

JUST WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE WAR, SOLDIER

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OUTLINE  
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This is a fast moving autobiography of a soldier in World War Two from induction to discharge. Food poisoning and a related paralysis on a combat infiltration course, early in service, necessitate a transfer from an assigned Infantry Signal Company that is preparing for overseas combat.

Later, at the new unit, the transfer orders and medical records are unjustly destroyed. Swept along as a part of the war, the soldier soon finds himself spending the Christmas Season on the high-seas, and combat duty in the E.T.O.

The combat assignment is with a top-secret Radio Intelligence unit. As a diversion, a full scale radio communications system is established with a make-believe Army to the north of the planned invasion area of the Normandy Beaches. Before and during the D-Day period, we intercept German radio traffic in the invasion path from our headquarters on the English Channel opposite the invasion beaches.

Thirty-six days following the main D-Day, we land on the Omaha Beaches with our mobile, radio intercept units. We follow the front-line fighting across France, Germany, to Austria. From our intercept we hear the war being fought, and from our lofty and exposed listening posts, we observe the fighting.

The war ended, and for that we were thankful. Similar units to ours had suffered total casualties during the African Campaign. We had only a few listed casualties.

For most of us, another phase of the war was to start- the battle to go home. During the seven months struggle for this fulfillment we were sent to a rest camp, given a trip to the Austrian Alps, and a furlough to Scotland. These were all appreciated gestures, but we had too many traumatic memories, and the best medicine to heal these war scars was missing- a chance to go home!

We get our boat to come home on, it is one of our Liberty Ships that had just been used to carry French troops to an African conflict. Our boat is rocked by hurricane winds off the Virginia Coast. The trip to the west-coast and Fort Lewis is made in a C-47 airplane. A similar flight had crashed one week before our flight.

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## OUTLINE

-page two-

And what about after the war, did the waiting bring justice? The answer to that question is another story, but it is probably the reason behind writing this one. The effects of the injuries of service remained with me. I had to change jobs, and was unable to work for several years following service. Medical and financial help was needed. There were new rules to adhere to when aid was requested. "Sorry we can't help you. You have no official records in regards to such alleged injuries."

I thought about several of these things as I was recovering from open-heart surgery, and writing this book two years later. The V.A. is an agency set up to aid the veteran, a task it does exceedingly well in many respects. But the set-up is outside of our constitutional decree, and as such is not subject to have any of its decision, outside of insurance claims, brought before judicial review. This may change somewhat, later in time. Time has already brought some changes. Later wars such as the Viet Nam War has proven the existence of follow through injuries of combat such as the post-combat syndrome.

There will be other proven facts as wars and struggles continue- the results of atomic blasts, and agent orange are among some of these. I believe that soldiers exposed to combat- wars, and killings, have all had their health affected to some degree and in that light, should be given any requested needed medical attention.

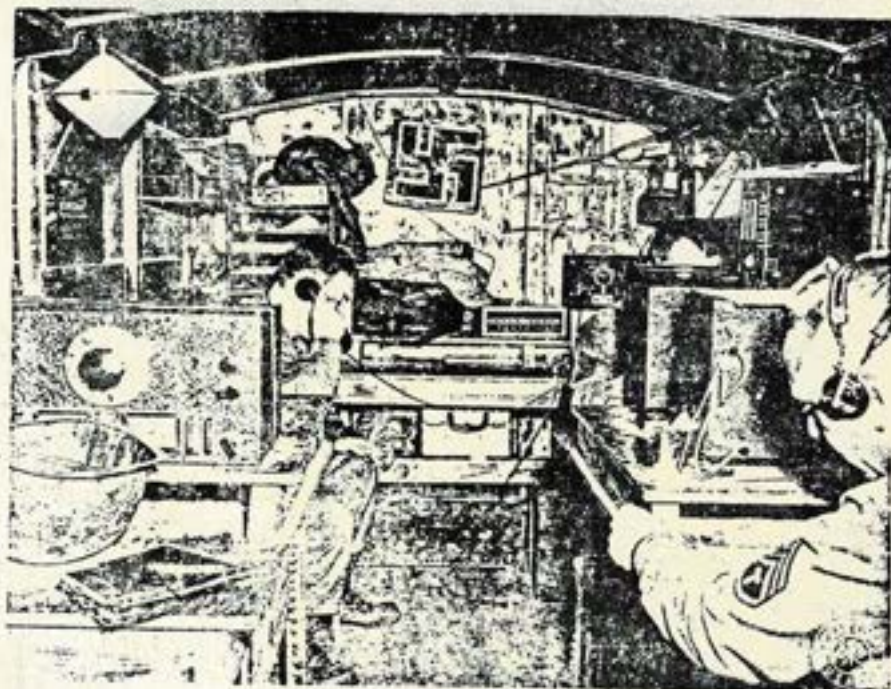
With these thoughts, together with our role in bringing an end to World War Two, this book was written- and dedicated.

George L. Sanford





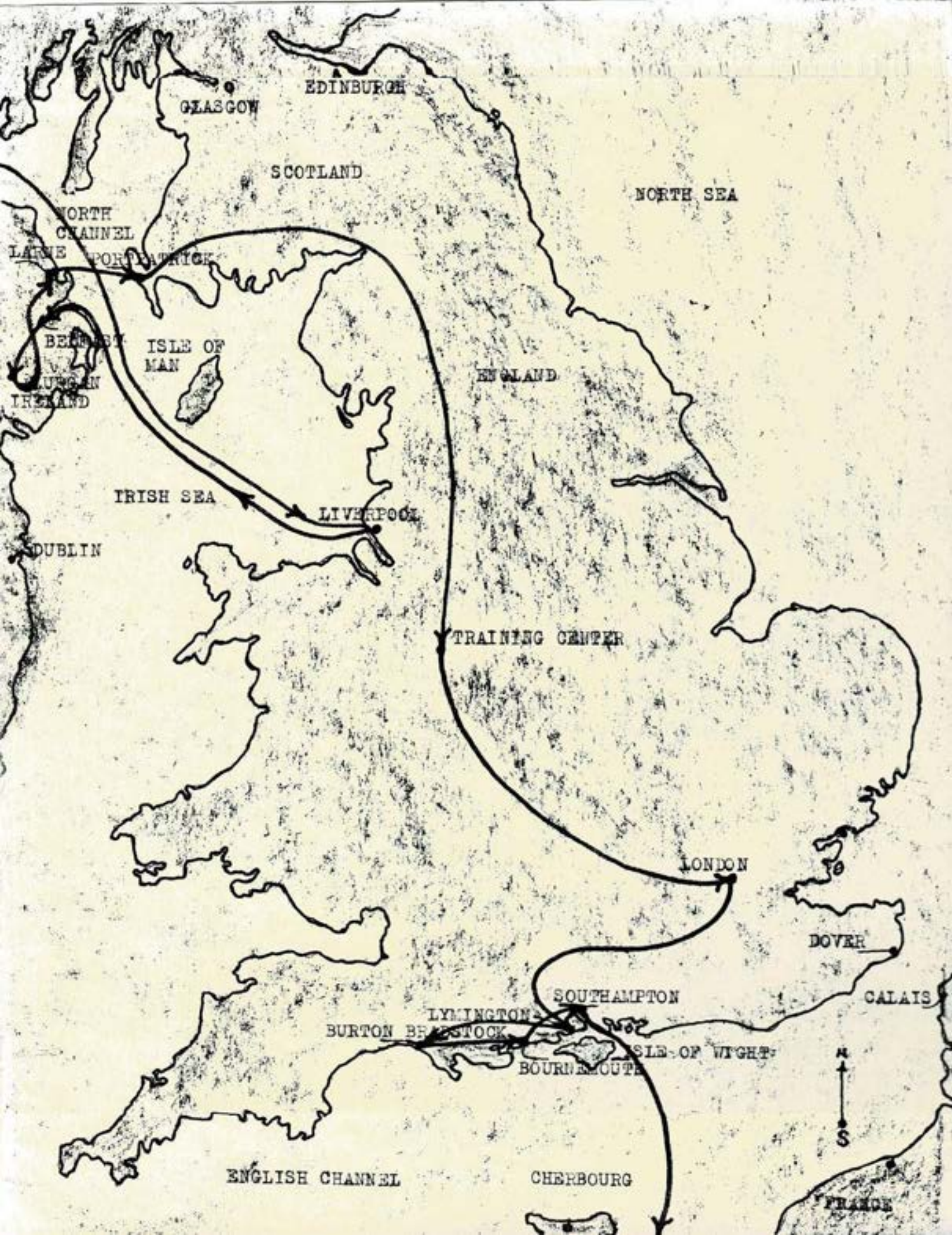
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INTERIOR OF INTERCEPT CONTROL ROOM

S E C R E T









R. K. K. K.  
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FROM NAZI WAR PICTURE BOOK  
FOUND NEAR DACHAU



Links und rechts:  
Straßenkämpfe in Kischinew

NAZI PICTURE  
BOOK; DACHAU OR  
MUNICH



Deutsche Infanterie dringt  
in Kischinew ein



JUST WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE WAR, SOLDIER

by

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Yakima, Washington



Glancing back-

On the morning of December 7, 1941, Japanese planes, without warning, delivered an aerial bombardment to Pearl Harbor, and other key United States' naval and air installations of the Hawaiian Islands. The bases at Wake, Guam, and Midway, were also attacked. Within a space of two hours, the Japanese had crippled our entire Pacific Fleet. President Roosevelt, in calling for a declaration of war against Japan, referred to the Japanese action as a "dastardly attack", and to the date of the attack, as "a date that will live in infamy".

Most of us who were around at that time, also remember just what we were doing when we heard the news on the radio, or saw the first headline in the paper. For our family, it had been a day to relax after a hard week's work. I had been relaxing, tinting a photograph, and my older brother with mother had been out for a ride when the news came to us by radio early in the afternoon. We listened for several hours as the direct news came in reporting the damage, and heavy casualties- censorship was then invoked.

To us in the United States, the name, Pearl Harbor, is synonymous with the name, or the start of World War Two. But this holocaust of war, had been going on in Europe with the Nazi regime, for several years. Prior to the start of this insane event, and developing after World War One, social problems had arisen that were the breeding grounds for a war of such magnitude.

We had our own full-grown depression of '29, but we were busy either

looking for work, or working, to have time to think about involvement in wars. Also whether it was hard times, or good, we were lucky enough to live next to mountains that we had grown to love. Hiking, camping, hunting, or fishing didn't require one to be rich, or even working. I didn't care for the sport of hunting and then killing the animals, but I did like to be in the surroundings of the woods, and hunt the animals with a camera.

Pearl Harbor meant that we, like the animals, were being hunted and killed. That in turn meant that we as peace-loving humans, would have to hunt and kill them in order to survive. It is a situation change that is hard to grasp. We change from a society based on law and order, that does not tolerate killing of its own, to one that teaches and advocates such killings of the enemy. Most of us, who know that we would either be the target, or shoot at the target, in such a conflict, always will have a deep-rooted fear of such a confrontation. It always has been, and always will be that way, whether the weapons be rocks and clubs, or the atomic bomb.

As in any war when a nation is attacked, there is a great surge of patriotism. to work together for survival, and a call for revenge. Pearl Harbor meant that a large number of Americans had already been killed, more would be, and if we survived the initial crisis, every home in the United States would be affected deeply before we could realize full retaliations, and victory.

Some individuals would make huge profits, or monetary benefits, with the sale of weapons of war, or other products. Things would not be always fair during hostilities, sometimes they have that appearance



during peace. We would have the "bad guys" on our side of the war also.

One year after "Pearl Harbor", I became a number, as well as a name, along with a continuous stream of other men, from all walks of life, and conditions to cope with. Like most of the others, I tried to make the highest score on all of the tests, and to fit into the place that I was best adapted.

My physical examination stated that I was in the best possible of condition- but again the reminder, this was wartime, and nearly everything goes. The standard joke was that the doctor would look in one ear, and if he couldn't see through to the other side, boy, you were in the service.

In the IQ, and other entry tests, I made as good a grade, if not better than the average. The Army was noted for the alleged peculiarity also, that they would place new recruits into new positions other than they had been trained to do in civilian life. I had been a plasterer, and now I was scheduled to become a radio operator. This news brought no complaint from me. The place of service, however, was with the Signal Company of the 84th Infantry Division, and this part of it brought some strong apprehension on my part.

During the month of December, 1942, the war in the Pacific, and in Europe continued at its furious pace. Both Japan, and Nazi Germany had reached the limit of their expansion, and were being contained. There had been heavy loss of lives, but now some of the conquered bases, and land were being retaken. The latter made good news anyway.

### A new life.

The place was the induction center at Fort Douglas, Utah. The date was 14, December 1942. New recruits were scheduled to arrive at the center daily in large numbers, and the outfitted, and assigned troops were likewise scheduled to move on to their new units on the same clockwork basis. Army life, up to this point, had not been too bad. We had a sleeper train to the induction center, the food seemed to be good, we were not yet subjected fully to the "yes sir, no sir" bit of Army life. But things do not work out always as scheduled, and, this isn't home- I was about to be taught my first tough lesson.

Our tests had been completed, so had our physicals, and shots had been given. We would be shipped to our newly assigned units the following day. We had what we thought was a wonderful chicken dinner, and to top it off, we were all given a pass to Salt Lake City, for the evening. I went to a theater- but something didn't seem quite right. I felt a little flushed- just the new wool uniform I thought. And then there was a slight abdominal and stomach pain- it will go away. But the intensity of the pain increased, in area as well. Finally, in desperation, I had to try and make it back to the Fort. I should have just flopped, and called for help. How I managed to drag myself back to the Fort, barrack, and latrine, I'll never fully understand.

This was my introduction into Army life, about 300 others also, as well as the several doctors who treated us. Acute-moderate diarrhea, type and cause unknown, it is listed as being. We held up the shipment for two days. I was shipped out like the others, but I was still sick, and the effects lasted- they will check me over at the new unit, I thought.



Somehow through all of this suffering, the lesson had not been driven fully home yet.

Basic training presented me with the operations of radio, and other signal functions of the Company. The learning of radio-code, and procedures, was combined with the other basics of Army life. And in this little place known as Camp Howze, there were the dreaded ticks, chiggers, and rattlesnakes. Most of us made sick-call for treatment of the infection from these little pests, as well as the prevalent 'athlete's-foot', that was picked up in the showers. Then there were the sick-call reports for sore throats and colds- wait out in the cold air in front of the crowded dispensary, go in and have your throat swabbed, return to duty.

One of these little throat swabbing incidents didn't turn out well for me. I came down with a high fever after returning to the barracks, and remembering the lesson of the food-poisoning, determined to stay in bed until I got better, or until they carried me to the hospital. I stayed in bed for three days.

To top off my basic training indoctrination, and to qualify for combat duty, I had to go through several combat courses, including an infiltration course exercise. As a leader on a radio team, I had been up all night on a training maneuver, and the morning, July the Fourth, was extremely hot. Needless to say, I didn't complete the course, and I was carried off in what was described as a 'paralyzed condition'. A medical field report was written up, and I was transported back to the barracks, where I was given rest.

Up to this event, I had advanced quite well in this Signal Company. I had made the rank of sergeant- T/4, as well as the leader of a radio team, and I had also been considered for Officer's Candidate School. Of course that consideration was dropped when it became known that I didn't qualify because I lacked a high-school diploma- a situation that I could again blame on the days of the depression.

I lost my leadership position in the Signal Company, but I remained with them until after the fall maneuvers in Louisiana. I worked various nets, including the receiving of Red Cross, or "Dear John" messages. Some of them were quite emotional, and disturbed me. Of better interest to me was the providing of voice communications for the commanding officers back to their Regiments, or Battalions. They were real life dramas sometimes, as one case where the tanks of the reds were going over the tops of soldiers in the foxholes, "Stop it! These are just maneuvers!" I could relax more talking with some of these higher ranking officers.

But the time came for my inevitable transfer after the maneuvers, from our new camp at Shreveport, Louisiana. The Division was making preparations for combat duty, and the "non-fits" were being weeded out. As one of them, I was the ranking non-com in charge of about six men being sent to the 92nd Signal Battalion, Camp Maxey, Texas. The date was 19 November 1943. I have been given the transfer papers, the medical records, and the transportation vouchers for the trip. As this amounted to a medical transfer for all of us, when the papers were delivered to our new commanding officer, a complete medical examination and evaluation would be required.



At my new unit I seem to fit right into the picture, it is still a signal outfit, and I'm in a radio section. But in a few days I seem to be exposed to more of the intelligence side of the work, and I'm shown a number of coding and encoding devices.

A disturbing fact came to my attention a few days after arriving here. This outfit has been alerted for overseas shipment and combat. Just what have I gotten myself into? All furloughs have been cancelled- I would have had one coming at my old outfit after maneuvers.

And what about the required medical? Captain Armstrong gave me an explanation when he called me into his office one morning. He seemed like a nice person- very congenial. Well, Lieutenant Ellis of the 84th was that way also. Maybe all C.O.s are that type, especially those who will be in combat with the men. "Sergeant, you and the other men should have had a physical examination when you first arrived here. I'm sorry about the delay, but with these new orders for shipment- well, we've just been too busy. So, you can take these men and their records, and report to the Camp Hospital. I have transportation for you."

"Yes, sir," I replied as I took the sealed records, and proceeded to the waiting weapons carrier, and driver.

The hospital was a large complex- and very busy. I delivered the records, and we each went our own way to the various waiting rooms. And waiting rooms seemed to describe them.

After a long wait, a man made his appearance, whom I believed, was a doctor. There were no introductions, which made me feel ill at ease. It was as if the First Sergeant, in civilian attire was

about to conduct the examination. And speaking of such sergeants, there was one standing across the room now, taking this all in.

The doctor picked up my medical records and glanced at them- and then at me. "How do you feel now soldier?" And then referring to the injury on the infiltration course, "have you had any trouble like that before?"

A double barreled question, and something seemed wrong. "I feel fairly good now- I think... No, sir, I've never been through anything quite like that before. But-"

"Well then," the doctor interrupted, "for your own good and that of your outfit, I'm going to remove these medical records from your file."

I was getting quite aggravated as he threw the records into the waste-basket. The lesson of the food poisoning was with me now, and the episode on the infiltration course was too fresh in my mind to set it aside that easy. "Crawl through with your pack and rifle on. Stay low- don't stand up!" Those had been the instructions. Dynamite had exploded in the craters, and the machine-gun bullets with tracers whizzed overhead- I went as far as my body would carry me.

The doctor had turned his back on my questions and explanations. He was going back out of the door, that he had entered, in what seemed like only three minutes before.

And now, the sergeant noticing my obvious frustration, came across the room to talk to me. "What kind of a doctor was that?" I asked him. "He didn't even introduce himself."



"That's a new doctor around here." he replied. "I saw what was going on. If you think you've been given a bum deal, just wait until after the war to complain. You'll have plenty of time then to seek justice."

His advice didn't seem quite right, either, but I thanked him. As I started out of the room, I noticed the records sticking part-way out of the basket, and I was tempted to pick them out- but I didn't.

It would be a two mile walk back to my barracks, south from the hospital. The walk takes me past a maze of barracks and other buildings, comprising the 15th Corps. If I hurry, I'll make it back in time for chow.

The walk gives me a chance to think clearer. What the doctor did was not right, he was going against regulations and the very things that we were supposed to be fighting for. Such records were invaluable for me, and could not be replaced. Aw- but the sergeant was right in a way, I didn't want to start another war, as one at a time was enough. I knew a little of what the records stated, but not all. If such a thing could happen to me on an infiltration course, it's a cinch it would happen again in combat- I knew that. But I'll cross those bridges when I come to them. You're on your own now, soldier, remember that.

With all of those crazy thoughts tumbling around in my mind, the time passed swiftly, and it didn't take long for me to get back to my Battalion Headquarters. I'm back in time for dinner, also. The line is just starting to form outside of the mess-hall. So, there is

time to clean up a little and grab my mess gear. I keep an eye open for the fellows that went with me to the hospital, but I didn't see any of them. I wanted to find out how they had made out.

"What's on the menu, Fred?" I ask one of the soldiers ahead of me in the line.

"Roast beef again I guess, George." He answers. "They've really been putting on the eats lately. But if you think this is good, just wait until you've read the notice that they have put up on the bulletin board."

