and early to find that they were part of a task force organized to chase the retreating Jerries.

"Task force!"... what a laugh!

The men were loaded up on trucks, and before long the trucks were rolling. But not for long!

The convoy stopped at a town by the name of Moyenmoutier. The reason given was a road block up ahead.

Then it started to rain. So we sat in our trucks and proceeded to soak in the rain. We couldn't put the covers over the trucks... protection against Jerry aircraft prevented that.

Hours passed. Some of the men went into houses to get out of the rain, rushing back to the trucks when several false alarms that we were moving had been given.

Soon other vehicles passed us,... artillery pieces, corps wire communication vehicles, and other "rear echelon" vehicles. Our trucks remained where they were. The men sat in the trucks, drenched from the rain and watched the "rear echelon" moving in front of the "task force".

Bert Bless



ecause we missed Thanksgiving Day dinner, the morning of the 25th was begun with a turkey dinner for breakfast. A line formed behind a truck loaded with sleeping-bags — something absolutely new in sleeping comfort to us. At 8 o'clock an eleven mile march from Le Vernont to a fox-hole was begun. Along the way, we ate our first German black bread. Diarrhoea was nearly everyman's marching companion. The night was spent testing the real worth of our new sleeping bags.

A Loose and Watery discourse

Funny thing. I mean about this being in France. Most of the doughboys, when, in the long-awaited pleasanter days of the future, they're bouncing their curly-headed grand-daughters on their good knee, will tell (that's "tell", spelled "B-R-A-G") about the time they, single handedly, wiped out a 120 mm. mortar and its crew and how, when Jerry was slingin' all kinds of lead around (at this point, the grand-daughter's eyes are popping out like the 1st Sgt's. when he looked at your rifle bore) the old man picked you (lucky you) out of the entire company, the company at that time consisting of forty-five dejected souls, to lead a demolition patrol and how you blew this up and shot that up and, and . . . get the idea? Me? Heck, when I reminisce about the land of wine, women, and song (the wine's diluted, the women are polluted and the songs, well, the word has "P" in the beginning, "D" at the end and "U-T-R-I" in the middle), I'll always think of the G. I.'s, M-1 (for the benefit of the laymen, the G. I.'s in the vernacular of modern medicine is diarrhoea). The G. I.'s and I'll argue the point with anybody, 'cause I'm talkin' from a wide field of experience, are worse than any barrage the Krauts can throw your way. They are to my way of thinking, a great Army equalizer. Like death and taxes, it effects everybody. Backyards, streetcorners, haylofts, helmets or houses, they're all expendable if within range! Everything else seems to fall in a category of secondary importance next to

them. You can be in the leading platoon of the leading company in a night attack, bayonets fixed, finger nervous on the trigger, bodies tense, "88's" droppin' all around, "screamin' mimmies" singing death, M.G. tracer bullets "rick-a-shaying" thru the dark against tree trunks when suddenly, well, heck, you can't help it, out come the shirt tails, down go the pants, the "long-Johns", shorts, assume the old position and then, need I continue? I've often thought if they could bottle that smell, you know the one I mean, stick it in shells, shove it down the tube of a 4.2 mortar that's pointed toward Jerryland, well, the

M

orning brought with it another rapid march down into the little town of Albet, France. Here we met our first Alsatian-speaking French, who seemed more pro-German than any group we had met before-they seemed better fed, also. We bivouaced on the outskirts of Albet, until a convoy of jeeps and trucks came to carry us into St. Prayel, the village from which our task-force originated. As we loaded the order came, "Nine men on a jeep . . . Forty men on a ton-and-a-half." We reached St. Prayel about 11 o'clock that night. Diarrhoea was still raging among the troops.

war would be over and you'd be back in civies so fast it'd make your head swim! G. I.'s besides makin' you unbutton and button your pants 10 or 20 times a day, making you a 100 yard dash man, second only to Gundar Haag, and puttin' a severe strain on friendships 'cause of resulting aromas, leaves you feeling like a wet rag, a dead fish or the groom the day after that first night . . . weak isn't the word for it . . . Sinatra could make mince pie of you in two short rounds . . . If you pull up the shade you'll go with it. The "runs" some guys call it, . . . it's "gallops" with me!

The average doughboy dreams about the cutie he left back on Maple Street, banana splits at the corner drugstore, dances, hot dogs and ice cream, the favorite seat in the living room, sleeping thru breakfast . . . Me? Walk in my house, up the stairs, turn to the right, open the door and you'll see . . . Well, its big and white, made of some composition like porcelain, round and beautiful . . . that's for me, G. I.'s or no G. I.'s.