"They're sure trying to fatten us up. I wonder why?"

"I'll give you one guess," he replies.

And it was a good meal tonight- plenty of seconds too. I take time later to read the bulletin board. There's a notice regarding the Thanksgiving Day holiday, which is only one week away. "Notice to all cooks! You will be free to prepare any special dish that you desire for this celebration. Please let the Mess-Sergeant know right away just what special supplies you will need."

As Captain Armstrong said, there is plenty of work to do to get ready to go overseas. We keep right on with our training, that includes the study of some new coding devices. There are frequent inspections, and we are presented with some new clothing, and other supplies. Heavy equipment is being packed in water-proof grease, then it's crated and stenciled.

An extra assignment that I now have is that of Battalion Bugler. It's not a real bugle- it's a recording of bugle calls. My job is



to get up early and play the recording over the amplifying system in the tower. "Do you make a lot of friends that way?" Someone would ask. Well, it doesn't seem to interfere, in any event. And through it all, we do have some fun. At least that's what I say in my letters home to Mom. We have good eats, movies, and trips to town. Sometimes, almost a little sarcastically, I mention about their sincere interest in us having to keep our barracks and clothes clean. There's free medical attention, and to top it off, we even get paid. I really don't gripe too much, but when I do, I try and remember that it's a healthy and happy soldier who indulges in some normal griping.

I get my regular letters from home, with the news generally on the cheerful side. My older brother is now serving on a destroyer in the Pacific. And I'm reminded, in one of the letters, about a time we were by a wharf at Long Beach, California. We had seen piles of scrap-iron being loaded on Japanese ships. An off the cuff remark made then, was that some day they would be sending it back to us in the form of bullets- he was right!

Waiting for Thanksgiving Day to come, could be compared in some ways like waiting for a dental or doctor appointment. We knew that it would be a first-class meal, but we knew also like a last supper- a farewell to the United States.

Thanksgiving Day came, and the meal was more than we ever thought it could be. It was an all day affair. Relaxing later on my bed, that evening, I decide to write a letter home- as these are some of the happy events I like to tell about. "Dear Mom, This is my first Thanksgiving Day away from home. I'd rather be back home and have

one of your nice meals, if I had a choice. You wouldn't believe the amount of food they had spread out for us today. There seemed to be every kind of dish and variation available: salads, meats, fish, shell-foods, pies, cakes, nuts, candies, and- well you name it and it was there. Oh sure, we had turkey, and there was duck also. And besides the regular drinks, there was some fire-water flowing around. We had the luxury of dinner-ware also- no mess-kits to wash.

"If you think that there is some catch to this fancy affair you're right. We're alerted for shipment, which can be any day now. Just where and when is a big secret, and maybe it's better that way. I'll try and keep you informed. It's now certain that I won't get the furlough that was due me from the other outfit. With love, Your son, George."

I made no mention about my medical records being destroyed at the Camp Hospital. It embarrassed me, and worried me that it had happened, and I for sure, didn't want to worry her with such things. I'm sure though, that she was used to hearing about the unpleasant things happening during war. Her father had been a Captain in the Civil War, and had spent one night wounded, laying on the battle-field.

The weather is now growing colder here in Texas. Nothing is routine anymore, except packing and waiting. Passes to town are cancelled.

The first week in December we are called out in full gear, and arrive at the rail-yard in trucks. So this is it- or is it? After 1-1/2 hours of waiting with heavy packs- in what appeared to be a mob-scene, new orders over the P.A., have us return to our barracks. "Dry run."



Someone comments to express our feelings.

The next fretful week we are again called out. Is this another practice? No, this time is for real. There is the usual amount of waiting, but this time we are ushered into waiting rail cars like we are sardines.

"Where are we heading?" Somebody asks, but there is no answer. Our destination could be anybody's guess - except for a few. The blinds on the car are pulled tight, and there're orders that they remain that way.

A short time later a small group of officers make their way slowly up the aisle. "Do you know where our destination is soldier?" They ask nearly everyone.

"No sir," I reply as they ask me. The answers as they proceed along to the next car remain the same.

When they're out of earshot, one soldier from headquarters lets the proverbial cat out of the bag by stating: "I could have told him, but I knew better than to get myself or anyone else in trouble. We got a card from one of the advanced team, and while the card didn't say where they were, the card was postmarked in New York City."

Most of us had guessed the spot, but now there is partial confirmation. After we get our gear stacked away, things seem to run pretty smooth. They treat us like royalty; dinner in the diner, and we have sleeping cars. I sleep like a baby when the car is in motion, but when it stops for what ever reason, I wake up. I try and guess what town we go through, and someone would peek out of the window to verify the guess.

As the trip continues, I start feeling unusually tired, and my eyes have a burning sensation. It's just the excitement I believe - but it

continues to bother me.

New York-

Camp Shanks is our first destination after three days and nights of travel. It feels good to get outside and stretch again. This is our embarkation center located about twenty miles <sup>NORTH</sup> ~~south~~ of the big city of New York. We've a busy schedule lined up for us, with last minute checks of equipment and personnel. Different types of exercise and obstacle courses are laid out for us. One reminder of possible things to come, is the abandon ship drill where we go over the side of a wooden platform, on a rope ladder. Just what actual good it is to abandon ship, is a good question, for they've already told us that we could survive for only a few moments in the cold Atlantic.

"If anyone has any physical problem that hasn't been taken care of yet, you'll be given a chance by reporting to sick call by ten A.M." Captain Armstrong, makes the announcement on the second morning.

"And this is the opportunity to get your eyes checked, George." I think outloud. I report for sick call, and the service is fast. An appointment is made for two o'clock this afternoon to see the eye doctor at the Camp Hospital.

"There appears to be nothing physically wrong with your eyes," He announces after a thorough examination. "But they do seem inflamed. I'll give you a prescription for some eye drops that should help clear that up. It could be just the excitement, or a nervous condition, but there is nothing in your files in regards to this problem."

"I did have trouble on an infiltration course exercise," I reply.



He looks through the files again before he replies. "There's nothing here in regards to that. But I'll give you the prescription anyway and that should help at least temporarily. Good luck to you."

Well, no glasses were needed anyway, and the drops do help. The slower pace that we are now on also seems to help. We find that we have time on our hands - and that can also be bad. One fellow who appears to be a real artist, entertains himself and others by drawing some obscene pictures on the wall. It's a shame that he's wasting his talent on stuff like that. Just expressing his feelings? - Well maybe. I have feelings too, and I think back about the medical examination at Camp Maxey and the destroyed records. And then today: "There's no record of any injury here, soldier."

So things are already beginning to surface. And I remember the advice of the Sergeant: "Wait until after the war soldier. You'll have plenty of time then to get justice." I guess I don't have any choice.

But there's good news. We're to receive a pass for New York tonight. The train leaves here at three, and we're to return on the two A.M. train. It means a last fling, and chance to see the big city.

It's a crowded train, but after arriving at the city, everyone goes his own way and does his own thing. Some visit bars, some go to shows, and some have dates. I'm not a loner, but I seem to end up that way. For a novelty I plan to have dinner at the Nickelodion, and start putting nickels in the slots for food. A waitress holds her hand up over the slot. "You don't have to do that, soldier, it's already been paid for."

"That's sure nice. Thank you very much," I respond.

Next, I visit the Radio Center Music Hall. There's a booth set up to



give tickets to the soldiers. And the word 'soldier' includes all service personnel - men and women, and from all branches of the military service. "Where would you like a ticket to, soldier?" She invites.

Yes, there is a choice to see nearly any play or show on Broadway, and if there's a seat or a ticket, they're free. "I'd like to see the show right here at the Center, thank you," I reply.

New York has really gone all out for a welcome for the services. Someone has to pay for this hospitality, which is a part of the war effort on the home front. And it must be realized that for many servicemen, this will be the port of no return. But for me tonight, I'm here to enjoy myself, and I'm really impressed by the size and design of this building. There's the huge carpeted lobby, with spacious winding ramps leading to the balconies. Tall sparkling mirrors flank the sides.

One of the two shows tonight is about the life of Louis Pasteur. There's also a stage show featuring the precision dance group called the Rockettes. The show turns out to be quite a treat for a country boy like me. And the show marks the beginning of a free escorted world tour.

Outside again in the cool crisp night air I'm again brought back to reality. With the blackout, the skyscrapers surrounding me appear as ghosts. But to replace the artificial light, countless stars twinkle down through these alleys of the sky. They're lighting the way for a traveller as they did some ago. And my thoughts recall that this is the Christmas Season and today was the 21st, but it's now the 22nd. There's no chance for a white Christmas - the streets are bare. With the thoughts of Christmas, I think of home and Mother. It's a small world - the same stars shining above me are shining back there on the west coast in Washington State. It would be nice to send a present home, but there's



no way of doing that now - or is there?

A small all night drug store is open down the street as if it were a beacon in the dark. There are newspapers, candy, and even drugs on the shelf. But it's a small packet of pictures showing New York city that catches my eye. It would be nice to send home, but I'm not supposed to write home - it's top secret concerning the movement of troops. But maybe there's a way around the situation. "Sir, could you please send these pictures in the mail for me?" I ask the clerk. "I'm not supposed to write, but I would like to send this small Christmas present home."

"Sure, soldier," he replies. "I'll be glad to mail them for you."

I pay him the money for the pictures and the stamp. Then he proceeds to write the address on the outside cover and drop it in the mailbox. Well, that's all taken care of - "Merry Christmas, Mom." Now she would never guess who sent that-or would she? I feel good inside as I leave the store and into the dark streets again, I go past the famous Wall Street. The tickers are silent, but the streets are still littered.

"So this is what it's all about." I muse to myself. "This is the pulse of America."

There's just time to catch the ferry to the depot for the train ride back to camp. I recognize several fellows from the Signal Battalion on the ferry. "Hi Joe, and Frank. Did you have a good time?"

"We sure did, George. We went to a Broadway play. Then we had a steak dinner, and we topped off the evening by going to a night club." From their conversation I learn that they also sent a couple of presents home, besides bringing some items back to camp for their own Christmas cheer. We discuss the secrecy of our troop movement and agree that the enemy would be just as confused as we still are.



It's early morning when we return to camp, but we've been promised a late breakfast which will give us another hour of needed sleep. It's the day that has all the promises of being the day for embarkation - I'm sure that they'll let us know.

It's in the afternoon when we're all invited to see a free movie. The Army wants to demonstrate that they can provide entertainment also. But this is really a required and serious movie called: "Why We Fight." It's a documentary showing more of the Nazi conquest, and ways that we can protect ourselves from such an enemy. It explains how our involvement helps to insure our own rights and justice at home. I ponder that last promise a little while. Liberty and justice are worth fighting for, but the fighting isn't confined to one war or even to just war - it's a continual process. And like living through the depression, I know that there is always a price to pay.

Our mess gear is packed in our duffle bags with the rest of our equipment. It makes a good reason for using the mess hall trays for eating on. And it's an hour after dinner that we receive our orders. "Report to the rail yard with full gear." Like sardines in a can, we file into the waiting cars of the train. With two to a seat plus duffle bags, rifle, and packs, there's no room to move around. I'm thankful that it's to be a short trip. It's a trip that's for real.

It's late at night again when we arrive in New York City. A cordon of police hold back the crowd, and clear a path from the train to the waiting ferry. Instead of transporting us across to the regular terminal, our personal ferry takes our Signal Battalion downstream to a darkened warehouse and an awaiting Victory Ship. Our ferry ties up along side the pier and we make our way inside.

The outside darkness is changed to the bright artificial daylight of



the inside. Preparations have been made way ahead of our arrival and everything appears orderly. We're grouped into our assigned Companies. Loud speakers give the orders. There's still time for some coffee and doughnuts offered by the American Red Cross volunteers.-"Thank you, Ma'am. Our Victory Ship-

It's time to embark - by groups, names are called off. We repeat our names and add our serial numbers. Such procedure acts as a good security check. "All troops will go to their assigned quarters and remain there. No troops will be allowed top side until after we are under way." It's three flight of stairs down to our quarters in the hold. We're below water level. Bunks, or hammocks are stacked in rows of six high. I leave my barracks bag by one tier and stake a claim on a top hammock. And I had better start using these nautical terms now that we're about to start our escorted sea cruise. And why did I select a top bunk? Well, I've heard that there's such a thing as seasickness, and this was just a precaution. Getting sick is just one of the little goodies that's possible, but we pray that it won't happen.

The time is late and I'm tired like most of the fellows. No one is allowed top side and it's just as well. It feels good to stretch out on this new bed, but there's too much excitement and noise to sleep for awhile. There's the steady pounding of the G.I. boots as they walk the steel deck from the gangplank. Then they make their way down the steel stairs. Now, there must be some nautical word for stairs.

There're 500 or more men aboard our ship besides the crew and possible other troops. The exact number maybe a military secret. There's ~~top~~ secret equipment aboard our ship also, besides the highly trained men with their secret knowledge. A life is a life, but in war they have things figured just a little differently. Our priority affords us greater protection, but the same priority makes us a better target for the



enemy. And the enemy is always ready to expend a few extra bullets, or torpedoes for such a prize.

The pounding on the decks slows down and finally stops. Everyone is on board. Being restricted to our quarters below decks gives us the feeling of caged animals, as in a way we are. Is it just a bad dream? I don't hear any announcement of: "All ashore that's going ashore!" So here we are with the steady drone of the airconditioning fans to lull us to sleep. And there's also piped music coming through the P.A. system to lull us to sleep, or to entertain us. It's relayed through the courtesy of the Armed Forces Radio Network.

There are some soldiers that I had known back in camp, now in nearby hammocks. There are also some new ones that I would be meeting. And what better way is there to meet people than on a sea voyage? "What time do you think we'll sail, George?" A former acquaintance asks.

"I really don't know, Carl," I reply. "But I heard some say that high tide is at four in the morning, but whether that will be the time I really don't know. But if I were to guess, that would be the hour."

Soldiers are always guessing or betting, and his question gave me something to think about while trying to get to sleep. And by some miracle sleep does take over. Then I'm awakened like many of the others, to a new sound. It's the quiet throb of the ship's engines. The sound is followed by the feeling of motion, and a faint creaking noise. "We've been underway for twenty minutes," someone relates.

I had been thinking that it would be nice to get a glimpse of the Statue of Liberty, even in the dark. But as if they had been reading my thoughts, and to emphasize an order made earlier as we boarded ship, the music is



interrupted for a repeat announcement. "We are under way. All troops will remain below decks until we are out of the harbour. Breakfast will be served starting at seven."

Well, that takes care of the Statue of Liberty. But it did open up a question regarding their use of the word, "breakfast." There must be some nautical word for it and they thought they would give us landlubbers a break. And I ponder that question as I start the land or sea ritual of shaving and washing.

Finding our new mess hall is not too difficult a task - just get at the end of a long line, wait, and wait. We wind our way around a number of passage ways before we make our grand entrance. Food is served on trays, and there's no motion of the ship at this time to spill the food or liquids. It's a good breakfast. Of course, the Navy is always noted for their good eats. And being just out of port with new troops - well, they have a reputation to live up to. Fresh eggs, bacon, brown potatoes, cereal, toast, orange juice, with milk or coffee are on the menu. It's a real good start for the day.

The time is 1100 hours when we feel a slight rolling motion of the ship. An announcements interrupts our music a while later. "We are outside of the harbour. Troops are permitted on deck at this time."

I'm one of the many others that waste no time in accepting the invitation. And from then on, I spend a great deal of my waking hours at that location. The first item to hold our interest is the forming of our convoy. One by one the ships appear on the horizon and take up their assigned position. Destroyers flank us on all sides. An aircraft carrier and a cruiser can be seen. Still nearer to us is a battleship. As far as we can see on the horizon there are ships. We take up a zigzag course of



evasive travel as instructed from prearranged flag signals, or by some other means except radio contact. Navigation distance between the ships is aided by the use of small buoys trailing to the side and behind of our escort vessels. This proves to be very useful at night when the wake of the object creates fluorescence in the water.

The line up for lunch is considerable smaller than it was for breakfast. The rolling motion of the sea is already taking its toll of appetites. Most poor souls are seeking any means of possible relief. This will be the pattern followed for the next few days. This is sort of a shame because some of the best served meals are during the first few day out of port when the food is fresh and in big supply. For some strange or unexplained reason I'm one of the few fortunate not to get sick. So for a while, with the short lines some have it made and are living like kings. But as time passes the lines again grow longer, while another type of food makes its way on the menu - but it's all good food.

One item of food that takes to everyone's liking is the fresh baked bread. Maybe it's the aroma of it being baked that has such an impact. The temptation caused by the aroma is just too much for a few. An announcement is made warning the troops of the possible penalties to be imposed for stealing the hot baked loaves. While it is wrong to steal the loaves, it also amounts in some small way as a very good compliment to the bakers.

Along the coast where the convoy first forms is known as the hunting grounds of German U-Boats. Of course there are air patrol planes on duty, but things are not quite as organized as when there is a chain of armed naval vessels around the merchant ships that are carrying the



troops and supplies. It is for these reasons that strong security measures have to be made and strictly enforced. One precaution that has to be taken at night is the control of lights. At night, any light such as a match, flashlight, or other incandescent light can be seen for many miles at sea. The U-Boats are always looking for such a telltale light to guide them to their target. The result is the sinking of a vessel.

At dusk or at the first sign of darkness, and in keeping with old navy customs, the speakers call out: "The smoking lamp is lit." With that notice there are no lights allowed on deck, - 'smoking or otherwise. Double canvas covers all hatches or entrances for light protection.

The first night out, one of our troops decides to step outside into the dark evening and have a smoke. His action endangers a lot of lives. Luckily he is spotted by the watch, and arrested to spend the rest of the trip in the brig. The news of the incident travels fast. Later in the evening, another warning about the use of smoking and other lights on deck at night is given, but not really needed.

The weather remains fair with sunny days and starry nights. Like some of the others, I like to stay outside on deck until after it's bedtime. The fresh salt air helps to induce sleep, but more than that there is something very peaceful about it. We're in and surrounded by war, but on deck under the stars there seems to be a little area reserved for God's promised peace. The peaceful future of the world seems like a long way off, but that is our assigned task - to create and insure that justice and peace. It brings to mind again the thoughts behind our required movie of: "Why We Fight."



It's interesting guiding our ship in a make-believe fashion, by the constellation of the stars. But the zigzag course that we follow, makes navigating a little difficult, or confusing. Of course, the stars keep their same position and it's just a little trick we use to confuse the enemy. And the enemy is out there somewhere. The fluorescent spray created by our neighbor the battleship, and other warships, bring us back to the reality that all is not peaceful out there.

We have passed the point of no return, if there ever was such a place. Anyway, we are over halfway across, and our ship's radio pick up the British radio broadcasts from London. It's complete with usual British accent, and the sound of Big Ben on the hour. We're closer to Europe now, and also closer to another German hunting ground. What a place for our ship to develop engine trouble. Our crew has been working frantically to restore them, ever since they stopped running earlier in the evening.

At dawn the crew picks up the sound of a submarine on the sonar. We have received orders to wear our lifejackets-as if that would do any good in these icy waters. One of our warships that had remained behind for a while also leaves, and we are alone like a sitting duck. Of course we realize that it would be better to lose one ship of 500 men, than to lose the whole convoy.

By afternoon, after much work and prayer, the engines are again working. By evening, with full speed ahead, we are beginning to catch up with our convoy.

On our course we now approach within 200 miles of the German occupied French coast. At this point we head for the North Sea and around the



British Isles. Allied patrol planes can be seen on occasions, and our ship's anti-aircraft crews stand by their guns. We're now in an active war zone.

We proceed east through a small channel of the North Sea, and then turn south to go between the British Isles to the port city of Liverpool. We drop anchor and wait outside of the harbour overnight. There must be some other ships ahead of us or we are just waiting for the high tide of morning.

In the morning we make our way to port. "Is this where we get off, Carl?" I ask.

"No," He answers. "I believe that they are just unloading some liquid supplies, and since it's going into a tank marked 'Hi Test Petrol,' you can bet that is what our cargo was. The grapevine has it that our destination is Belfast, Ireland. The location sounds logical, but you know how rumors go, George."