R. F. Gabriel



It should be said that when we left Albet our part in the Vosges Mountain campaign was over and the morning brought a trip from St. Prayel to a little town of Trois Fontaines near Sarrebourg and into the area of Bitcher.

Eight Hour Shifts

When we first went to relieve the 45th Division, our major told us that the Germans and us had certain times to fight. The Germans wouldn't start fighting before eight o'clock and would stop at five. The next day we relieved the 45th Division at one o'clock in the afternoon. Then around six o'clock we got out of our fox hole, took out heat tablets and started supper, which was "K" rations. Around a quarter to seven when we started eating, we heard the most terrible screaming of artillery shells and explosions. We dived for our holes. After the ringing had gone from my ears and the check had been made to see if any one was hit, I heard someone say out of the darkness of their hole "I guess the Jerries are working time-and-a-half for us!"

John Miller

Remember?

HINTZEL: The "Fritz" was quite a guy to the boys of the company. Somehow everyone figured he'd come back even though we knew he was hit bad. He laughed the loudest, dressed the neatest, drank the most and held it, commanded the most respect, and played the damndest game of football of anybody in the company.

OLINSKI: Louis, who spoke much of his ol' alma mater, Princeton, was an all-around-boy. He possessed a good sense of humor and liked to write, both poetry and stories. For those that did not know him well, he appeared shy but could be drawn into a friendly argument 'most anytime.

SERATT: Jim was the type of boy that usually kept to himself. He was quiet, but enjoyed talkin' about his farm down South where he was eager to return.

TO SUM UP THE VOSGES MOUNTAINS, HERE IS A GENERAL CONSENSUS OF ITS AFFECT ON THE TROOPS.

WE QUOTE:

"Rough as hell!"

"Looks like we'll never get home!"

"Ugh!"

"Damn those mountains!"

"Nothin' to 'em much!"

"Geeziz C"

"Pas Bon"

"They didn't impress me, but it did my feet!"

"Boy, could Cap. Smith hit those hills!"

"Just one damn hill after another!"

"Whew!"

"Wasn't too hard going down hill!"

"I felt like a pack mule!"

"\$ + + Ö !! = % / !!"

"Rough, Rough!"

"Worse than fighting the Heinies!"

"I sure had my ups and downs!"

"They're a long way from home!"

Out of the Vosges

"Whatever may or may not be said for the staffs and their rigamarol, they picked a beautiful day for a motor movement. The sun shone all day long and the country-side, soaked in rain, was lovely and green except for the patches of deciduous woods, which became more frequent as we made our way across the more rolling country from the foothills of the Vosges.

It seemed rather strange to drive along that highway with the railway beside it just south of Raon l'Etape, the same that we viewed from that high promontory just across the Muerthe River. This area, a couple of weeks ago, was in the hands of the enemy. In Raon l'Etape too, one felt that strange sensation looking at the people in the street such a short time ago under German rule, a child wearing an American helmet-liner, the buildings beaten by artillery fire...our artillery fire, the town that we studied in aerial photos.

The Muerthe itself was swollen by the rains and the alluvial valleys out in the country were flooded well beyond the ordinary channel which is not big.

Baccarat was the same as we left it and made our way out into the open country to the northeast. The road was good and the convoy moved at pretty close to twenty-five miles per hour with occasional stops. Instead of the woods surrounding each field here over the even crests of the undulations, the woods were often only barely visible in the sunlit distance. The ride was a pretty cold one for the frost in the air was dispelled only slowly by the low hanging winter sun which at high noon seemed to a man from the southern latitudes of the United States, like seven in the morning."

Trois Fontaine

● Quotes from Lt. Allen's notes

In Trois Fontains

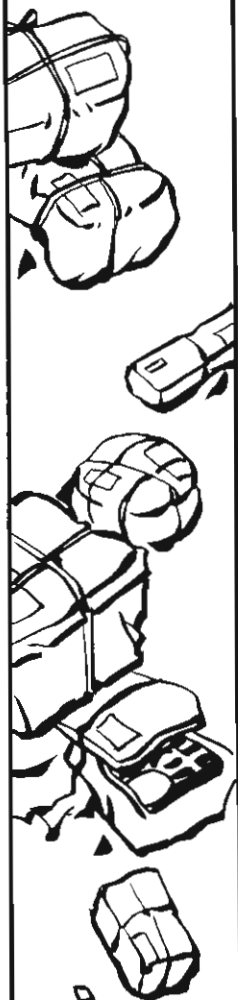
Feeling in the company was at first predisposed to be antagonistic toward the people here in Trois Fontaine (Dreibrunner) because of the substantial German element. However, everyone was favorably impressed by their extreme cleanliness, their desire to accomodate us, and not least by the girls here, who seemed prettier and certainly were more tastefully dressed than the other French girls the company had previously seen.