"I'm glad we didn't know before that we were carrying aviation gas," I comment. "We would have made a real prize for that submarine we encountered."

All of the troops are on deck observing all of the activity that's taking place. There's a British band on the dock playing some favorite tunes as a welcome, and it's request time. "Are there any requests?"

"Beer Barrel Polka," comes the unanimous response. The band seems a little set back by the request, but they play it. They must have been expecting a request for a more patriotic number or something.

We again head out of the Port of Liverpool. While still within sight



of land, communications are carried on by the use of coded light signals flashed between the ship and shore.

The grapevine rumor proves to be right as we head for the Port of Belfast and into its harbour that's pot-marked with light bombings, and the telltale signs of machine gun fire. It's the first place where we've seen some physical damage of the war. We wait awhile in the harbour, as seems to be the custom, and then we're escorted along a narrow channel to our dock for unloading. There's a lot of activity taking place at the docks and the other warehouses in the vicinity. Of course once the strategic supplies are unloaded, they're immediately dispersed to the various new camp staging areas. The importance of this port to the Nazis as a target, is realized by the fact that they risked such long flights over England to strike here. They've done it once, so it's a sure bet they'll try to do it again as the supplies build up - that is if they're given such a chance.

But our airforce is building up, and we've already taken a heavy toll of German planes. Another strong deterrent is the strong anti aircraft units located in front of the camouflaged warehouses, or other buildings and installations. Ireland is in a war area and the civilians are mobilized to save their land. There are the airraid wardens, nurses, and various other workers that help to keep the machine running. The housewives find themselves also wrapped up in the busy activities. and this is a good way to escape, for a few moments anyway, the many tragedies or realities that are taking place.

Our ship is but one of a very large convoy that's now unloading its precious cargo at various ports and docks throughout this vast theater of operations. There've been other convoys before us, and there'll be more to follow. And after unloading



our preciously needed supply of gasoline, we somehow feel just a little inferior.

"Well, we made it anyway, George." one of my many buddies comments as if he was reading my mind. "There were several times that I was beginning to have my doubts. . We made a good target for that German submarine, for awhile. I'm sure going to appreciate being on soil again. I guess that I wasn't cut out to be a sailor."

"I believe that you are expressing the thoughts of all of us," I reply. "Yes, there were times that I was glad that I had that small Bible in my duffle bag. But I guess, John, that we made it safely, and we can think of this as a free escorted tour of Europe. So in one way or the other, we can be thankful. We made it this far safely, they can keep the rest of the tour. No one will want to go over the hill from this location anyway. There is water on one side of us, and the enemy is on the other side."

"No, George, there is only one direction we're headed. You had better get that Bible out of your bag, because it won't do you much good in there. And, you know, where we're going, I think we're going to need that kind of protection - lots of it."

I didn't comment any further about the merits of the Bible being more beneficial outside of my duffle bag. I believe that it was more practical during these times, to be aware of just what the Book contains, and know the One responsible for our safety. And I'm sure I'm not the only one who is giving a prayer of thanks at this

time. Our future rests in His hands.

Belfast, Ireland-

There isn't any packing to do - just tie the cord on our duffle bags. And then by sections we make our way to the gangplank which leads down to good old terra firma. Except for the awareness of the fact that we're at war, which is a dead serious game of hunting and being hunted, it could have been a real nice sea voyage. We had felt the salt spray on our faces, and there was plenty of rest and food - who could have asked for anything more? And there was the smell and taste of the freshly baked bread - some fellows did get into trouble for stealing some of it from the bakery while it was cooling.

All of us would rather have been home for the holidays instead of on the high seas. For most of us, it was our first time away from home for this celebration.

But we are on land again after going down the gangplank. We notice the European rail cars, and the tracks that connect to the unloading areas. To us they seem quite quaint - but they have their job to do, which is a big one. On the nearby buildings we can see warning posters reminding everyone that the enemy is always listening.

"Troops will form by assigned Companies and answer to roll call." These are the instructions coming to us through the public address system. Of course, such a roll call is standard procedure, but we all wonder if it's really necessary at this time. Maybe someone did jump overboard, or is hiding out in the hold. Oh well, the affair won't take too long, and we're in no big rush to get to where we're going.



Military Police, and the local Irish Police have cleared and blocked off the area for our arrival. With the rolldown out of the way, we make our way to an area by the railyard, where our train is being made ready for a sightseeing trip to the country. The destination will be our temporary new camp and assembly area. Just where this new location is, most of us don't know. Only our Commanding Officer, (CO), or the engineer - I hope - know for sure. Of course there are always some fellows that have 'grapevine' information of all these secrets - and sometimes it's correct. Someone in the advance team has sent an uncensored letter back to the rest of the outfit - perhaps.

Soldiers can smell coffee and see girls from quite a distance. And this explains the concentration of GIs to one side of the depot. It is the American Red Cross Canteen. Is it the coffee, doughnuts, or the girls that makes the attraction? We get plenty of coffee all of the time, so maybe it's either the doughnuts or the girls. The girls are pretty, and the refreshments do taste mighty good. It's a real welcome gesture and appreciated even after just twelve days on ship - just looking at the waves.

The Irish girls, or colleens, seem mighty nice too. They don't have quite as much makeup to wear, and nylons are not easy to come by either. Nylons would be out of place a little also, as most of these girls are working in the factories, or in the fields. They are all friendly and their smile is genuine. And so is their quick little temper, as some of the guys will soon learn.

Wine, women, and song are the topics men and soldiers talk and dream about in their spare time. It's a cover-up for the darker side of war - the shelling, death, and suffering.

Our brief diversion at the canteen is short-lived, as the orders come to board the train. There is more room on these little cars than would appear from the outside. Some of our equipment has gone on special baggage cars, but we have our own personal gear, so it's still crowded.

My first impression of Ireland is, as most of the fellows comment: "Everything sure looks fresh and green." And to make the land look this way, it takes a lot of rain. It's a warm rain like we're having today that is of the most value. This does seem like a paradise compared to the cold and snow we had left in the United States where it was winter.

The train speeds southwest from Belfast where we had just disembarked. Past rolling hills, small farmland, and little villages we travel - the country all seems to tie in together.

"That's the first time I've seen houses with thatched roofs," Roy confesses to me. "They look like they came out of a postcard."

"I've just seen postcard pictures of them before also," I answer. "Some of these also have tile roofs, and they look pretty mixed in with the others."

"We've been going over an hour now. We can't go much farther south or we'll be in Free Ireland, or if we travel to far west we'll also have the ocean, which is likewise 'off limits'."



As if in answer to my thoughts, the train does slow down and then stop at the next village. "Lurgan," is the sign over the depot. From what we can see it seems like a nice little town. Little, but also big enough to be interesting. Transportation trucks from our unit are waiting for us by the side of the tracks. Our advanced team has been working and everything is ready for us.

It's a short ride to the other side of Lurgan and our camp area. The camp is set apart from the other buildings, and residential area. It consists of a cluster of quonset type structures in a fenced in, block square compound. It resembles a military unit in every way. Our Radio Company has two buildings for sleeping. There's also a building for the Dispensary as well as Headquarters. There are quarters for the Officers, and a building for showers. Other units of the Corps are located in other parts of the town, and in other nearby communities.

And just which bed do we claim, and in what building? Well, that's all been taken care of by a noncom in charge of the building, and squad. Oh yes, we finally find the mess-hall where we eat - that should have been our first priority.

We are back to the routine of camp life again and it's a life that we're more compatible with, if there's any such state of existence. Life aboard ship had its good points, but if we had wanted to have joined the Navy, then that would have been our choice. Even with all of the other dangers that we would be facing, we feel more secure having two feet on land.

"There's to be an informal assembly at about one hour before dinner."

our Sergeant informs us as we are unpacking some of our gear. "You are free until then, but don't leave the area."

The affair is low-keyed to fit the occasion - more of a welcome by our Captain, whom we have not seen much of since our departure from the States. The other officers are also present, including the two Lieutenants from our Radio gang. We seem to have a pretty nice bunch of officers with us, trying to be just a part of the Company, rather than King of it. We had heard that this is the way that it would be for units going overseas. Our lives depend upon one another as we work close together in a game of survival. Of course some officers just out of school will have to learn the hard way. Officers in war are like Kings in a game of checkers; their elimination is always figured to be of high value by the opposition.

"We are here for an indefinite period of time, and most of our equipment will remain packed. You'll have your regular tours of guard duty, and KP. The rosters will be posted on the bulletin board," he begins.

"This is the European Theater of Operation and you've been instructed as to just what is expected of you in the way of conduct. Remember that this is Ireland - this is their land. Southern Ireland is a neutral country and there's always the danger of infiltration. The signs around here all say: 'The Enemy Is Listening.' So watch out what you say and who you talk with. Don't try to take a trip to Southern Ireland in Civilian clothes either.

"You are permitted to have a pass tonight, that is, if you're not on guard duty. For your protection go in pairs, with the 'buddy system.'



"There will be a physical check up tomorrow. Be sure and look at the bulletin board for the details and exact time. And as I also said, the duty roster will also be posted.

"You're dismissed, except some of you might want to stick around for mailcall." Captain Armstrong concludes his welcome.

There's quite a lot of mail given out and I'm one of the lucky ones to get a letter. It's as refreshing as a summer breeze - mail from Mom and home. She didn't know just where I was,, but she had received the postcards from New York City. This is V-mail, and it's censored, but the feelings and thoughts of a closely related family can't be censored in the field of communications. Every word has a meaning of its own without being coded.

Of course, she painted a rosier picture than might be taking place, but that was to be expected. She was feeling good, and she was getting the allotment checks on time. There is news about my brother, who's in the Navy, and my other brother with his family who are on the home front. I knew that I'd receive letters from them real soon. Until our unit is on the move again, I'll have plenty of time to write to all of them.

Hidden between the lines in her letter, is the news that there's a top secret project going on, not far from our town. Just what's the nature of this project she didn't know, or let me know if she did. I didn't care to find out either, as the knowledge of such information can be very dangerous. It's no secret that everyone on the home-

front in the United States was working with everything possible on our behalf.

We have a brief physical the next day. I'm running out of eyedrops, and I question the doctor about a renewal of the prescription.

"There's no record of any prescription in your file. I wouldn't know what to prescribe for your eyes either, but if they should get worse, let me know and we'll see if we can work out something," is his reply.

And whatever the cause, I hope that my eyes will get better. But for any better remedy, I know that I'll just have to wait. I'd heard that advice before. Right now there's a job to do, and more at stake than just a pair of sore eyes - many lives are at stake!

It's sort of a nice life around camp. There's plenty to eat, periods of exercise, and of course guard duty. Sometimes I'm assigned to answer the phone at Headquarters. To keep busy and in practice, I listen to a couple of radios that we've set up with a DC power supply. The regular power supply runs a different voltage than we need. I can hear the news of the war and other events. There's code that I can copy on CW - some of this does come from Germany.

But such a life could and does get a little boring. So, like many of the others, I find myself making more frequent trips into good old Lurgan. Even before this time, some of the fellows had steady girlfriends and, knew the best places to get whiskey. Of course it's no secret where the pubs are to get beer, or ale as it's called - light or dark. It's always a challenge to go to town at night with the wartime black-



out. It never seems to be any trouble to find someone to go to town with, in fact, it seems like we're always going in groups of three or four. It isn't over six blocks to town, but with blackouts and no moon, the distance appears to be longer and more treacherous. At least it was that way until we found where everything, including the chuckholes were located. We know that there're a lot of people in town but we can't see anyone, and then we bump into someone, and someone has put a lamp post in the way. Most of our navigation is done with the aid of our nose and ears. We can smell the odors from the brew in the Pub as it's mixed with cigarette smoke and drifts out the double curtains of the doorway.

We enter some of these shops even though we don't buy anything or order any drinks. There're people in here, in this blackout world, we can see their faces through the cigarette haze and orange glow of the dimly lit room. It's sort of an eerie, but yet happy, sight and everything takes on a bouncing shadow effect. There is the deafening hum of conversations of people trying to out talk one another. In the far corner there is the sound of singing to the tunes of an old piano.

These are the sounds that we hear from the outside that help to guide our way. From another doorway comes the pleasant aroma of an unmistakable item - fish and chips. There are a couple of these shops in town and they're both quite busy - from the sounds of the cash registers, and the orders being taken.

"Are you hungry, George?" John asks me as I pause near the door way.

"We had a big supper - but that was quite a while ago," I reply. "But why not get a couple of orders? Anyway, we've to get used to spend-

ing some of this British money - shillings, pence, or whatever."

"I don't think that'll take very long to figure out," he reasons. "The shop-owners will also be willing to help out. This'll be a good place to go when our camp chow isn't up to par."

The snack is good and the cost isn't very hard to figure out. All we have to worry about is to be sure and have enough of the folding green stuff. At John's suggestion, our next stop is to try and find a drug store, or whatever they call these places on this side of the ocean. The smell of some medicine indicates just such a place. There is also the mingling order of perfume.

It's another dimly lit store, and quite small. There're drugs, papers, magazines, and a couple of old fashioned candy jars containing a small amount of horehound and peppermint candy. And yes, he has some postcards and other souvenirs located in the other corner of the store. John buys a couple of cards and a souvenir to send home to his girl friend. The selection isn't too great, but I select and pay for a small book of cards called: "5 View Letter Card of Glimpses of Beautiful Ireland."

It seems to contain the typical Irish scenery. The descriptive titles are: Mist on an Irish Mountain, A Farm in the Irish Mountains, and An Irish Mountain Road, By Killarney's Lakes. Typical of a verse of poetry on each is one found on the later. "Oh Irish mountains wild and free, with your white homesteads peeping. Like mushrooms from an Autumn Lea, my heart is in your keeping." It's quaint and pretty. Now to figure some way to get it home for a Valentine's Day present.



The mail will go through, of that we're sure. It is a must for the morale of the soldiers. The home folks could know where we are, as long as the other military information is left out - and most of us comply with that rule.

It's getting late as we make our way back down the darkened streets toward camp. There're many more darkened shops that are only open in the daytime, and only five days a week. In some of these darkened entrances a GI could be having a romantic interlude with a newly-found girl friend - saying goodnight or whatever. Where there're girls, there are soldiers. Some of the romances will blossom, some will just be for the night. And the Irish girls seem to get prettier every day. Most of the affairs are like part of the poem: "A fond kiss and then we sever; a farewell and then forever."

We pass a cinema, or movie house, on the way back to camp. "Looks like we'll have to investigate this place a little more in the days ahead," John quips.

In the days ahead we're regular customers to the theater, <sup>we</sup> queuing up with the rest - GIs and civilians. Everytime that there's a new picture, then we'll be there. There's a short serial that gets our attention every week also. It's a good pastime. On occasions a group of Irish lads will be singing by some street corner. They're good singers, and not all of them have gone to war. As a general rule, we keep our distance from civilians - this is their country.

We get to see what's in town in the daylight also. There are quite a few stores for such a small town. There's a jewelry store

with watch repairing, a grocery store, a butcher shop, a barber shop, and a department store - a Woolworth Limited. We take them all in. The jewelry store has different makes of watches - old and new. And they have some pins, rings, necklaces that make good gifts to send back home. It's a small shop, but they make a living, especially after the troops get paid.

The butcher shop is a typical one from the days before refrigeration. There's sawdust on the floor, and the meat - birds or whatever, is hanging by hooks. There's some in a glass case. And the flies are doing a good job of sampling all of the wares. It makes our kitchen back at camp really look inviting.

The department store has just about everything in it for this type of store. That is it did have it in stock before the war. Typical are the empty candy jars in that department. Some things are not to be had, and other things are rationed. We were issued a ration card that we could use for some purposes. Before I leave the store, I purchase a linen table cloth with a fancy bit of green embroidery work in the form of shamrocks around the outside. It's a memento from Ireland - shamrocks and linens. I hope that it was made here anyway, but it's real pretty.

We have to take time off once in awhile for guard duty and the other work around camp. Guard duty isn't too bad of a job, as it's quite warm. More than anything is the fear of rain showers. To help pass the time while on duty, I can watch the fast moving rain clouds speed across the sky, playing hide-and-go-seek with the moon as they travel.



The CO one day decides that we need more exercise than just walking uptown to the Pub or someplace. So it's exercise every morning from then on out. One morning a fellow from our radio squad complains that we don't get any exercise that will help our work. "Just what kind of exercise do you have in mind?" The Sergeant asks him.

Jokingly, the soldiers replies, "How about a finger exercise?"

Well, the Sergeant takes him up on that request, and we are doing that exercise for quite a few days. It looks easy, but it's really tiring. There were no more requests.

I'm assigned the job for awhile, of giving instructions for the dismantling and the assembling of the machine gun. I had worked with one before, but I wasn't an expert qualified for instructing. We're supposed to be able to take the machine apart and put it together blindfolded. "What am I going to do if they ask me a question that I don't know the answer? I ask the Lieutenant.

"Well, Sergeant," he replies. "Here's your instruction book with the lessons. If you get to a point where the questions are asked beyond the lesson, just say, that is all the lesson for today, and that you will take it up next time."

I follow his instructions and get by. Of course, the course didn't last too long for which I'm grateful.

And there's another exercise that suits me, and that's the walks or marches out of the city to see some of the pretty Irish country-side,

or see the mist on an Irish morning, as in the poem by Eva Brennan. "White mist hang over the Irish hills like a bridal veil adorning, their dear brown heads as they proudly rise to meet the caress of morning."

They are nice walks, and we'll get to see more of the real country this way than from the train or from our trucks. "Good morning. It's a beautiful day isn't it?" One of the women greets us as we pass her small house.

"Good morning," we reply. "It's pretty, but it's sort of wet." She watches us as we pass by, and then goes back to the scrubbing of her porch. They like to keep things clean, and the rain helps her in that effort.

The road curves around and over the rolling hills. Dodging a cottage or a group of trees the road goes on. The houses are like those in the postcards - small, scattered, and with a thatched or tile roof. This is a much better way to exercise.

Back in town we find out there are places to eat, other than the fish and chip houses. A couple of the fellows invite me to go with them one day, to where they had been eating. This is a small family-run cafe, with a couple of nice looking Irish girls in charge of the cooking and serving. Trust the soldiers to find such a place. There isn't much meat to be had, but there are chickens. And where there are chickens, then there are eggs. So we have some scrambled eggs.

We finish eating, and as we are leaving, one of them remarks, "You soldier



sure eat a lot of eggs. That must be where you get all of your pep."

There's no more conversation, but a slight wink and smile carries more meaning than any words.

It's the last day of January, and I celebrate my birthday with routine Army life. I read a letter and birthday greeting from Mom, which is most welcome - as all of her letters are. Then with some of the gang I take in a movie to top off the day.

Just as a group had prepared our quarters for our arrival in Ireland; near the first of February, we're assigned to make ready for a new group that will soon be arriving from the States. Our project is to clean up an old castle on a jetty just south of Belfast and a little east. We go there by truck with some supplies, and stay several days, sweeping and cleaning up. We set up some beds, and on the last day we make some fires in the more than fourteen fireplaces. There's one fireplace for nearly every large room.

In between chores, I sometimes take a break and go down by the shore and watch some of the ships come into the harbor. I watch their blinking lights, and copy some of their messages. But to me, the code doesn't make any sense, since they're using nautical terms. It doesn't really matter anyway, as it's just something to do. This is a work project, but in some ways it's fun, and it's a change from being back at Camp. Maybe that's partly the idea behind it.

But back at camp, other events are starting to take place for our good.

We're now allowed passes to go to Belfast by train, and in the second week of February there's a musical show to be there. Just from the States, it's the Irving Berlin show: "This Is the Army." Irving Berlin will be there in person.

"He's the composer who wrote 'White Christmas'," John informs me - as if I didn't know. But it's just my luck to be on guard duty that night. I'll see if I can make a switch with someone - I'd sure like to go. How about you, are you going?"

"This is the first time that I've heard about the show, but I've heard about him before. I'll try and go to see it. There'll probably be a mob there, but if it's full, I can always look around Belfast for a while. It'll also be a good train ride and a chance to get away from camp a little, and keep from getting stir crazy," I answer.

John couldn't get off on the night of the show, but there are some other fellows that I know who are going. The train is packed with troops. For some it's their first visit to Belfast, while others have been making regular visits. I'd been there at the time we cleaned up the castle, but that didn't make me a native guide by any means - I'm still just a stranger, or a tourist.