Speaking of cleanliness, almost every house was spotless. Wooden shoes were left outside and everyplace seemed to be well-painted, floors varnished and sometimes covered over to protect the finish. The cellars were fairly well stocked and smelled spicily of apples, nuts and other foods.

Packages

Second only to a letter from home, is a package. As everyone knows, a package is a five pound sample of someone's kitchen. Watching a fellow share his package is indeed a happy sight. Honestly, I believe a fellow gets more enjoyment out of talking about the "stuff" in his package than in the eating. He'll tell you just how Mom (Wife, Sis, or Sweetheart) goes about making such delicious cookies or fudge. Also, he'll let you know that it took so many points to send that can of good Campbell's soup. And that cake of soap, well, that's hard to explain ... guess they sent it for "that dirty old lieutenant". Yes, a package takes you back home to the kitchen and the grocery store ... and to those who sent a little bit of each.

Lt. Joe Ward



SCENE: *France*

TIME: LAST OF NOVEMBER OR FIRST OF DECEMBER OR SOME DAMN TIME

The wind is blowing, the air is crisp, it's football weather. The leaves are falling from the trees. Summer is gone for another year. Bits of manure are floating down the street. Yes, it's Fall ... Fall with all of its glory, truly the best time of the year.

"Like Hell! -- huh-huh, what do you mean Joe? Yea, I suppose it is too damn cold at night. Come over here, Joe, and sit down on this manure pile. Ah, this is comfortable ... Have some bread?"

"What's a matter, Joe? ... Look out, you dropped the bread in the manure. Here it is. I've got it. That was close. Give me a bite will you? ... I'm pretty hungry."

"Boy, I could lay all day in this stuff, its so nice and warm."

"Say, Joe, I heard a report that Patton will be in Berlin in twenty days, Good old Patton. Here is November and that means only a month more! Good old George!"

"Well, what do you think of him, Joe?"

"Now, I wouldn't say that, Joe. After all, he may be full of it, but you're laying in it."

"You know, Joe, I've been thinking What are we going to act like when we get home? Some people say we won't know how to act ... that's just a bunch of propoganda. After all we are just a bunch of guys, ain't we? We were civilians once ... weren't we, Joe? We'll be O.K."

"Say, here comes the old lady. Hey, Madam, throw the next pile on my feet ... they're cold!"

John Chynoweth

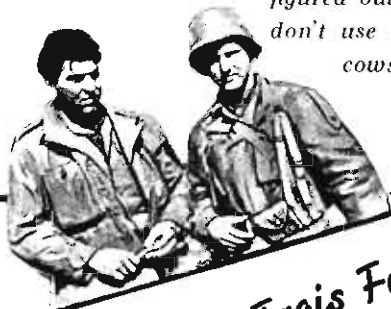


C'est La Guerre

The fourth platoon, complete with month-old beards and wellcaked in the best the Vosges Mountains had to offer in the way of mud and dirt, straggled down the street to the little French farm house assigned them. When they started to enter the door, they were met by a flood of loud and guttural German issued by a short, bearded, old man...the boys tried to by-pass him, but he got more insistent. Pretty soon the old man was shoutin' loudly, obviously irritated, and very persistent on not lettin' the boys in...needless to say, the mortar and machine-gun men were growing very impatient and beginnin' to reach for their respective weapons. Stanley Brodsky the only one who's German consisted of a little more than "Nix verstan", moved forward and finally

figured out what the old boy was sayin'... "Please don't use my hayloft for an outhouse, 'cause the cows won't eat the stuff then!"

Richard Gabriel



Hair-Cuts ... Trois Fontaine

Whenever there was a break that looked like it might stretch into a day or longer, the self-styled barbers blossomed forth... Trois Fontaine was no exception... Two inch jobs on top, suggested by higher-ups (that's "suggested", spelled, O-R-D-E-R-E-D), were the style... The men that looked like out-of-job violin players weren't safe long on the narrow cobblestone streets of the little village... An arm would reach out, some "I'm working my way through barber's college" G.I. would grab his victim, and the hack job would begin, scissors, wire clippers, razors... Before the man was settled comfortably in an improvised barber's chair, the job would be done or as those of the profession say, "Hair today, gone tomorrow!"