Very shortly after our train reaches the depot in Belfast, our troops have dispersed into the Friday night crowd and there's not one to be seen. I know that the theater isn't too far from the depot, and I make my way there on foot power. There's still no sign of any of the troops from our unit. They must have had other plans for entertainment.



I'd heard some of them say that they wanted to find out just where they make the Irish whiskey.

But it's getting near show time so I'd better hurry. And the theater is just ahead. There are still several people still going in, but there's no mob scene. Then I see the red sign on the ticket window that sends my hopes to the bottom. "Sorry, full house."

Well, that is what I believe, and I proceed to look at some of the billboards that advertise the show. I might as well look at some of the things that I might have seen.

I have just looked at the last ad and I'm preparing to leave and look a little around Belfast when I feel a tap on my shoulder. "Would you like to see the show, soldier?" It's a young officer, probably one who is with the show, who asks the question.

"I sure would, and that's why I came here, but they're full." I reply.

"Come with me," he directs. "I think I can find you a seat." And he leads me to an empty seat halfway down a crowded theater and on the left side. "Here's one just for you."

"Thank you, sir. This is great!" I acknowledge.

The curtain soon rises on the musical: "This is the Army." It's an all-male cast of entertainers fresh from the States. The audience enjoys it - the music, the singing, and the noted composer that is a part of it.

Thinking about the show, I'm nearly lulled to sleep by the clickity-

clack of the wheels on the rails, as the train rolls back to our camp at Lurgan. Mixed with my thoughts of the show, are the conversations of the gang telling of their adventures in the city. And there's also the occasional tinkling noise of a glass bottle. There are still the signs or posters reminding us that the enemy is listening - so I guess he is also watching and wondering. The train will continue on to free Ireland and Dublin. We get off at Lurgan.

Events like the show are the ones that I like to write home about. And these events on our schedule also makes our time go quickly - too quickly. Things are beginning to change and shape up. We know which way we'll be heading and know that it'll be soon. Although we've not had any air raids where we are, we always face that possibility. The destruction of war is not too far away.

In March there's a notice that a distinguished General will be making an address to the troops in a nearby town. We'll be having a part in it, and anybody that wants to come is welcome. There'll be transportation. His reputation has proceeded him. There are two items by which he's remembered; the incident where he slapped the soldier in the hospital is one, and his use of cuss words as a standard vocabulary is the other.

John was going to see, along with some others, but I decline the invitation to go with them. I know that I'll get a report from John later when he returns.

"Well, and just how did the pep talk go?" I ask him when he returns.

"George," he answers, "we're all used to cussing in the Army, not that



we all do it. It's either just a bad habit, or our lack of knowledge of words from the English language. But that fellow embarrassed the worst of us. There were a lot of red faces. Another bad part about it was that there were a lot of women and children in the audience.

"He told the soldiers that we wouldn't have time to dig any fox holes - any that were with him, anyway. We would just keep going through France, and Germany, killing the German men and making love to their women. Of course, he used other words that were a little more sickening."

"Thank you for your report, John. All I can say is that if the enemy was listening, I hope it scared some of them."

Secret Assignment-

ST. Patrick's Day is one that is noted for unrest or disturbances in Ireland. We increase our guard and take precaution against sabotage, and there are no incidents reported.

But following this holiday, we've orders that will make waves of our own. The orders are on the bulletin board, and our CO has instructed at assemblies. "Have your gear packed and clean, we'll be leaving Lurgan and going on a period of maneuvers. You'll receive your instructions from the officer in charge of each team."

It'll mean 'goodbye to Lurgan' and our theater, but in a way it's most welcome news, for we are wanting and needing some new activity. Some of our radio team will be going north with other troops. There's talk that another team will be in Scotland.

The group to which I'm assigned, heads south about ten miles to occupy a large estate and a few buildings. The main building, where our

Headquarters is located, is the castle. Our coding rooms, our receivers, and the remote control units for our transmitters are also located here. It seems like a castle to us anyway - it's made of stone. We have our equipment set up in the basement, with cables running in from the outside. East of the castle is a small lake in a park like setting. Along the shore there has been installed two poles for a beam antenna. They have it laid out with a map and compass. Our Radio Officer is busy cutting the length of antenna to get the proper match for the wavelength being used. We help him string in the cable through an upstairs window, and then down to our control units in the basement.

As we work with him we do our job, but it's more on an informal basis than we used in the States. The closer we get to this war front, the more this is noted. The 'sirs' are not used as much, but there are the exceptions, as we've seen before. We get along good working together. A few times we go the Battalion Headquarters to get some new equipment to complete the installation. We seem to have a high priority to get anything that we need.

There is one little puzzle to me as to just why our antenna is beamed toward Southern England while our radio contact is to the north. Southern England also means toward France, as well as Germany. But the policy is not to ask questions, but just do our work.

Our living quarters are located to the north of the castle in the form of some quonset huts again. We're now used to living in these.



Our mobile radio units - 299s, and 399s, are located west of our quonset huts in a small field. A power generator is connected to each unit. The mobile radio units are worked from remote control from the castle. There's always a man on duty in the units to change the coils for the required frequencies, and he receives his instruction through a field telephone located inside the unit. Each mobile unit has its own whip antenna system. We also have telephones in our sleeping quarters, connected to a main switchboard. Our mobile units are now at work with troops on maneuvers in northern Ireland. For awhile the operations is routine contact and setup. Several of us who are a part of the over-strength, have no permanent duties in this part of the work.

Located in the basement of the castle besides the receivers, are a couple of high powered transmitters. A lead in from one of them is connected to our beam antenna besides the lake east of the castle. This setup is not yet complete, although almost ready for some sort of operations.

About two days later, there are some new officers seen around the castle. About seven of us so called extras are given private orders to report to a large room located upstairs in the castle. There are special guards posted at each doorway entrance - they are men that we had not seen before. The arrangement is taking on a clandestine atmosphere as if there is some counter intelligence involvement. Later as the events unravel, we find this to be true.

"Your backgrounds have been checked by the F.B.I.," the officer in charge informs us. The operation that you are about to take part in, is listed as top secret. The penalty for revealing such secrets



to anyone during the war, carries the death penalty, as you should be aware." The officer finishes his warnings about the penalties involved for us revealing the knowledge or importance of our work. Many lives and the success of the not too distant invasion could lie in the balance. Some information concerning this operation might leak out. But if it did, on purpose or not, it was not to come from us.

He then continues to outline the operation. "You seven men in this room, and your radio officer, are the only ones on this base that will know of this operation. The other radio men on this base do not, and will not know of your exact assignment. But they will be in contact with units on maneuvers in Northern Ireland. We'll relay some of these coded messages, along with some other messages, to another station like yours in Edinburgh, Scotland. The units on maneuvers will change their locations at a predetermined time and direction. And we'll increase the tempo and priority of our messages to Scotland, along with these changes.

"You've seen the direction of our beam antennae. They are beamed toward the French coast, so it's obvious that the Germans will be intercepting these messages as well as our station in Scotland. We also have one of our own intercept stations in England that will monitor this traffic.

"That's your assignment, and you'll start to work immediately. Sergeant Sanford will be the noncom in charge of this crew."

That was news for me as well as the rest of the fellows. We are playing for real, and not just practice. As this is a diversion type of operation, it means that we know the possible areas of the invasion.



The enemy would like to have this information, so there's a very strong risk involved. It means the safety of our own necks, as well many, many more, depend upon our actions.

The guards open the doors, the officers leave, and we go our way. It's a big assignment for me as well as the crew, and carries a heavy responsibility. Since we're not in a bombing area, I feel that I can fulfill the task that lies ahead - at least I'll try.

We start right in with our contact and identification with our sister station. The traffic starts in rather slow, but as planned, the tempo varies. By having top priority and plenty of power, there isn't much trouble in getting the messages through. Of course the distance to Scotland isn't too great. But there is some QRM, or man made interference, from even our own nets - like the Airforce, or Navy.

Duty is twenty-four hours a day, and seven days a week. There are relief operators during meals. We've just enough operators to do the job, as long as everything goes smoothly. They're all good operators, and they have been picked for that reason. The situation of working close with the other radio teams, brings about some feelings that resembles jealousy on their part. Their job is, in its way, as important as ours, but they don't know the setup. We've a small crew, and have been working around the clock. They've plenty of operators, and so they have plenty of time for extra rest. They do sense that we're handling actual war messages, and that theirs are a regular practice type from maneuvers.

I'm in our hut one evening, resting after supper, when one of the men calls me to the phone to receive a call. It has been four days since we started operations. The call is from a Staff Sergeant in charge of the main radio section, working the teams that are on maneuvers.

"George," he begins. "I've received some complaints that you are working your men too hard, and too long of hours. And I don't like it either. We have plenty of men here. Can't you put some others on for awhile and give these men some more time off?"

His call and complaint about throws me for awhile, but I reel back. He outranks me by several steps, and he's in charge of all the radio team of this Headquarters - that is except ours. We're on a separate assignment, with a higher priority, and I'm in charge. While thinking of these points, I also quickly remember the warning about revealing our work to anyone. Is this his purpose? Is he serious and concerned for the mens welfare? Or had he been drinking? These thoughts come to me swiftly, and my reply to him is just about as swift.

"Sergeant," I answer. "I've not received any complaints from any of my men. We've an assigned job to fulfill, and I've been given an assigned number of men to do that job. If you have the weight and carry the authority to secure some more men for us, let me know and I'll be glad to work out the hours accordingly. Meanwhile we'll continue to do our best with what we have. Thank you for your concern."



Nothing more is heard from him on that subject, although I see him often at meal times, and around camp. They do their work and we do ours. Things are working as smoothly as can be expected.

It takes a lot of practice and concentration to receive the dots and dashes of continuous wave, as it's called. Like throwing a baseball, it takes good control of the wrist and forearm. One morning while off duty, I receive an urgent call to report to the message room. The men have just decoded an urgent operational message from our station in Scotland. One of our men had been sending a rather long priority message. Every other group or letters he sent, contained an error and had to be repeated. They had interrupted his sending long enough to send this coded message, asking that he be replaced.

I would have a shift later in the evening, but I fill in and complete his message, and a couple more. To top it off, I have to send a real long one of 1,200 words or groups of code. By the time I finish, my wrist feels like jelly also. I was thankful that most of the messages were not that long. The man I replaced, later confessed that he'd been playing baseball just before his shift.

The airways of radio are not always free of noise or static. Sometimes we have jamming by a German station, or there could be atmospheric disturbances such as lightning. More often it's caused by crowded band conditions where another station is sending close to, or on the same frequency. We have an airbase close to our location, and they have high priority also. Generally their radio

frequency is far enough away from ours so that it doesn't interfere. One night, the ionosphere or something is playing havoc as well. I can adjust my receiver to escape some of their close transmissions, but the receiving station in Scotland can't. They keep asking for repeats because of this QRM noise level. We have our fixed transmission frequency, so I can't change that. I have some urgent messages to deliver, with the priority and power to do it. I raise my power, and peak the output and antenna coils, and continue to send. It seems as if the airforce station is playing the same game, as it's also getting louder. I'm now working full power, and get the message through.

The next day there are some changes in our assigned frequency, and that of the Air Force station. There's no comment about the operational Procedure used. The little battle of power probably did more good than harm. I didn't like interfering with the Air Force station. If the stations listening in France had any doubts about the importance, and power of our station, they didn't after that duel of watts.

The tempo and priority of our messages fluctuates at random. The location of the stations on maneuvers also change, and move in a prearranged direction. To be of any value our broadcasts can't go on indefinitely. It's two weeks after we had started operations that we get our orders to QRT, or cease operations.

Our radio officer briefs us on our future plans. "We'll be leaving from here early tomorrow, right after breakfast. Have your gear all packed and be ready to load by that time. I don't know where our destination will be - only that we'll be starting out north."

I had received two letters from home since being at this temporary



location. They had both been addressed to the 92nd Signal Battalion, with the assigned post office number, and in care of the postmaster in New York City. It's wonderful how this post office can get the mail through. One of the letters is from my Mom, and the other is from my brother and his wife. Since the time that they wrote these letters, I've been assigned a new A.P.O. of 436, with the 97th Signal Battalion. Even though I can't tell them that I'm with another unit and have changed jobs, it should be obvious to them with the new post office number shown. I can't tell about the work that we'll be doing, or where we'll be going - even if I knew. To help us on this security, there hasn't even been any 'grapevine rumors' reach us. This is all for our own interest.

But it doesn't take much figuring, for those few of us that now possess top secret information, to realize that we won't be going back the the former 92nd Signal Battalion, and Captain Armstrong. The young Lieutenant Radio Officer will be our Commanding Officer until further notice. He is from Army Corps, and had possessed high priority to fulfill the assignment that was just completed. He had borrowed men and equipment from the 92nd Signal Battalion to complete that job. Since that phase of the operation is finished, most of those men have, or will be returning there. Their mobile radio units have already left. Some of their men have remained for cleaning up. There may be another Signal unit located here in the future.

Some new men have been assigned to our unit. But our past and present operations is secret, even to them. We have about forty men with us. Some trucks with drivers, are at our disposal for our trip tomorrow.

April seems to be bringing some nicer weather to Ireland. We've had a few showers, but that's a normal weather condition for any place at this time. The days are getting a little longer, and warmer - just nice. With that in our favor it seems a shame to be leaving here, especially since we know what direction that we'll be heading. But if we want to get home, we'll have to go by this route.

After supper I finish packing, and find that I've time to write a letter home. Some of the other fellows seem to have the same idea, but a few of them have disappeared to say a farewell to a new acquaintance. There's always something to write home about, and I know that the letters are always welcome. I can answer some of their questions. Is there anything I need? "How about a nice fast boat going home?" I would kid back. And there's always the subject of the weather, the flowers in the country, or the people.

There is some news of the war and the events at home that I can comment about. We're getting an Army newspaper called, "The Stars and Stripes." It's a good source of news - it even has a couple of comics for a few laughs. And we hear the latest news on the radio. I try and keep the news going home as light as possible, because a letter just coming from a war zone could be depressing. But of course the other thought is that not getting a letter could be even more depressing.

The excitement of moving doesn't bother my sleep, and the night passes quickly. We have a good breakfast, and load our gear into



the waiting trucks. We're even given a sack lunch to top off the event. Someone has thought of everything for us, and knew that we would be in for quite a bit of traveling. With jeeps and trucks, we're finally on our way north.

As we ride along there are several guesses made as to where our destination for the evening will be. Most of us are certain that we'll be somewhere in Scotland before the day is through. There is other talk as we ride along also; events that had happened at home, and what had happened at camp - some of their conquests. There is also a small amount of griping, which is a good sign of a healthy Army.

"We're bypassing the city of Belfast, George," Bill comments. "It looks like we don't sail from here, anyway."

"No, Bill," I agree. "The GO meant it when he said we're going north. We'll get to see some more of Ireland anyway. You know, in some ways, I'm going to miss it."

"I tried to talk him into letting us stay," he replies. "But with all of my pleading he still wouldn't listen."

Some of it is crazy kind of talk, but it makes the time more pleasant. Of course it makes the time go faster too. We are 30 miles north of Belfast at a pretty little town, and our port. We're ahead of schedule, so that means that we'll have to wait for awhile. But this is better than being late. There's time to bring out a deck of cards, or eat a sandwich or two. I think that I'll save mine for the boat ride. It's a calm day with a little sun so there should

be very little chance of getting seasick. I think about it for awhile, and then decide that it won't pay to take a chance with an empty stomach either.

If we looked at the map correctly the other night, the closest points, or ports between Ireland and Scotland would be Larne and Stranraer. It is a distance of about 25 miles, or two or three hours of travel time, depending on the boat's speed. It's a trim looking ferry that now approaches the dock area. Except for the fact that it's painted grey, it could have served as some type of a cruise ship. And maybe it was in prewar days. It looks like it has the capacity to hold three to four hundred passengers and supplies.

It doesn't take very long to have the passengers disembark. It seems to be all business. I try at one point to count the number of passengers, but I give up on that idea due to the large group, and their quick dispersal into the crowd on the dock. As soon as the area is clear, our CO checks some papers with the ship's Officer, which seems to clear us to be the first to board. We're ushered to a large observation room, enclosed on the main deck. Other passengers, some military, and some civilians are now given clearance to board. Longshoremen have been busy unloading and loading cargo. They're well-trained and some very difficult tasks go as smoothly as clockwork. We're soon under way.

I think about some of the characteristics of these workers on this side of the Atlantic. They know their trades and keep busy but they don't seem to rush quite as much as we do. And this seems



to establish a better priority for life. These people have had a closer taste of this thing called war also, and maybe that has something to do with it. Their homes and towns have been bombed - the war has come to them.

#### Moving Closer-

It's a nice day for a boat ride, and we might as well enjoy what we can of it. But as we leave the harbor and swing into the North Channel of the Irish Sea, we become aware that except that for a few deterrent forces, this serenity would be short lived. In both directions from our grey painted decks, grey warships can be seen plying the waters. We hear the drone of a patrol plane, and looking up, we see it disappear in some fluffy clouds. As an unarmed vessel on open waters, we are again on the enemy's list of targets. We're protected by batteries of shore based anti aircraft guns for the planes; and there're nets strung in the waters as well as patrol craft on the list of things in our favor. But there's always that chance that a submarine or an enemy aircraft will get through. With our good fortune thus far on our journey from home, I know that there's also a force far greater than man's weapons of war, that has been protecting us.

The salt air seems to spur our appetites, which gives us an excuse to make short work on that remaining sandwich from our sack lunch. And there is a cup of coffee furnished in our room, that we can wash it down with. Some of the fellows resume their game of cards. It's a game that generally ends up with the stakes being money.

Besides just looking out of the window and daydreaming, I engage in numerous conversations. I know the names of men I've been working with, but there're many new ones that I've yet to meet. The conversations are generally about their occupations at home, and what they

would be doing after the war - always optimistic about the outcome. Of course, we all had thoughts and expressions about what outfit we would be with, and what we would be doing. And there's always talk about the girl back home, or even at the last town. Well, I had a mother back home; maybe I needed a girl back home too, but I'm content with things the way they are. Anyway, I know to me, she is the best.

What are the names of some of these new men? We are always introduced, but unless I work with them for awhile, the name will soon be forgotten. I never was very good at remembering names, and maybe that's because I don't try hard enough. Our conversation deal with subjects in which we relate. In this pursuit, the time soon passes and we find that we've reached our little port in Scotland.

If there's a city of any size here, we can't see it from where we disembark. But it's a large and busy dock. There're large piles of lumber and other material of war. It's into one of these sections of dock that we assemble. We start playing a waiting game, while our Lieutenant and Staff Sergeant do some foot work seeking information, or orders. Some of us take advantage of the situation and stretch out on some of the piles of lumber to have a nap - always alert to the low flying seagulls.

We wait and the minutes seem to tick by into hours. We think that our waiting is over when we again assemble and march off of the dock area, to another section that contains a large warehouse type of structure. It's a place to eat. But it's a change and most welcome. Following the meal, we again march back to our area on the dock, and take



our place along with the other war material - just waiting.

The minutes continue to tick by, and the day is getting late. "Scotland doesn't <sup>look</sup> any different than Ireland did," these thoughts come to me as I watch the cranes work, and the little switch engines move the cargo to areas of transfer. From where we were in Ireland we had the water to our east, here the water is to the west. The people and the land seem to be the same - but I'd better not tell them that.

A newly-formed card game is interrupted by the sight of a larger engine backing a string of passenger cars on a siding, near our location. The men assemble and move closer to the location of the train, even before they are given the orders. Everyone seems to know that this is just what we've been waiting for the last several hours.

We're soon struggling aboard the train with our duffle bags. The design of the cars don't seem as strange to us as when we first saw them in Ireland. It's growing dusk as our loaded train maneuvers its way back and forth out of the dock area and onto the main line. Blackout regulation are in effect, which means that we have the blinds pulled and only safety nightlights on. If there is a city of any size near the dock area, we couldn't see it now. The city would be as dark as we are.

Even with the dim lights of the car to see with, a couple of card games are under way. There's also the dull drone of conversations, mixed with the 'clickity clack' of the wheels on the track. The soldiers aren't sleepy - it's too early in the evening, and we're too excited.

But as the evening wears on, I, like the rest, am lulled to sleep by the train's motion, and the steady tempo of its wheels.

As it has been my experience with train travel before, as long as the train keeps rolling, I keep sleeping. But when on its southerly course, it slows or stops, then I awaken. At such times the volume of conversations would also increase. "I think we've crossed the Scottish border and we're now in England," is one announcement. At one stop we hear the passing of another train. That stop is self explained. On another occasion when we slow to a stop, there is the excited announcement of: "I think they've stopped for an airraid alert!" And the news spreads throughout the car. We stay immobile for a long period of time before proceeding. This scene repeats itself on another occasion. I can hear the distant sounds of the anti-aircraft guns. I'm thankful that they keep their distance. This is our first witness of the battles that we know we'll see more of. We're getting closer to the fighting of the war.

Even with all of the continuous interruptions, I manage to get a considerable amount of sleep. Our train pulls onto a siding after slowing down. We come to a halt near some Army buildings composed mostly of quonset huts. It's daylight and we can see outside. Like it was at our port in Scotland, if there's a town nearby here, it can't be seen. But we've reached the first camp on our new travels. "Somewhere in Central England," that will be our only guess, and it'll have to do until we have more information.

An officer from our new camp is now giving the instructions, as soon as we assemble on a platform beside the track. "The Sergeant



will show you to your new temporary sleeping quarters and other facilities of this base. After you've been established and clean up, you'll be served a breakfast in the messhall. There'll be an orientation in the communications building promptly at ten."

We're given a grand tour of the little establishment by the Staff Sergeant. The first stop is our barracks where we can leave our heavy duffle bags. There is a wash-room nearby where we can wash up, but the toilets are located off in a separate area, with a 'honey bucket' setup.

And over here is our communications building where we'll be meeting at ten hundred hours," the Sergeant emphasizes as we continue our tour. "This is our mess hall, where breakfast will be served in ten minutes. So, if you're hungry, you'd better get cleaned up and get in line."

It turns out to be a really good breakfast. We have hotcakes, hash browns, sausage, eggs, and coffee. It's also nice that they furnish eating trays for us. Our mess gear will remain packed. Most outfits aren't always this fortunate, and the messkit is always a part of the soldier's daily life of eating.

After breakfast we get a chance to have a shower and clean up some more - even wash out a few items of clothes. The remaining time I have to spare before the meeting, I decide to invest in a little shut-eye, stretched out on the bed. It's a good investment, and I get up feeling more rested. The sleep on the train had not been the best in the world. Now, it's time for our briefing by the Captain.

"I want first to explain your reason for being here, and then, what

you'll be doing here as well as on your future assignments. This is an assembly area for troops connected with radio intelligence type of operations. All of you have had security checks made on your past, and you've been selected for this type of work because of your proficiency in radio CW code.

"Your work from now on will consist of intercepting German radio traffic - both coded and clear text. It's a priority assignment of work, and you'll not be expected to do manual chores of camp maintenance. Your job will be solely to intercept radio traffic.

"While you're here," the Captain continues, "for a period of about five days, you'll have practice to help you increase your copy speed. Tapes will be used for this purpose. As a general rule the real messages that you'll be copying, will be of a much slower speed, and many will be in clear text. You'll also learn several new letters of the German alphabet, including the 'barred' letters. You'll also learn the operational prosigns used by them to indicate the priority of a given message.

"I'll mention another very important item for you to remember when you are copying their traffic. Every operator will, in some fashion, leave his signature on every message sent. One operator may have trouble with a certain letter or a group of letters. Or he may leave out a 'dit' or add an extra one. He may make more errors, or be more proficient, than another. You'll want to be alert in your copying, for such characteristics of individual sending. By such recognition of this nature, we'll be able to establish future deployment of their troops."

It's a lengthy but very informative briefing by the Captain. He concludes with some remarks about the risks and security involved.



"During our African Campaign, our troops engaged in doing the same type of work you are going to be engaged in, were listed as nearly one hundred percent casualty. Since that time, however, the German airforce has been drastically reduced. The direction finders we had set up in the field in Africa, became high priority targets for their bombing runs.

"We have now gained knowledge of some of their code, and we have changed our organizational setup. This is all to our advantage, but like all of the other activities of war, there are always high risks. You are not to reveal the type of work that you are doing when you write home, or in any communications with anyone. In your future activities, be careful not to leave scraps of paper or other evidence lying around that will reveal your organization or the type of work that you are doing. Your life, and the entire war effort, depends on each of you adhering to these regulations.

"I want to wish you the best of luck as you proceed with your assignments in the field. The Sergeant will now outline your work schedule here at this base. If you have any questions concerning anything, feel free to ask him."

The Sergeant takes over his assigned task, and shows us the layout of the equipment we will be using, as well as our schedule. We will be in class for three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon. The first class will start this afternoon after lunch.

The Sergeant dismisses us in time to clean up and rest a little

before lunch-time. The fellows don't say much, but they're doing a lot of thinking about the briefing and what is going on - I'm doing the same. If there was any doubt before as to our future status, it was cleared up following the Captain's briefing. Of course, there're always some unanswered questions. Before too long we'll be heading for combat, and close to the front. We'll have to be there to intercept the messages from the lower powered sets of the Germans, and their slower speed transmissions. For the 'when and how' of some of the questions, we'll just have to wait.

And I think about the course that some of this waiting and wondering, is already taking me. I was transferred from the 84th Signal Company as being physically unfit for combat. The records were destroyed following my transfer. I arrived overseas months before the 84th Signal Company. I was again transferred out on the special assignment. And now it's definite that I'll soon be transferred to another combat unit in a very hazardous assignment. If I wanted to do anything about it, now isn't the time, and that's for sure.

There's now another feeling that has taken over. I'm now in the action with a very important job to do. Our lives now depend upon working together. My thoughts now are only the desire to do my best in an environment that I had been warned against being in - one that could be dangerous to myself, or to others serving with me.

"Hey George, are you going to lunch, or are you going to keep day dreaming?" Comes a voice.



"I'll be right with you, Bill. I was just thinking about our assignments."

The following days bring full schedules of code practice. Over and over go the tapes - always faster and faster. It has been during times of long hours of code practice like this, that men have been known to have thrown their headsets out of the window. Copying code can be a mental strain under the best of conditions. Under adverse or combat conditions it'll be another story. The new German letters and prosigns are repeated with the same procedure, and mixed with the other letters and words.

We don't have a chance to go out on pass, with our busy schedule, and maybe it's just as well. For the men on the staff at camp, it's another story. And we learn that there's a village not far from camp.

It has a depot, so it must have a name. We can see a few of the houses, but that's all. Where there're houses there're people; but for a specific type, there are girls - 'English girls.' This's the information according to a staff member. We don't get to see any, so really we wouldn't know. None of them are allowed in camp, and we're restricted to the camp area. One day during a between class break, and for the lack of anything else to do, I'm walking around the perimeter of the camp for exercise. Near one of the entrances one of the sergeants is talking to one of these mystic girls that we've never seen. The Sergeant recognizes me, and calls me over.

"George, I'd like you to meet Mary. You didn't believe me when I told you that there were some nice girls around - one, anyway. So, I thought

I'd show you.

"Pleased to meet you Mary. That's a pretty name." I sort of stammer. And she is pretty too, although I didn't say it. We talk for awhile, and then I excuse myself to return to our class. The Sergeant must have guessed that when he introduced us.

I had plenty of things that I could have talked with her about. One of my grandmothers was a Lady in Waiting to a Queen of England. But you 'dumb bunny,' " I think to myself. "You didn't even try to get her address. It would be nice to write to someone like her.

"Well that's a soldier for you, they get lonesome, and they fall for anyone," I reason. "I have a job to do, and I'll soon forget her. But she did seem real nice."

The week of practice and study seems to pass real fast. On the last day of the schedule, we're given some speed tests and our scores are graded. I get to twenty eight words a minute printing from the coded tape. The letters were starting to get a little blurred at that speed. Much faster copy would require the use of a typewriter. A couple of the sergeants give us some last minute tips and instructions. "If you think it would help your speed any, you can use longhand instead of printing. Anything that can help, is permissible."

Unknown Destination-

The orders are that we will ship out tomorrow to continue our escorted tour of England. Everyone knows that we'll be going towards London. But where we'll go from there is anyone's guess - sealed orders.

Early the next morning after breakfast, we're loaded into our



private railcars - for our use anyway, courtesy of the British Government. One good thing about these moves is that they require little or no packing. One of the things that we do have to watch out for is not to get caught with some wet laundry to pack. But so far we've had enough notice of our moves to prevent such an occurrence. The weather that we have here in central England is drier than that which we experienced in Ireland.

Most of the fellows, including myself, are in pretty good spirits to start our day's travel - good, considering the direction that we're heading. Some of the fellows are whistling, and some are even singing. They're tunes that we had heard blaring from the juke boxes back at Camp Maxey, or some other camp. "Rose of San Anton", Paper Doll, and There's a Star-Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere," are a few that we had heard. Whether they are favorites or not is another matter.

Our train switches back off our branch line, and then onto the main line. We start moving slowly ahead. For some reason I find myself humming another tune that's an old favorite anywhere. "For it was Mary, Mary, long before the fashions came --" Our train picks up speed as we near the little village next to camp. I find myself looking out of the window as we pass the depot - there isn't a soul in sight.

We head in a southeasterly direction towards London. It's daylight, and we can see out of the window. The countryside is similar to parts of Ireland; but being drier here, it's not quite as green. Several large estates can be seen on the upper hillsides, and below are a cluster of smaller homes - cottages. There'll be a smaller village, and then a larger town. There's no set

pattern, and yet it looks as if it had been this way forever. Mainly because of the London Blitz, many of the factories formerly located there, have been moved to the country. We can see their camouflaged outlines, dispersed as they are, for protection. But there's always some telltale puff of steam coming from the building, or there'll be a spur rail line leading to the building. Many people from the larger cities have also taken up residence in the less populated regions of the country. But even here, the Luft waffe has found targets, as evidenced by some gutted building or rail depot.

"Looks like we're going to get to see London," Bill informs me as he taps me on the shoulder.

"Thanks, Bill. I guess I was just resting my eyes, and had just dozed off a bit. Boy, it is a big city, and really spread out in area. There's supposed to be about three million people living here."

You can sure see the damage of the 1940-1941 Blitz," he resumes.

"There're damaged or ruined buildings everywhere we look. And they're still making strikes at the city. I hope that they leave us alone today."

Our train slows down its speed as we approach the railyard of the station. The heavy bomb damage is more evident here. This city has been a prime target. There's broken glass in all of the skylights of the depot, along with some broken walls and twisted steel of the building. There're still some craters and twisted rails in the yard. Even with all of this damage, the trains keep moving, carrying the needed supplies and people. "Remarkable how they manage to keep going, isn't it, Bill? They must have badly damaged the subways also."



Bill, along with the rest of our gang, are taking in the view and nodded in agreement, "It sure is a scene of destruction."

We wait in a group on the platform besides the train that we'd been on, while our CO and Sergeant do some more of that required footwork. But this time it doesn't take near as long. Within ten minutes we're boarding several chartered busses for an unknown destination. Either communications are better now, or we have a higher priority rating now than we did before. It's also evident that they didn't want us to stay too long in this congested rail area. We're in agreement with that wish.

At any other time, this could have been a sightseeing tour of London. This is a historic city that has led conquests and has been conquered in return. Even what little of it that we're seeing of it at this time, I'm sure I'll long remember - the ancient history, and the history that's still being made. As we approach the Thames River, and the London Bridge, we can see the Parliament Buildings and Big Ben on our right.

"Is that the clock, or the bell that we hear on the radio every night?" I ask Carl who was seated opposite Bill and me.

"That's the clock alright, George. But I don't really know for sure if that's what we've been hearing. Someone told me that Big Ben was shut down for the duration of the war, for security reasons. And that sounds logical, so I'm not sure. The buildings of Parliament were known to have been heavily bombed, but the clock looks to be here in all of its regal splendor. Hey, did you know that the bell for that clock weighs over thirteen tons?"

"No, I didn't, Carl. You're alright, even a tour guide might not have told us all of that."

From the top of London Bridge we get a better view of some of the damage inflicted by the bombings. Whole sections of the waterfront and its shipping facilities have been destroyed. To our left as we cross the river, a whole block section of what was a large church, has been leveled to a pile of rubble - except for one small spire with a cross.

We turn right to follow parallel with the upstream course of the river. I glance over my right shoulder to get a last look at Big Ben from this side of the river. Even without a camera, I've taken a permanent picture of its majestic splendor.

We turn left shortly, circling a couple of blocks to another railway station. This depot is in the heart of the shipping area, and its condition seems to be worse than the other depot. There are the broken skylights and the other windows. And there are the craters with piles of rubble that's still waiting to be hauled away.

"Our priority must be getting higher, Bill. They even have a train waiting for us this time."

"You might be right, George," he replies. "but really I think they're just trying to keep the area from becoming congested. And they might think that we'll attract the Luft Waffe - like honey attracts flies."

Once more we go through that struggle of carrying our duffle bags through the narrow compartments of the train. As a reward, we find



that there has been some thoughtfulness on someone's part. Our last camp had provided a sack lunch for us as a going away present. So we do have some more traveling to do. As our train heads in a southwesterly direction past the switch yards of London, there is nothing to do but to settle back in our stuffed chairs and leisurely enjoy a nice lunch - a ham sandwich, anyway.

The peak excitement for our day's trip seems to have been climaxed with our one hour stopover at London, where we made new train connections. We're now heading south in the direction of Southampton and Southern England. This must be the same direction that a lot of the population travel on their summer vacations - that is, in time of peace. Some cities like Winchester are surrounded by a more populated rural area. But as we speed farther south, these populated rural areas give way to more of a parklike setting of more woods and open country. The smaller homes are replaced by larger dwellings, like small castles on estates with immaculately kept grounds.

Spring is making itself seen with all of its glory in this setting also - it's now mid-April. The vivid green of the freshly budded deciduous trees stand out in sharp contrast among the darker evergreens. Flowering trees and shrubs add a splash of color to the landscape.

All seems to be peaceful and serene, but I find myself saying, "Just wait, soldier, things will change."

But these thoughts are mixed with other thoughts that seem to win out. "Enjoy yourself today, and just take one tick at a time."

This is a beautiful country with all of its history and romance, but my subconscious thoughts of reality can't be hidden. They're here to dull any glamour that may also be here.

Through the small towns that we pass, and on the country roads, there can be seen the ever presence of the military - soldiers and small convoys of troops. The big buildup is taking place..Like some of my thoughts, the major buildup of the men and material can't be seen, as they are fairly well camouflaged or dispersed throughout the area.

We are still the hunted, even though we are also hunting. The situation resembles a game of checkers with real men and kings. The more valuable that we become, or the more knowledge that we possess, then the more imperative it is that we are put out of the action by the opposition. I'd always possessed considerable knowledge of signal operations and coding devices, but the knowledge I had from the last operation really topped the list. With that knowledge came the fear that I was on the enemy's most wanted list. And just what would be the price that the enemy would give to find out when and where the invasion would take place? This burden of responsibility would continue to rest heavily upon anyone who possessed this information until after the event had taken place.

Possessing this, or any other information, contains its dangers and maybe it's for that reason that it'll also have more compensations. Every means possible will be taken to insure our safety, as we'll continue to do a job that'll mean the savings of an untold number of lives. Our orders or instructions from our last training



center in England, was that our interception of messages was to be our priority and only concern. There would be other details of men available for the other jobs that keeps the unit going. We would be attached to another unit such as the Third Army or the Fifteenth Corps, but our priority would still keep us above their actual control.

I also think of the officers' role in this setup. It's true that they are in charge and will be giving the orders, but I wouldn't care for their job. They receive more money and prestige, but in other ways they seem to fill the role of servants to us.

However, in that same of thought, the Bible quotes that if we're to hold the honor as leaders, then we must also hold the honor of being the best servant. So I guess that puts me in my place in a hurry. And speaking of the Bible, I'd better see how that little item is doing in my duffle bag, and start reading it again soon.

Our train has skirted around the north side of Southampton and heads for a coastal stretch of land opposite what is known as the Isle of Wight. The train slows as the brakes take hold, and we stop at a small but nice appearing town by the name of Lymington. It was a nice train ride, we didn't stop for any air raid alerts, and that's something. I guess the Jerries must be getting shorter on planes and don't want to take chances with too many daylight strikes against such strong defenses - but I know that this could only be wishful thinking.

There isn't much chance to observe the town. Communications have been good, and a small convoy of trucks are waiting to serve our

needs as further transportation to some still unknown spot.

While transferring ourselves and equipment to the awaiting trucks, there is time to observe that there are a few stores in town and also a theater. And there; a number of military men walking on the streets.

"I'm disappointed, George," Bill kids me as I help him and his duffle bag up into the truck. "There isn't any welcome band to greet us."

"No," I reply. "I think that we're on our own from here on out, or for the duration."

Channel Estate-

The first impression one gets of a place, is generally a lasting one. If this holds true, then I knew that I'd remember our Headquarters at Lymington for a long time in the future. Our little convoy takes us to a beautiful estate east of the city, and touching on part of the Channel - the English Channel. The first overall picture is that this place was owned by someone who really enjoyed a nice landscaped surrounding. The large eight-foot high rock wall that encloses the buildings and grounds, doesn't really look out of place with such a setting. There're some shiny objects on top of the wall and running the full length, that catch my eye. As we approach closer the objects are identified as pieces of jagged glass from broken bottles that had been embedded in the top cement cap. The owners had been faced with potential enemies even before this war. This gimmick would sure discourage trespassing, that's certain. It would also aid in our security.



The large gates in the wall on the north side swing open and we roll inside to the building complex. We unload our gear and wait for orders. Once the trucks are dispersed it will be hard to observe any signs that this is a military installation. So - this is to be our home base for awhile. But like our stay in Ireland, this will also be a short stay. The invasion force is building up, and will soon be ready to roll.

"You men follow me with your gear, and I'll show you where you'll be sleeping." The Staff Sergeant at our new base gives the orders. I notice that our CO on the trip has already had his gear taken into one of the buildings, and an officer, after introducing himself, is conducting him on a tour. As for our quarters - we're guided past the buildings, to a wooded area on the southeast side.

Hidden and dispersed under the trees and between the shrubs, there are a cluster of tents. These tents are four man type, with wooden platforms as floors. There are four metal beds with mattresses in each tent. There has been a lot of work put into the preparation of these setups. It's some of these 'behind the scene' jobs, that help make things run smoothly - and it's total team work that'll show its rewards.

"This is where you'll be sleeping. Leave your bags here, and I'll give you a quick tour of the facilities." We follow the Sergeant's instruction, which is really presented as an invitation. It looks interesting, and we're all anxious to get acquainted with everything of our new surroundings.



On the grounds, or lawn, south of the two-story buildings, is a large antenna array of six, forty-foot high poles. There are six more poles opposite these, but nearer the building, with wire strung between these in pairs, to make up the antennae. A lead in wire is attached to the center of each antenna, and from there it goes into the lower story of the operations building. This antennae has to be out in the open, and it's about the only thing partially visible that leaves a clue that men are stationed here. The type of work is obvious from any such type of observation. The antennae are beamed to bring in the best reception from the continent of Europe, a mere hundred miles to our east. Radio reception from these Nazi-controlled regions are being intercepted by this network. The team of cryptanalysts decode the messages, evaluate them, and then pass along all of the information to the Headquarters of the Allied Supreme Command of the E.T.O., or the European Theater of Operations.

Following nearly the same course as the lead in wires, we enter the doorway into a large operations room. Perhaps this room was once a ballroom - it's large enough. We can see a half dozen rows of monitor stations, with a score of tables to each row. Many of the stations are now occupied with men at work monitoring nets or searching. Headphones are being used to keep the interference from another operator to a minimum. The tools of the trade are here; a radio receiver, paper and pencils. The men have been working here on this operation for quite some time. With our arrival, the surveillance of the air waves will be stepped up.

We are introduced to the Commanding Officer, and our Radio Officer with whom we'll work. It is time for a briefing of some of our



duties. So as not to bother the men who are working, we're directed to a doorway on the south side of the building, across a breezeway, and into a large dining room area with tables.