Richard Gabriel

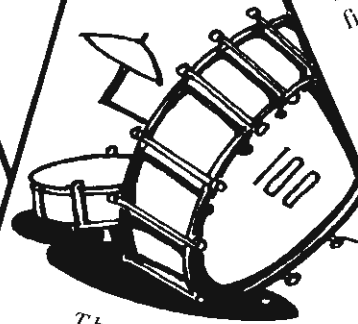
The G.I. Blues

The cause for the acute diarrhoea in the company was believed to be the "K" rations we lived on for so long in the Vosges Mountains. So, in Trois Fontaines, the second platoon gave all the "K's" we had accumulated to a very grateful old French woman.

We were accustomed to the mad dashes (made by ourselves and our buddies) and these sprints came usually in the dead of night. However, during the end of our stay in this French woman's home, our sleep was disturbed by a new sound.

The door of the old lady's room would open and bang shut... then the clomping of wooden shoes, moving rapidly across a boardwalk, and finally the swinging to of the "cabinet" door could be heard. All would be silent for an endless length of time, then the slow, weary troding of the returning shoes would signify that the emergency was over.

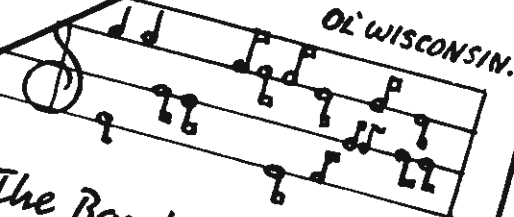
Oscar Beaman



The Band

The day the Division Band marched through Trois Fontaines every man felt the distance from home very deeply. When the band struck up the football number "On Wisconsin", I had tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat. The whole town seemed to watch the band and when they had left and the music faded away, I again felt a little homesick.

Ralph Johnson



Life is like that

To me, one of the Army's field expedients that unfairly goes against all rightful urges of nature is the straddle trench. To have to squirm into an unGodly stoopin' position everytime you want to commit one of the necessities of life is an unpardonable sin on the part of Uncle Sam for which I will never totally jorgive him!

Trois Fontaine was, after the Company got half-way settled, cursed with many of these Army invented inconveniences... There, to make matters worse, due to rotten K rations and doubtful drinking water, business was overflowin'... There wasn't a latrine that didn't have several well-trot paths leadin' to it... Unfortunately never officially recorded for posterity, these latrines were indirectly responsible for some of the fastest sprints and dashes run by man. Every platoon had their own straddle trench which was religiously visited by a group of faithful followers... Just to make things a little more interesting, exciting and stimulating, the first and second platoons dug their trenches halfway up the side of a hill... It wasn't uncommon to hear in the middle of the night, "I've got to go, but quick". G.I. scramble madly out of his sleepin' bag, trip down the stairs, fly out the house, doors slamming madly behind him, and galloping like hell to his hard sought-after destruction. After a few minutes his steps would disgustingly slow down and you'd hear a disgruntled "Damn". Well, as it has so often been said, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again".

Richard Gabriel

We regret to inform

In Trois Fontaine we got the news that Ewing had died in the hospital. It came as a shock to us who were living such an easy life those few days and it shook us back into the realization that we owed more than we could ever pay to those guys who had already done so much in this war.

Ewing was a short fellow who never wasted words. He was a hard worker and never could be heard complaining. An Ohio boy, Ewing almost always wore a worrysome smile and was liked by all who knew him. When you think of him you think of just a darn nice fellow.

Facewell

Little did I realize how long the shower I took at Trois Fontaines would have to last me. I believe it was very close to one month and twenty-nine days. The new clothing, showers, and Christmas packages boosted our morale greatly. When we finally left Trois Fontaines, some of us waved goodbye to the very lovely French girls and they waved back ... even in front of their parents!

Ralph Johnson

One Soldier to Another

The morning we had our showers in the Glassware factory, General Burress stopped near by. He got out of his car and spoke to several of the men. His aides laid out his maps and he explained our movement from the Vosges area to Sarrebourg. When he finished, the men all felt very enlightened and one "company headquarters commando" remarked, "Well, it looks O. K. to me, General!"

Ralph Johnson

William Port

We were all standing around, cleaning our rifles, smoking, talking when suddenly, "Bang!" ... Everyone turned around at once as Port leaned forward; the "P-38" still clutched in his right hand. Kutzman, the medic, ran up to Port to give him first-aid and found the bullet had gone in the palm of his hand and had followed up the arm, coming out near the elbow. Port was loaded on a jeep and quickly whisked away.

We all liked Port's easy going, friendly ways; he liked a good time and knew how to make the most of it. The guys said, "Ports a sergeant with the heart of a private."