Some more introductions are made before we are filled in on our jobs. The Radio Officer and the Staff Sergeant join in this discussion.

"We know of the location and description of the major German units. Our job is to keep track of these units, noting any change of their location, or the priority of their messages. Also of importance is the addition of any new units in the area. We will assign the call signs, and the frequencies of the stations that you are to monitor on a daily basis. You are to keep track of the telltale signatures used by their net operators - extra dits or dashes. This will be useful in case there is a change in their standard operating procedures. Such a change would indicate a possible security change.

"Your shifts and the working hours will be posted by this evening. The first shift will start at 0800 hours.

"Dinner will be ready in about one hour," the Sergeant adds. "So be here promptly if you want to eat."

We're tired and hungry from our long day's travel of over 200 miles - no one will want to miss dinner.

I'd heard that a unit of this description was the one that had monitored our traffic to Scotland. As we're leaving the hall, I get a chance to guardedly ask the Sergeant if he had ever had any copy from Ireland to Scotland.



"Oh," he replies. "Were you in on that deal?" And then without waiting for a reply he continues. "Yes, you gave us quite a bit of copy at times."

We continue to talk for awhile. I was going to ask him how we managed to have such a well-informed knowledge of the German operations, but I decide against it at the last minute. Sooner or later I'll find out, and maybe the less I know about it now, the better it'll be.

We go out of the south hall and back to our tents. As we pass the sentinel-like array of antennae, I glance up and take in some of their meaning. They are beamed at France and Europe, but they are also beamed at the most possible point of invasion - Normandy and Omaha Beach. A shift of German troops or their security, could mean a need for a change in invasion plans also. Many thousands of lives are at stake, and our work now holds part of the key to any last minute decisions.

"I'll bet that it took a lot of work to put up this antennae," I comment to Bill as we pass near them.

"It must have been a lot of work," he replies. "But they had a lot of help and heavy equipment to do the job. I'll bet these things will sure bring in the reception, and I'm sure anxious to find out."

We go back to our sleeping quarters. At any other time of the year, it might not have been too nice sleeping out here in the open under a tent. But with the constant moderate, day and night weather we're now having, it'll be nice - healthy too. Back home in Washington State, hiking and camping were the main part of my life, so the present situation seems to fit



right in. The overall picture of this place is one of beauty. The setting for our tents, fits right into this picture, also. On each side of our entry way, looking as if they had been planted there just for us, are two large rhododendron bushes. One is red and the other bush is more pink with shiny green leaves. Of course there are other flowering shrubs blooming, but the rhododendrons seem to take the spotlight. Next week will be May, and these flowers are just starting to bloom, so we should enjoy their beauty for quite a while yet.

Bill had been noticing the flowers as we entered our tent. "Some of the fellows and the officers are sleeping in the buildings, but I'm like you," he comments. "I'd rather sleep out here in the tents surrounded by the beautiful flowers. Really though, this is a pretty place. What did you say that the name of these flowers are?"

"These are the rhododendron," I answer. And then with a little pride I add, "They are the Washington's State flower. I got to know the names of quite a few plants by working for a while in a nursery."

Two other fellows who would also occupy the tent are already inside. Bill makes the introductions. We'd seen them with our unit for quite some time - but their names, that's something else. "I'm Bill," he states. "And I'm from Pennsylvania. And this is George. He's from Washington state."

"I'm Brad from Ohio. And this is Ken, he's from California." Brad makes his introductions and then continues. "This is quite a setup here with no guard duty or kitchen detail. I



guess they meant it when they said that our job was just to copy code."

"I'm willing to enjoy it while I can," Ken adds. "It might not last too long. Changing the subject, I notice that there was a memo on the bulletin board saying that if we turn in the laundry by eight, it'll be ready the following day. I've got quite a lot to turn in."

His information was useful. It pays to keep ahead on the laundry, so that would also be a priority for tomorrow.

We have a nice welcome type dinner of roast beef for our evening meal. It is topped off with some apple pie - sort of special. The meal is served on trays, so there'll be no dishes for us to wash. We have a nice environment for eating, with the large room. There's a row of view windows on the south side, overlooking the spacious lawns and shrubs. There's a nice view on the north also, even though there are a few less windows. There's at least one trellis of light pink climbing roses on that side near the building. Several of the flowers tap against the window pane, with the light breeze.

But there's also the reminder here of what it's all about. Blackout panels are below the windows for ready use after dark. The days are getting longer now, and I'm glad to be eating while the sun is still up a ways in the sky. It also means that we'll have some time to explore some of the estate yet this evening.

The first thing on our evening adventure is to read the bulletin board. There's the notice about the laundry, and a few lost and found notices. The Sergeant is just putting up a list of the shift schedules. Well, for tomorrow anyway, we'll all report at eight.



We start to explore the south grounds by going counter-clockwise, and following a small path. The whole area appears to take in about ten acres of land. Leading off from the small path, are numerous other paths. They lead through several glens of trees and shrubs. The owners must have imported plants from all over the world. There are all varieties of trees and flowering shrubs - deciduous and evergreen. The most showy of the shrubs still proves to be the rhododendron, although the beauty bush, weigelia, and others were all in there with the competition.

As we approach a small pond, with a bridge, we hear what sounds like a hundred frogs. And then, as if from some signal, there is silence. Then, as we leave the area to what must have been a predetermined distance, the frogs once again resume their serenade.

"One thing is for sure," Bill summarizes. "At least we'll know what some of these noises are when we hear them in the night."

"They're pretty good sentinels, too," I add. "Sort of like a watch dog."

Our path leads down to a small inlet that connects from the waters of the English Channel to the east. There's a very small dock from the land to the water. It looks as if it had been made for some type of sailboat. Smooth waters like these are always soothing to be near. Before returning to our tent, we sit for a while on a log, and watch the small ripples lap against the sandy shore.

We hear no frogs from our tent area in the night. There's no anti-aircraft fire to disturb us; we're tired from the trip, and



we're getting lots of nice fresh air. Anyone of these items in itself could have been enough to induce sleep, but we had the combination. We also had the luxury of fresh sheets and pillows to help.

The work rituals of morning are soon taken care of. There're beds to make, we shave, eat breakfast, and turn in the dirty laundry. It's soon eight o'clock.

To intercept German messages, patience, practice, and 'know how' are needed. Most of us have had the practice from our previous work on radio nets. We had received some of the 'know how'. What we needed now, as much as anything, is the on-the-job training. But everything is for real now - every message is important. We learn to identify German traffic, urgent or routine. Most of their messages are in coded groups. Some cleartext is used by the smaller units. If much cleartext traffic comes in, it can spell trouble. The coded messages are taken to the adjoining room to be deciphered.

Assigned nets and callsigns are given to us for copy. We sometimes search and pick up traffic on our own. Extreme patience is needed in cases where an important net goes into silence for a long period of time. The new messages are of extreme importance. Has the unit moved, or have new units been added? What type of traffic is now being received? We're aware of the location of the permanent based units, as well as some units taking part in some maneuvers. The Germans know that sometime soon, we'll invade the continent, and while one of their questions remains 'when?', the big question for them is still 'where?'

Our work is now of critical importance as we settle down to work as veterans on a daily basis - always listening, always searching.



It's several days after our arrival that I receive a letter from home. It all comes by airmail. We've been moving, but it finally caught up with me - it even has my new address. The letter was written just a week ago, so that's still real good time. All is well at home, or so Mom stated. They had the invasion jitters over there, just as all of us facing each other over here does. I can tell that she's real concerned. There was a lot of serious praying being done at home. I took my Bible out of my bag and did some praying for her the other day also. Sometimes not knowing what's going on can be worse than being in the actual danger.

Anyway, it's time for another "Dear Mom" letter. And letters can be good to receive on both sides - the same way sort of like a nice smile is. I'd like to tell her where we are and what we're doing - but that's out. She knows about where I'm located anyway. So, it's still the stories about my good health, and the wonderful food that we're getting. I continue to rave about the beautiful flowers and shrubs I'm seeing this spring. There's another story that I hesitate on, but finally send it. The other day I heard some birds chirping in a way that sounded like code. Were they trying to tell us something, or were they German spies? In case she thinks that I'm getting too much code, I add that I believe that the birds were mocking birds, and it's for real.

I would like to send her a picture of this place. But there are excuses; I don't have a camera or film, and I don't know whether it could get by the censors. This subject did give me a thought, however. I did have some paints and a drawing pad. I'd take on the project of drawing a picture of the estate, in the very near future. It could be



sent or taken home at a later date. If I didn't have time to finish the drawing at this time, I could at least make a sketch and fill in some of the details later.

Walking around the paths of the estate continues to be fun as there seems to be something new to discover on each walk - some new flower or plant. Added to this past time, we've been given permission to visit Lymington when we're not on shift. I prefer to make such visits on a daylight basis. It's not much fun being caught out at night with the blackout regulations in effect. It's safer in the daylight, also.

Lymington has a number of stores, but they don't hold much interest for me. There's a food store, or grocery store, and as always a place to buy fish and chips. Generally at the time I go to town, I'd just eaten, or I was due to be back in camp for dinner, so that item didn't interest me. We're getting excellent meals at camp, and I'm more than satisfied.

Some of the Camp's staff live in town, and on occasions we would stop in and visit them. We talk or play a game of twenty-one. And if there's time, we take in a movie, wondering if we'd seen it before. These are the activities that we use as excuses for our walks. But it's really taking the walks that do me the most good. It's a chance to get away from Camp a little and relax - walking and relaxing, the two go together. And on the walks to town there are many things to observe, always something new. It's the same as on the walks around Camp, there is a new flower to see, or a new bird to see, or hear his song.



And there's another type of bird that one can observe on these walks to town or strolls around our Camp. These are the birds with the metal wings. From the activity that we can see and hear, there's an Airforce base about five miles to the northwest of us. And from the type of planes seen, there's at least one fighter squadron stationed there. I've seen movies of planes engaged in dog-fights, and other simulated maneuvers, but never have I observed such a show in person. It's an everyday performance. We're having beautiful May weather, mostly clear with a few billowy white clouds at higher elevations. These are ideal conditions for such maneuvers.

They pair off, roll, twist, and dive. Leaving trails of vapor, the planes appear to go straight up. One plane leading, will enter a cloud bank and be lost from sight for a few minutes. The pursuit plane will appear confused and start searching for the lost plane. Suddenly contact is again made and the chase resumes. The show goes on. It's a dangerous game of training and being prepared. Accident can happen, so the best insurance is the right training.

This base, and others like it, has a big responsibility. Not only are they preparing for the invasion, but the war can be brought here day or night by the German raids. This is a build-up area for the invasion, and it needs protection from bombings or camera surveillance.

Southampton is a buildup center, and it'll be one of the main ports for embarkation. For its protection, this air base is at an interception location for any German attacks.

Behind this umbrella of protection, there are dispersed other Airforce bases, English and American, but all Allied. These are



the bases for our bombers. As the days go farther into May, raids starting out from these bases increase in frequency and size. The American built B-17s seem to make the daylight raids and the British Liberators or other craft, use the cover of darkness. And the planes themselves often darken the sky or blot out the moon. Headlines in the paper, or on the radio the next day will say: "Allies Make Heavy Strikes at Invasion Bases." or, "Planes Strike German Cities - Factories Destroyed."

Our operations seem to continue at a routine pace as the days roll through the month of May. Intercept radio traffic keeps coming in and we keep searching for anything that could reveal any change of the activity or shift of strength by the German forces. Their troops on maneuver do make some routine moves, but in general everything appears normal. This is evidence that some of our other setup radio work was paying off. But the main test is yet to come with the invasion.

The beauty of the rhododendrons and other shrubs or flowers remain as the month of May comes to an end. With this beauty in mind, I sit down the next Sunday and make a sketch drawing of the buildings and grounds from the lower south side near the dock. I have the general outline and color on the pad. Some of the other details I can put on later.

This is a nice place to be in many ways; good eats, sleeping out in the nice perfumed air under a canvas. There's no noise from the frogs, or other natural noises to bother our sleep. But every night's not as serene or quiet as our first night under the stars. The Jerries seem to delight in disturbing our sleep with their night raids.



Of course, it just so happens that we're on their flight path to other targets. But they might just decide to release a bomb just to get rid of it before they return to Germany or France. There's no way of describing the deep emotional fear that grips one that knows he is a possible target for one of those bombs. Prayer seems to be our only means of protection, and faith that God will hear us. Some may say that they don't believe in God, but there're a lot who do, and there're a lot who'll continue to pray.

Our first indication of an air raid is the sound of the wailing air raid sirens. After a few minutes we'll hear the distant explosions of the anti-aircraft fire from our gun batteries on the Isle of Wight. There can also be some bomb explosions. If we're outside at night we can see the searchlights pick out the enemy aircraft. Two beams of light meet and the aircraft brightly reflects the beams back to earth. The anti-aircraft batteries at the nearest location try and zero in on this target. Many times they miss, but every so often they strike a target. One night we watch as one of their planes disappears in a ball of flame, on a slanting dive over the Isle of Wight.

It's not every night that they appear, or on any set schedule. But they come regularly on what seems to be harassing tactics. The nightmarish varied drone seems easily identified, and set apart from the sound of our own planes. Generally the Luftwaffe stays out of our location as they make their runs in the direction of Southampton - generally, but not always. We're initiated into the respect for both the planes and the shells shooting them down, on our third



night in camp. We hear the warnings of the sirens and the distant gunfire from the Isle of Wight. We hear the drone of the German plane as it's nearly overhead; so are the searchlights and the explosions from the ground fire. Like everyone else who possessed a little common sense fear, I hurry outside of the tent while putting my helmet on. It's a come as you are party.

There's some fuss in the tent next to ours, as one of the more complacent type soldiers doesn't want to be disturbed from his slumbers. "You'd better get out of that tent, Phil, and get under some shelter. They're firing overhead," his tentmate urges.

"I don't know what good it'll do. One place is as good as another," he complains. "But alright, I'll go, just to keep you quiet."

We hug close to the protection of some large trees. Loud whistling and whining noises can be heard, but there are no explosions. It seems a long time until the fireworks move farther to the west.

"I hope that's all for tonight," I comment as we reenter our tent. At the same time there're excited voices in Phil's tent, and Phil is yelling out of the doorway to us, and anyone else in the area.

"There's a hole in our tent," he exclaims. "Something has come through the roof."

We crowd into their tent and look through the hole up at the stars. Phil is shining a shielded light on the floor searching for something. "Here it is," he announces upon finding it.

Embedded into the floor of the tent, not more than six inches from



his pillow, is a jagged piece of shrapnel. He pulls it out and passes it around for everyone to look at. Later he places the shell fragment into his duffle bag. "I'm going to keep that for a souvenir," he meekly comments.

"We'd better get back and get some sleep," Brad injects as a signal to break up the show. "It'll soon be time for us to start our trek."

"We'll get to bed, anyway," I say cautiously, as I keep one ear open awhile for another air raid. We go to sleep.

I guess like a small child touching a hot stove, we sometimes have to learn by experience. If there's another air raid alert, I'm sure everyone will try and seek shelter.

The Jerries do make some more nightly visits. They come around in the daytime too, even though I'd once thought otherwise. Several times there's the 'ka-boom, ka boom' noise of our gunners as they follow their target. It gives one an odd feeling to be caught in a public building during an air raid alert. I go through the experience while attending a movie in Lymington, during the last week of May. With the sound of the movie, it's impossible to hear the sirens at first. The movie continues to run, but flashes in orange words in the top right hand corner of the screen, the warning: "Air Raid Alert." It's safer being in here than being outside on the streets. Later they flash the "All Clear," so I stay to see the end of the movie. Then like a good soldier, I return to camp while it's still light.

Would the experience cause me to terminate my movie visits in Lymington? I had heard the faint anti-aircraft fire and it was scary, but that's a



part of this game of war. It's like two mean-looking football players trying to outstare each other. "I wonder if the movie next week will be any good?" I ask another soldier I see from camp.

It's now June and another payday. The money is nice to receive, but there's not really much need for me to keep too much around at this stage of my travels. So - I'll send most of it home in a money order. I suppose if I wanted to get real reckless, I could take up poker or some other card game. And with my luck I wouldn't have to worry about sending any of it home. But I had learned some lessons about money by having to work for it the hard way, following the depression of the thirties.

Operations are working smoothly with intercept. Most of us feel like old timers now. It's much easier to follow the German nets with their traffic. We expect the new call signs on the proper day, and continue to search for the new call signs or nets. There's no unusual activity noted in the status quo of their setups.

The planes from our nearby airfield have made some noticeable changes in their operations. Most of their friendly dogfights have ceased, and the planes of a fighter type, are now making mass flights in the direction of the French Coast. They take off again on this Thursday, June the first. Everyone on shift could guess what their mission is, but it's not officially known. The B-17s and the other heavy bombers have started making daily flights in the same manner as the fighters, and in the same direction. On occasion we see them return from their raids with one or two dead, or smoking engines. Flights of the bombers take off again today as I'm listening to the news on our radio



stating that: "Heavy damage is being inflicted on the German military installations along the coast by Allied Warplanes."

Even though I've no intention of buying anything, I decide to take a window shopping tour of the big city of Lymington after dinner. It's nice to have a little money in your pocket even though you don't buy anything. Bill and Ken go with me.

"This place is getting to be as busy as Los Angeles," Ken remarks after buying some postcards at a store.

"It sure is," Bill agrees. "We had it almost to ourselves when we first arrived here. It has sure built up. This must be the invasion center alright. I notice people here from almost every branch of the service. Let's head back to camp."

"I'm ready to leave," I agree. "It's too busy to buy anything, even if I wanted to. I might come back Saturday if I have time. It might not be as crowded then."

"If it's as crowded in the other cities or camps as it is here, then there sure is a heavy build-up of forces."

"And material, too," Bill adds. "You don't see it, but it must be here."

"Friday there will be a routine physical." Reads the announcement posted on our bulletin board.

It's no big event. There're no facilities or time anymore to go into a complete checkup. We're all supposed to be in first-rate



shape - remember? Well, anyway, this checkup is mostly for V.D.

Saturday is the day that I promised myself that I'd do some more window shopping in Lymington. It's right after breakfast that I leave for town. The weather shows all the signs of bringing us a nice day. I can hear a distant air raid siren, and some distant gun fire - but now it's quiet again. Our planes had taken off earlier in the morning, and now the crews must be resting or getting ready for the next run. There are some high wispy clouds, and some haze to the west, but there is mostly the blue to greet the eye.

"I sure got the headstart on the other troops this morning," I think to myself, as I check through a couple of stores for possible gifts. There aren't any other soldiers on the streets either. I think for kicks, I'll go by the theater and see what's playing this afternoon.

Not far from the theater, about one block away I finally spot another soldier - a military policeman. He sees me about the same time that I see him. He's a big brute of a fellow with the familiar white arm-band with the black M.P. emblazoned on it. Like shepherds looking after their sheep, they stay with the soldiers. He hurries in my direction as if he is lonesome and wants to talk - I don't mind, as the streets do have that feeling. It's like being in a schoolhouse during vacation.

"What are you doing in town, soldier?" He demands.

"I'm stationed here. Why?" I casually reply.



He doesn't answer my inquiry, but issues his next demand. "Let me see your identification."

I take the card out of my pocket and give it to him to inspect.

He takes his time to look it over before handing it back. "Thank you," he finally responds. No - he didn't seem to want to talk, it was all business.

It wouldn't take a detective to figure out what was going on. The deserted streets had been enough give-away. The increased air strikes launched by our planes had been another clue. Our routine intercept copy had been another one. Like our build up of communications between Ireland and Scotland, things are again heading for a climax. There'll soon be an invasion of the French coast, the Normandy section opposite our location. We've already been alerted for the type of traffic that we'll receive at that time.

That's enough of my visit to town. I'll go back to the safe haven of our estate where there are some soldiers - and I'm not alone. I tell Ken, Bill, and Brad about my experience when I get back to our tent. "Some of the other fellows have been questioned, also," Ken speaks for the group. "Something is shaping up, that's for sure."

I spend the rest of the day cleaning up, and take some laundry over to the building, to turn in. It always pays to keep the clothes clean ahead.

In the evening we go down our flowered- bordered trail, to the dock. We sit on our log and again watch the water lick against the sand.



It's a quiet evening, and we stay here talking until the stars come out.

Sunday morning, June fourth, we're awakened earlier than usual by the sound of the fighter planes revving up at the nearby field.

"This is one way for us to get an early start," I think. Bombers follow the take-off of the fighters. There's all of this excitement and we haven't had breakfast yet. We'll surely be on time for our shift on the receivers.

There're more bomber flights in the afternoon, and the night bombers take over again in the evening.

Monday is a repeat of the Sunday's activities, except that the take-off is a little earlier, and there are a few more planes. The tempo and volume is building up. I content myself and stay around camp - I think it'll be best for awhile.

Tuesday, June sixth, nineteen forty-four, the fighters are revving up at three-thirty - before it's light. Even while half-asleep I realize that this is the big day. One group takes off and then another group revs up. I've already lost count of the number of flights. It's now daylight and I can see some of the flights of planes from an open flap on the tent. But who can sleep at a time like this? I'm soon up like many of the others who are taking in the spectacle.

I've seen many of the B-17s as they were being ferried through our home town, out of Washington State. Now, we're watching the results of that and the other tremendous war efforts.



The huge bombers are now taking over the show and darkening the sky like large flights of birds. One flight is soon followed by another. Out over the Isle of Wight they disappear, and more follow. The vibration of the flights shakes the ground. I'm sure that I'll never see a repeat of such a tremendous force of power again - the flights continue to come.

The sight makes my spine tingle with pride. But there's another sobering thought. Some of these planes will not be coming back. At this moment thousands of military men are being killed. I give a prayer for all of these taking part - fighting, suffering, and dying. And for the waiting loved ones back home - and the next of kin.

At a time like this one can't help wondering, "Why war? Why is it necessary?" Sure, we've seen our films, "Why we fight." And some of us saw a funny little man making speeches, and walking around with a goose step while giving orders. No one took him seriously - for awhile. Some people tried giving in to his wishes. But, behind all wars and turmoil, there's always the selfish individual or group with the never-satisfying desire for power or wealth. The small individuals are the ones who suffer. Bill put it right one evening during our chats: "If everyone had to work as hard as we have, they wouldn't have any time for war."

But now we've a job to do. The flights are still going strong when we go to breakfast, and there appears to be no letup when we return ready for our shift.

"We have a lot of German clear-text nets." The fellows inform us as



we relieve them from their shift. "It's official now, the invasion started early this morning!" they exclaim.

Someone heard it on the news over the Armed Forces Radio Network. It only confirmed what we already knew. The fact that the invasion had been launched did bring a certain amount of relief to those of us who knew some of these secrets. We know now that the secret has been kept as intended, and that the preliminary work we did in Ireland and now in Southern England was well worth the effort. We have no idea how many lives may have been saved by this work, but we do know that it must be substantial.

Our mission remains basically the same as it was, except for a few added advantages. Information keeps coming in and is forwarded to our High Command. We know the location and movement of most of the enemy units. This information is used many times to determine targets for our Airforce. But sometimes the target is spared so that more intelligence can be gathered. It's not unusual to have one, or a group of stations go out of existence after a raid.

Most of our units maintain radio silence. We obtain much of the information concerning the location and condition of our own forces by intercepting the radio messages from the enemy troops who have made contact with these units. Information will be passed along to our ground forces for planning their strategy, whether defensive or offensive. Even now, or as the invasion spreads inland through France, closer contact with the enemy by our intercept units will be needed. And that, as we were told in some of our first briefings, is where we are to play a vital role. It has been seen through



fulfilling this role that all of the previous intelligence gathering units have become casualties.

And the memorandum on my destroyed medical record stated: "Considered physically unfit for combat." Oh well, there's one bright ray of light, the unit's makeup has been changed, and the Germans now have fewer planes than they once had during the African campaign. But we do have our tell-tale antennae and the obvious direction finder set up out in the open that will be an open invitation to them.

There are a lot of clear-text messages coming in on this 'D' day. That means that it's front-line urgent traffic - low power transmitters. We are also receiving messages from our regular copy nets, but they all reflect the urgency of the new fast-moving events.

After dinner this evening, I decide that there is a need to send a letter home to Mom. No, I'll not tell her about the big waves of planes flying over this morning, and continuing all day - even now. I'll tell her about the fading rhododendron flowers, and the other flowers that are appearing to take their place. They're having their own invasion, but with a better meaning. And yes, the food is still real good. Well, that won't account for the future, but at least she'll know that I'm still in the same place and doing real good. I'll keep the letter short, so that I can mail it tonight.

The flights of our planes continues through out the night and relentlessly for the next several days. But never again does it ever come near the display shown on the initial day.

On the evening of June ninth, we are sitting or lying on our beds,



resting for a little while after dinner. Brad had just taken a bundle of dirty laundry up to the office. We see him returning now with a rather dejected look on his face.

"Wouldn't you know it," he murmurs, as he places the bundle of dirty clothes back in his duffle bag. "I guess I'll have to learn to do my own laundry again."

"What's up, Brad?" Ken asks. "I thought you went up to turn in your laundry - and now you're bringing it back."

"Well, I've got news for you Ken, and everyone," he exclaims. There's a sign up on the laundry door telling our group not to turn in any more dirty laundry, and to pick up any clean laundry by tomorrow noon - and there's more. On the bulletin board there's a list of some of us who will be leaving on Sunday. We're all on it."

That's the cue we need to make all of us race out and up to the bulletin board.

"Well, what do you know?" Bill exclaims. "Brad was right."

The dinner for Saturday seems sort of special. It reminds me in a small way of our farewell Thanksgiving Day dinner at Camp Maxey, Texas. Extra work had been put into its preparation. It's a farewell dinner, and those of us involved, stay on for the briefing to follow.

The Commanding Officer gets right to the point. "You'll be leaving here tomorrow, to take on a new assignment. Transportation, and an officer in charge, will be here tomorrow morning at eight. Your work will consist of the same type that you're doing at this base.



The other details you'll find out when you get there - and that goes for your location, also, I don't know where it'll be.

"Your mail will be forwarded to your new unit - and I do have that Post Office number for you. It will be : the 3253rd Signal Service Company, A.P.O. 758, care of the Postmaster, New York City, New York.

"I want to thank each of you for the work that you have done here. We will miss you. Good luck."

It's still light when we arrive back at our tents. We pool some of our knowledge and have a discussion of some of the events. We'll become a part of a small mobile, complete intercept unit. Some of the other fellows will be assigned to one or more similar type unit. The base at this location will remain and be manned by the original crew. New operators for the assignment here, may be coming in the near future. Perhaps they may be trained for faster copy by the use of the typewriter. No, this isn't official, we're just guessing.

Brad breaks up our discussion with the reminder that tomorrow will soon be here. "I'd better get my clothes that I washed off the line - if it's dry, and start packing."

The rest of us follow his lead and do some chores of our own. I have time to write a short note home giving our new Post Office number. To complete the day and remind us that there's still a war going on, another large group of night bombers fly over on their way to France. We're right under their flight path.

Sunday used to be a day to sleep in a little, but not any more. Our



friends with the fighter planes to our north have decided to do a little early morning traveling themselves. I'm thankful that they're on our side anyway.

After breakfast we struggle again with our loaded duffle bags, up past the sentinels of the antennae, past the operations building, to the parking area on the north. Three new looking trucks, and a jeep, with their drivers are waiting for us.

These truck drivers are as fussy with their trucks as a mother hen with her chicks. With any spare moment, they'll be found wiping off some mud or dirt, or making some adjustment on the engine. You'd think their life depended on it - well, it does, and so does ours.

We help each other with our heavy loads, and sit down on the comfortable wooden seats. As we pull out past the gate onto the road, Bill jokingly again sets forth his gripe.

"There was no band to greet us when we arrived," he complains. "And now there's no farewell committee on hand. But seriously, it was a nice place, and the events that happened here we'll remember for a long time."

The drivers knew where they're going, even if we don't. We head south through the nearly deserted streets of Lymington. There's no line-up, or queue, at the little movie theater, and just one or two people on the streets. Near the outskirts of town there's a small white building with a cross on its spire. Gathered around the open doors, there's a group of people. On the sidewalks leading to this building, other dressed-up couples are walking to join them.



This is Sunday, but with our mixed up working hours, I'd almost forgotten. "There's the farewell committee that you asked for, Bill," I announce. "They'll soon be inside praying for us."

The people wave to us as we go by.

"I see," he replies triumphantly. "They must have heard my complaint. I didn't think it would be answered that quickly, or in this good a manner. If you want something I guess it just pays to ask for it - only just be careful what you ask for."

"Good advice, Bill. It sounds like you've been reading your Bible a little lately also. I imagine these people do have a lot of relatives who are in this invasion, and they started praying for their safety before today."

Our small caravan continues on. We're now traveling in a more westerly direction. Our speed is fairly slow along these twisty country roads. There are scores of small towns; Lytchell Minister, Bere Regis, and Dorchester. We leave the area of larger estates, parks, and smaller towns and travel in a less populated area with less vegetation.

After about two hours of travel there's a junction in the road and we now travel in a southerly direction toward the English Channel. There're no markers with a town's name, but there's a marker with the number 3157 pointing south. It's a small dirt road that leads us past a small place called Bothenhampton. We continue about three miles in an easterly direction and climb a small hill. On top there're a couple of large two-story apartments, with a few smaller buildings scattered around. In the rear there are a number of



military vehicles dispersed in some fashion. Our trucks slow down for the turn off, and pull up to the rear of the apartments where we unload. We're now about seventy-five miles west of Lymington. It took us nearly three hours for the trip.

What a view! As far as I can see to the south, there is water - the English Channel. It's sunny but there's the usual haze on the horizon. This looks like sort of a wind-swept region, and there isn't too much vegetation. There are one or two small trees or shrubs scattered here and there, with clumps of salt grass for ground cover.

And what a high place for radio reception. We're now farther away from the invasion beaches and the fighting, but some stations should still come in strong. If all of our locations in France will be like this, then we're sure going to get a real bird's eye view of the war - and I guess that means that the enemy will get a good view of us too, unless we can find something good to hide under.

But that's enough looking at the view for now, as there are other things to do, like: "Take your bags and find yourself a bed in the upstairs of this building," the Sergeant instructs.

It's up one, then two flights of wooden stairs, struggling with our heavy load. "I thought there were only two stories to this building, Bill. But there are three levels with this converted attic."

"At least there's a bed, George," Bill replies. "And there's a toilet on the floor below us. So we almost have all of the comforts of home."



"We've got a room with a view too - if I can just get the window open to let in the sea breezes. But we're supposed to meet back down stairs, Bill, so we'd better go."

A group had already started to gather. As was the case at our last unit, meetings appear to be less formal. I imagine that it will continue to hold this pattern. There'll probably be a lot more respect shown this way than with all of the formalities of saluting.

The Sergeant who has just introduced himself, is now introducing a few of the officers. "Welcome to the 3253rd Signal Service Company, fellows. I want first to introduce your Commanding Officer, First Lieutenant Emory L. Jones - he'll be busy but you'll see him from time to time.

"And this is Lieutenant Horace L. Belou. You'll be seeing more of him as you work with him on the radio work.

"There're other officers and men that you'll meet later, but now it's almost lunch time. Make sure that your mess kits are clean, as you haven't used them for sometime. There's lots of hot water for that purpose. The same advice goes for your canteens, make sure that they're clean - and we have a lister bag out here for filling them. You'll find out just what your duties are after lunch."

I know that my mess kit needs cleaning, because it hasn't been used for two months. We've been hampered some at the last camps where we could eat out of trays that someone else washed. But it hasn't been so long - and we will soon get used to them once more. And we'd better keep everything nice and clean if we want to stay healthy. The Sergeant



stated there was plenty of hot water, and there is. There are three forty-gallon cans that are heated by gas burners. One of the cans has disinfectant in its water. The burners are the same type that are used for the cooking.

I had thought at another time, about the large amount of work that goes into everything; from the planning stage to its production, and to its use in the field. We're a complete unit in ourselves, composed of a roster of one hundred and fifty men - as our CO was telling us. Although our work centers around the intercepting of German traffic, we are all like wheels of a clock. One of us depends upon the other. And I think about how this arrangement all ties in while I'm eating lunch at our new outfit.

If we don't eat properly, or if we get sick from using dirty dishes, or drinking unsafe water, then the whole movement slows down or stops. The kitchen arrangements here reminds me of the chuck-wagons of the old west. At least a dozen men will have to be assigned to this section to keep things running smoothly. There are menus to plan, food and supplies to secure from quartermaster, three meals a day to cook, and pots and dishes to clean three times a day. Supplies of gas and water will also be needed. These fellows will need some rest too - how can a dozen men handle all of it? I mention this thought to Bill.

"I guess that they'll have someone like you or me digging garbage pits or latrines for them, George," he replies. "Or doing some other hard work, even though all we're supposed to do is quote, 'copy.'"



"You're right Bill," I agree. "But as they say, 'everything is fair in love and war.' Besides, we're used to those type of details, and a little such exercise should do us good."

After washing my dirty dishes from lunch, I take them up to our room to air-dry. There's nothing better than having a nap or some rest after eating. It feels good to stretch out on the bed, relax and smell the fresh salt air. Here we are in an isolate spot on the southern coast of England with nice summer weather. But the sound of boots hurrying down the wooden stairway, remind me that I have other things to do besides daydream.

We now have time to see our portable work-shop; H.O. is what they call it. What those letters stand for, I don't really know - unless it stands for 'house.' And it is a small house built on the frame of a truck. The wood frame is painted 'olive green' like our trucks and other GI equipment. The entrance to this plywood structure is from the rear, up some portable steps. There's a center aisle, with a row of five desks and benches on each side. Each desk has a receiver and a small light. Since there are no windows, the light will be needed. Electricity required to run these units, is furnished from a gas driven generator, stationed on a small trailer. During times of travel it is hauled by the H.O. truck from a hitch. During the times of operations, the generator units remain at a distance, and the electricity is fed to the H.O.s through long cables. That takes care of the power for our radios and the lights. Our antennae system consists of a whip antenna, fed through the H.O. to the individual sets. A long wire antenna could replace the whip type if desired. The sets are all grounded. Neither system would be as effective as the antennae setup at Lymington.



But now someone brings me up to reality, by reminding me that in France we'll get as good, or better reception that we did at Lymington, because we'll be closer to the war and probably on the top of some hill - yes, closer to the war, and the action..

There are a couple of these H.O. units set up for intercept, and another one is outfitted for the message center. Headquarters occupies still another - and don't forget the chuck-wagon. All of these units require maintenance, which includes manpower. There's a truck driver with an assistant for each vehicle. There're a lot of vehicles here - "But is this all of our vehicles and men?" one of the fellows asks the Lieutenant.

"No," he replies. "Most of them are here, but we do have a few more vehicles, as well as men, that we'll join up with in the very near future."

"And what about our shifts or work schedule?" someone asks.

"There'll be no regular shifts or net schedule at this time," he answers. "If some of you want to get some practice copy in, or use the radios to listen to the news, you're welcome to use them. Other than guard duty for some of you, you're pretty much on free time during this waiting period. But keep things cleaned up and don't wander too far from this area."

I stay around for awhile and look over some of the equipment, while exchanging talk with some of the other fellows. I learn that a couple of them had been stationed in Iceland. The other units such as the motor pool, or the message center doesn't hold much interest to me at this time, except to know that the men seem to know what they're



doing. I do find out that there's a good representation here from everyone of our States. Western, Eastern, Southern, and Northern States - there seem to be men from each one of these sections. I'm sure that I'll get to know some of these fellows real well before our journey is over - especially if some of them share the same interests.

If we were back in the States at Camp Maxey, you could say that we're alerted for shipment. Now I guess the word 'reshipment' would be more correct. It's still the old waiting game, but I'm not really in any hurry.

After dinner, Bill, Brad, Ken, a couple of new comers, and myself, go for our procedural inspection of our area. On the top of our hill the scene looks quite peaceful, but as we follow the little road that leads down to, and then follows along the shore, the setting changes. In a little nearby ravine there's a manned anti-aircraft battery. Along the sandy beach, just up from high tide, an endless coil of barbed wire stretches as far as the eye can see. There's an opening in the wire where a path leads down to the beach. Out of the high tide area there's a large upside down rowboat that belong to some fishermen. A heavy rope from the boat is fastened to an anchor stake. The boat makes a good back rest as we sit on the sand.

Looking out over the water it's again a very tranquil scene. There's a slight breeze and the waves lapping against the shore are a lot larger than the ones we saw from our protected cove at Lymington.

Ray, who's one of our group, comments on the view in his distinct southern fashion: "With this red sunset, it's sure a pretty picture."



And then seeing the other side of the picture, he adds: "But I bet on the shore across from us, the scene isn't quite this peaceful." That remark brings out some things that're bothering some of the others.

"I hear that one of our vehicles has a machine gun mounted on it. Has anyone seen it?" Brad inquires.

"I haven't," Ken answers for everyone. "They might have it for defensive purposes. But this unit is a small arms outfit, using only carbines. We're not supposed to do any firing that will attract us to the enemy as a target. Just keep low and pray - as somebody said."

"I haven't seen it either," Bill echoes. "But I did hear a nasty rumor that if we ever faced capture, the officers had their orders to shoot us. Sounds scary, doesn't it?"

"Maybe," I answer. "But if we should get captured, we might as well get shot anyway, or wished we had been. Maybe that'll cheer you up. Anyway, some of us who shared the knowledge of the invasion, had that same threat hanging over our heads, if anyone spilled the beans." We sit around and talk for awhile until it starts to get dark.

Our overall conclusion is that we're in a pretty nice place, and isolated for awhile from the action - but just a little while. We walk back up the road to our home by the sea. On the way back up, the thought of an enemy raiding party coming ashore at night, enters my mind, but I keep it to myself - why worry, we have guards on duty.

I awake after a good night's sleep - no planes on either side to disturb us.



Early in the afternoon there is a mail call; some of our mail has caught up with us and that's encouraging. I receive a letter from home and Mom, or Myrtle, as she seemed to like us to call her. It was dated June sixth. She had written the letter before that date,

but upon hearing the news about the invasion, she had scribbled out another note on the back of an old telephone bill. I sit down on an old crate to read it;

"We got the news last night abt 1- the invasion had started. Sun. was a false statement. Sultry today- Tues June 6-- Write me a hello if you possibly can Lots of love & chin up- I'll be seeing you soon- Myrtle."

She had a lot of worry, and had been doing a lot of praying. We didn't take part of the 'D' day invasion except working intercept from across the Channel, but we will have a little 'D' day of our own coming up real soon. I didn't tell her that, but I did answer her letter and tell her that everything was just fine - we have a new A.P.O., but we are still somewhere in England.

Some of the fellows are starting up the old card games again to pass the time. With our rations, we're now getting extra items like beer and cigarettes. I give my cigarettes away - I got sick once from smoking a grape reed once when I was a kid, and that was enough. As for the beer, some fellows say that one has to develop a taste for it by drinking enough of it, and I never seemed able to accomplish that feat, or see that it was worth that much persuasion. I did sample a little, but it still tasted the same. So, they can have any of my rations. Our officers get rations of whiskey also, and I'm glad that the rations stay at that point. of course many of the fellows seem



to get a supply of fire-water from somewhere, for their own use.

One morning a group of us go down to the beach and watch the fishermen take their boats out, and after several hours they return with a nice catch of fish. The work goes on, war or no war, and meat of any other type is hard to get - it's not available. But their peaceful fishing scene is in strong contrast with the backdrop of barbwire. They are proud of their catch, and display the fish for us. A certain type of fish they point out has external organs resembling a mammal of some sort. They secure their boat and walk down the road to a distant house, for a fish dinner.

From the beach looking back up toward our apartments there is the makings of a picture - I wish I had my camera. But the next day finds me down on the beach with a sketch pad and paints. I have plenty of time to fill in most all of the details. It's a scene of peace with a background of war. I'm nearly finished when two girls with swim-suits approach from somewhere up the road. I didn't know that there were any girls living near this area, but there are houses, so there must be families that include them. Then, too, there are soldiers - well, anyway, the girls spread out a beach towel and proceed to have a sun-bath beneath the shade of the barbwire. No, they didn't go swimming, but they seem to complete the picture, and I sketch them in the scene. My day's work is complete and I happily proceed back up the hill.

On the radio there's still encouraging news of the progress of our invasion. Several French Cities have been captured, and the bombings continue.



We had another reminder last night that the war was still going on. Our anti-aircraft gunners opened fire on some stray plane. It didn't last very long, and soon all was quiet again. This is the second time that we've heard them.

Just to keep busy, some of the fellows are making some daytime trips to a nearby Army depot. We're also starting to take more walks along the beach.

"Be ready to leave at any time," the Lieutenant had instructed us. We've been here a little over a week, and probably have overstayed our welcome. On Monday, June the nineteenth, we hear the word in the afternoon that we'll be leaving first thing in the morning.

"Where do you think our destination will be this time?" I ask Bill.

"I don't know, George," he replies. "I know that it won't be west, and I hope that it's not too far east."

By eight the next morning we have packed, loaded, and are on our way - east.

We're retracing the same route that we came just a little one week before. "You're right," I tell Bill. "This time we leave as a unit, leaving no one behind. I wonder who cleans up after us?"

"I don't know, George. But that's their worry. There'll probably be some new outfit in there before too long."

The new 3253 Signal Service Company is starting to roll on our mission. The country-side becomes greener and more populated as we travel east in the direction of our former camp at Lymington. About twenty miles from Lymington lies the port city of Bournemouth. We bypassed this city on



our travels west a little over one week ago. At this time we head directly towards the city of Bournemouth, stopping at an Army camp located near the outskirts of the city. Some of the trucks proceed on a short distance, but ours pull to a stop in front of some familiar looking quonset huts.

"Well, we're here," I remark to Bill. "We have another home."

"For just a short time, anyway," he prophesies. I guess he gave up on that binge about the welcome committee - he didn't mention it.

In some ways it's nice to get back into an established camp again. We've nice spring beds with pillows. There are showers, and facilities to get some clothes washed again. We also have inside eating quarters with an established kitchen.

There're some more men and officers that we haven't seen before. There's a Lieutenant Chisholm, and Rozich, and a couple of others. There is also a Sergeant Coit who works with the Officers, and helps out a lot with the work in Headquarters..It's evident that at this location, the 3253 Signal Service Company is at full strength. Everyone in this outfit is an officer of some type - either commissioned, or noncommissioned. The The Lieutenants' rank varies from first to second, and the Sergeants' vary from fourth to first. We will function under the Army set-up system of command, with Lt. Jones in charge. But to function properly, there has to be respect for everyone. Just one person getting out of hand will foul up the works all down the line.

There are more men now, and there are more vehicles in the parking area. There are more trucks, and jeeps or carryalls, with trailer tanks for transporting gas or water, and some more



power generator units on trailers. It makes quite an assembly of war equipment.

Our Headquarters is busy, but for the most of us, we take up that routine waiting game. The schedule is to eat, sleep, and keep clean. There's guard duty for some, and there's always a group of us to make our exploratory trips into the city of Bournemouth. Some of the outfit, but not too many, make their rounds of the Pubs, or find a source of bootleg whiskey.

One person can foul up the unit, and endanger everyone. As our 'D' day is nearing, all of us have growing fears to varying degrees. Inactivity makes the situation worse. I know that from my past medical record, that I'll have to take every precaution to protect myself in this regard. For what amount of buildup of fear I could accept, the prognosis would be guarded. My best ally, I know, will be through prayer and the belief in God. Most of the other fellows did, or would soon, share this belief. One of the men let it be known that he didn't believe in God. I feel that he did believe in some God, even if he was merely trying to elevate himself to that position.

But there's still that certain fear, the circumstances are real. One way to escape the reality of events, is to take some substance that will kill some brain cells, and dull others to this reality of the present - at least temporarily. One of the young men had gone to town and had consumed some cheap whiskey. With the help of some pals he barely makes it back to our camp. At any other time, they would have taken him to his bed and let him sleep it off, but it's now a medical or psychiatric problem.



"Can't some of you fellows help us with him?" They beg of the gathering crowd.

"Not with those flailing arms, we can't," comes the response. "That fellow possesses super-natural strength."

"Somebody had better get the Lieutenant," another reasons. "He'll know how to help him."

By the time that the CO and another Lieutenant arrive, the victim is bouncing off of the ground like a dying fish. With their help, they finally reason him into submission, and then carry him away. What therapy they later use on him, no one seems to know. It's quite a price to pay for the purpose of trying to forget the reality. He's a real sick man - delirium tremens, it is called.

The next morning after breakfast, Lt. Jones has the men assemble in front of the Headquarters building. "Most of you observed what happened last night as the result of too much drinking." He then makes the warning: "If you must drink, do it in moderation. Whatever you do, don't drink any bootleg brand that you don't know where it comes from, or what's in it. That'll also be good advice to follow when you are in France and are tempted to drink something that contains poison."

The warning did have some effect, for the men did take it easy on the drinking for awhile. Others felt that they had enough control, so they continue the pursuit of the escape from fear.

"Headquarters has done some shopping, and they're starting to give out



some presents - and it isn't even Christmas," Brad informs a group in our barracks. "We're getting a few new things for our wardrobe."

"How does Brad get the scoop on all of these things?" Ken asks.

"I guess maybe he reads the bulletin board," I reply. "Sunday was June the twenty-fifth, and today's Wednesday, so maybe it's a belated little Christmas celebration."

For the next two days, at intervals, we're instructed to pick up items of equipment. Two blankets, a shelter half, and an Army pack. On Friday we receive several clips of ammunition for our carbines. We look like real soldiers now with our helmets and guns.

"It looks like someones getting real serious about us going over there," Bill jokes. "Next thing you know they'll want to take our pictures for the papers."

I have the same idea, but I don't have a camera, and as far as I know, nobody else does. But somebody does have a camera! The Sergeant announces that Headquarters wants to take a picture of everyone as a group. We're to gather on a small hill east of the barracks. "And that means everybody!" Someone adds.

It's an informal picture, maybe we'll get a copy of it to send back home. Pictures can be used for many purposes - but I hope that they don't ever have to send it home for us- what a thought.

Saturday is July the first, and pay day. With a little money floating around, there are a few card games going on. And quite a number of the fellows are getting passes to Bournemouth, for reasons all



of their own. With these developments in mind, I'm given the dubious honors of walking patrol duty in town on this Saturday night.

Dressed with a helmet, and carrying a carbine which is a good weapon - I wonder just what good I can do as a deterrent, in regards to our own troops if there's real trouble. Of course the fellows don't carry any guns into town, but it's those few fellows who can't hold their liquor that would pose the real danger. It's a good idea that someone's up here to keep a eye on things though, and I guess that I'm the one who's been elected. I can get some help from somewhere if it's needed - I'll cross that bridge when I come to it.

There's some noise up the street. The soldier that got sick the other night evidently didn't learn his lesson. He's with a group of others that are causing the noise. His friends calm him down as I approach, and they move on to some other location. I avoided any direct confrontation with them - maybe I do some good just being here after all. As the hour grows late, the town becomes more quiet, for which I'm very thankful.

It's nearly midnight when I return to our barracks. Most of the fellows are asleep, and I soon join them in slumber.

If one is up late, the tendency exists to sleep in late. That's what most of us do on this Saturday morning, July the second. We can afford to miss breakfast, most of us have excess pounds other than the English currency. And the English currency is what we've been using for money, come to think of it.

"If we were back in the States, we'd be having a long Fourth of July



weekend," Bill reminisces outloud.

"I guess that they're through giving us presents, too," Brad complains. "The fact is that there isn't anything on the bulletin board, it looks sort of bare."

"Just what'd you fellows like to do on the Fourth, if you were given a choice?" I question, while changing the subject. "I know that I'd like to be up on top of some snow-clad mountain, someplace."

"I'd like to be on some nice sunny beach - just lay around and watch the pretty girls. Hey, maybe I could get a job as a lifeguard, and even get paid for it," Brad volunteers.

"I'd be content just fishing the whole weekend by some mountain stream that's filled with nice rainbow trout," Bill replies.

Everyone had different ideas for our celebration. Some would be content just being home. A few would like to forget everything by getting drunk - but I wonder if they really would, or if they could develop other interests? "Well maybe," some of them reply. "How about girls?" - So much for the interests of the soldiers. Bournemouth is liable to be a wild place on the Fourth.

Sunday could be a nice day to go to church, but since I've found no church nearby, it's also a nice day to visit some of the other groups of our unit..We've several interpreters - French and German. I guess that they'll help translate some of the messages that we receive. One fellow speaks German with such an accent, that it's almost scary. He could be in real trouble by a guard, if we were in German territory.

There's a crew for repairing the radio equipment, a couple of men.



Roy Drake is one of them. They seem to know their assignment, and they'll sure be needed when we hit some rough roads. I meet a couple more of the cooks. They're sure nice fellows to know, especially when a soldier is hungry. And there are some more fellows from my own section that I meet today, also. I'll be working close together with some of them in our HO units. There's Andre, Bud or Carl, and a few others. I hope that I'll know some of the other names better by then. Getting better acquainted with some more of our gang today, has made it a very nice Sunday.

Monday we find that our lazy routine life is in for a change. There is no notice on the empty bulletin board. But, someone has been formulating plans for our Fourth of July celebration. Maybe it's anything just to get us out of Bournemouth on such a day.

The CO has the men assemble following breakfast. "Men, we'll be leaving here tomorrow as a unit. Have everything clean and packed tonight, we'll be leaving early. Like all troop movements, such knowledge is considered secret."

"Maybe sometime they'll surprise us and tell us that we're leaving at night," Bill jokes.

"Well, at least someone had an interest in us and planned a celebration for us on the Fourth - an escorted tour," I add.

Some of the fellows, several weeks back, had been stationed at a small town not far from here called Christchurch. Of course they made frequent trips into Bournemouth on passes. Maybe that accounts for the fact that when our convoy of the 3253 Signal Service Company makes



its way through the narrow streets of Bournemouth, about seven - bright and early - many of the upstairs apartment windows are filled with men, women, and children waving a goodbye. Well, so much for the idea of secret troop movements. In some ways it's sort of ironic also for us to be celebrating our independence today, from Great Briton, namely England, and at the same time we are over here now fighting with them against Germany.

Our general direction of travel is northeast past the small town of Ringwood and on to the port city of Southampton. It's a distance of a little over thirty miles. It is the major port for the invasion activities, and it's located at the head of a small channel. This channel is protected in some small degree by the Isle of Wight.

We would have been surprised if we had arrived at any other port of embarkation rather than this one. That's the way we figured the odds even without seeing the orders. Through various conversations around other subjects such as this, a song that used to blare from out the juke box at Camp Maxey, keeps rolling through my head. I don't remember the name of the song, but some of the words are: "There's a Star Spangled Banner waving somewhere, in a distant land so many miles away..." It's a patriotic song about the glory of fighting and dying in some distant land for our country. Well, that's a good song, and a good cause. But maybe it's a little better song for someone on the outside looking in. For that reason I don't know why it keeps repeating itself.

As our convoy enters the gates of our FOB Camp, one of the fellows comments, as if reading everyone's thoughts, that it reminds him



of entering a cattle chute, for whatever purpose. The thought clashes with the song that I was singing. He's right, there's only one way out of this camp. We're located several miles from the actual port of Southampton, and it's a typical POE Camp, with quonset huts for housing. There's only one way out of here, and that'll be on a boat to France, either landing on a beach or at some port. We're restricted to this camp at this Southampton location, while we start another waiting game. This is like our POE camp in New York, only now we are much closer to the action - much closer.

While this is a one-way chute, they treat us much better than cattle. We have good eats, showers, and clean beds - and nothing to do. Well, almost nothing. It's a big camp and there are plenty of places to walk on the many streets. There's an occasional flight of planes to watch, also. On Friday, as if to break up the routine, we're given a chance to exchange some of our English currency of shillings, for some new French francs. It's crisp new invasion money. Someone thinks of everything on this escorted tour.

While we've nothing but time on our hands, it's evident that the officers, and some other members of our unit are quite busy. Someone has to coordinate the details of the transportation, embarking and debarking of both the men and the vehicles. There are maps to study to aid in our landing, and establishing our first camp. What enemy units are near the area, and what are their call signs, or those of other stations? Where's the quartermaster's location to get new supplies, what will be our route of travel, and who will give the orders? We have a high priority, we're attached to the Fifteenth



Corps, as well as the Third Army. The Third Army contains the elements of Patton's armored Division, as well as the other divisions and units that make up our Corps and Army. There are a lot of men in these fast-fighting units, with the Navy and the Airforce in addition.

Our job during this period of waiting is to be always ready to move, keep things clean, and packed. Everything is in my duffle bag, including my Bible. I dusted it off and read a little from it yesterday. We continue our walks, and even play a couple of card games of twenty-one - just for fun. There's also time to get another short note sent home - Yes, Mom, we're still somewhere in England.

Some of the fellows who are used to making frequent trips to town, are beginning to feel a little caged up. But I don't believe that they'll have to wait too long. Our warm summer weather with blue skies continue to dominate the picture.

On Monday morning following breakfast, Brad comes into our hut with a handful of French francs, fanned out like a poker player would do. "Would anyone like to make a bet as to the date and time that we'll be sailing for parts unknown?" he asks in a serious manner. "You know - just something to break the monotony."

"Sure, I will," Bud replies. "How much do you want to..." He's interrupted by Ken.

"Sorry Bud, but you don't know him like we do."

"O.K. Brad, what have you found out? We know you well enough to know that you wouldn't bet on anything unless you had some information."



"What's the matter, don't you fellows trust me anymore?" he complains. "Alright," he confesses. "All bets are off. You're going to find out sooner or later anyway. Some of the trucks and their drivers have already left for the port. The remaining drivers are getting their trucks ready to serve as our transportation. Oh, and we're supposed to pick up a couple of 'K' rations, and have our canteens filled."

"I see what you mean," Bud states. "And I was already to bet with him too. Thank you Ken. Well, at least now we know - this is the big day."

We have a nice lunch that seems a little special - at least to us. Since we're using trays, our packs remain ready, and we're soon loaded. Someone else will do the dishes.

Our truck convoy proceeds several miles to the port and dock areas, following a preselected course. This is that one way street down that mythical 'chute', that we had discussed earlier. Today is Monday, July 11th. While Bill isn't getting his 'farewell' party, at least he's getting a surprise on our moving - for it's sometime other than morning. This is a busy POE, as are all the other such ports. But if we're going to observe any more of the activities, it'll have to be done rather fast. There's a sleek looking ship in front of us, and the trucks are proceeding to another area near a cargo type vessel.

"We're going in style anyway," one of the fellows observes. It looks as if this yacht might have, at one time, belonged to a King or Queen."

"Or at least a Prince or Duke," Roy adds.

The ship is about one hundred feet long and sporting the familiar



battle grey. It's a color that seems to look out of place on such a ship. Most of the wood trim had either been removed, or it's now padded. Covering some of the windows on the main deck, is some strong steel screen material that one would see in a place of detention. But there's no time to observe much as our line keeps moving.

There's no need to give any orders. They tell the first man where to go, and the rest of us follow - like sheep. Up the gangplank, around the stern of the ship, through a doorway to the left, a turn to the right and down a flight of stairs. Here, there are stacked hammocks in rows - they look familiar.

"It seems like I've been through something like this before out of New York," I comment to Bill.

And as if to emphasize my thoughts, we hear the part that goes with it: "You men will remain below decks at all times until we're ready to debark."

"Well, at least the metal plates will give us some protection from a few light bullets," I think out loud. "And there's only two ways to go - either across or down."

"We could go up first," Bill reminds me with a chuckle.

There's no delay, and we soon hear the quiet throb of the engines, then the slight forward, rolling motion. It would be nice to be on deck, but they have other plans for us. It would be nice if we were going the other way also. The slight rolling motion is replaced by heavier swells, but it's still relatively smooth, and nothing in



comparison with the open ocean.

Someone checks the time when we leave port so that we'll have an idea of the lapsed time, indicating the speed of our boat. Some had guessed that our speed would be near twenty knots - pretty fast.

There isn't much conversation going on as we get under way, but that'll gradually change I'm sure, as five or six hours even, is quite a lot of time to spend without someone telling a story or playing some cards. There's one man, called Brown, who's writing a letter. He has left a nice girl friend back in England, and has really fallen in love with her. He's setting a record by writing her a letter every day - that'll keep him busy. Most of the men are doing some heavy thinking on this trip, and a lot of praying.

Sometimes it seems like we have to do a lot of waiting, but then after the time has elapsed and we look back - well, the time wasn't really very long. So it is now, the ship's engines slow, then stop. It's quiet for awhile, then we can hear the clank of the anchor as it's lowered. The soldier checks his watch again, it's near seven P.M. There's the sound of more activity on deck, and as we continue to listen there's the continuous background noise - like thunder. Then we also hear the distant explosions.

"We won't be going ashore tonight. So, you might as well eat, and make yourself comfortable for the rest of the night." That's the word as it's passed along.

Good old 'K' rations, the joy of all soldiers. We've had them before



on maneuvers, and they've made some improvements on them since. They do taste pretty good - well, a change anyway. We do have an advantage in eating them, the same as taking a sack lunch or having a picnic. There are no chow-lines to wait in, and there's no mess to clean up. Soldiers are always looking for nice things like that.

We're fairly well bedded down for the night, when Bud reminds himself outloud that he forgot to brush his teeth.

"You can brush them in the morning," I urge him, I'm not really asleep. Who could sleep anyway? It's warm and we don't need any blankets - they stay packed. We're in a strange place and situation, and the continuous noise of the man-made thunder isn't very sleep-inducing. I finally doze off and on, like many of the others.

Around three A.M., there's a series of loud explosions closer than the others that we have heard. There's a slight movement of the ship. "Did you hear that!" someone asks - I'm sure that everyone did. There's the new sound of anti-aircraft fire, and later there are some more explosions. There's that undefined fear, and some prayers - at least from me.

By our time, it's now daylight, and some noise on deck seems to confirm this fact. It's time for our breakfast of 'K' rations. Canned ham and eggs with hard biscuit and jelly. There're a few other goodies with it also, such as a chew of gum. Our canteen full of water comes in handy.

"Bring your gear and file up on deck!" Is the command given. So with our pack on, and gun over our shoulder, we struggle again with our duffle bag, and finally make it to the main deck. There before our eyes is an



unbelievable sight. No picture could do it justice, because our thoughts are a part of the scene. Directly south towards the beach, but well above it, there's a huge cemetery plot of about two blocks wide, and stretching several blocks over the hill as far as the eye can see. This plot is filled solid with white markers. Did our work foul up somewhere? Did someone miscalculate? No! This is just a small portion of the normal expected casualties-- the price of any war.

There's a dirt road leading up the hill on the east side of the cemetery. This one road is the only way up. On the west and the east side of the cemetery there's an artillery unit. There must be a couple of them over the hill, also. The emplacements have the familiar camouflage netting draped over them - green, yellow, and brown burlap netting. But their location is easily identified by the black smoke and red flame that belches from their muzzles at rhythmic intervals. Their targets are German installations, less than twenty miles to the east and south.

Five to ten miles east, but a little north along the coastline, there are some large billows of black smoke. Overhead in the same direction, can be seen bursts of anti-aircraft fire. In the water along the shoreline on each side of our ship, are at least a dozen other boats, most of them much larger than ours. Over each vessel floats one or two large thirty-foot blimps or dirigibles. They are anchored to the vessels at various heights, by heavy steel cable. This is our protection to discourage low-level strafing by the enemy. It looks like a field of grey flowers in a sky of blue.



All of the ships are as close to the shore as they can safely anchor. To transfer the men and the materials from the ships to the beaches, large, powered rafts are employed. They're about seventy-five feet square. A couple of them are now in use, starting to unload our vehicles from the other ship. One of the rafts is just tying up along side of our vessel, and we are about to debark. There has to be good timing with this transfer, as our vehicles have to be unloaded and on shore waiting for us to load as soon as we arrive. The object is to clear this concentration area as soon as possible.

The raft's starting to load. Bill is ahead of me. He has dropped his bag on the raft, and hands the soldier ahead of him the carbine. Then he scrambles down the ladder. "O.K. George, drop it, and hand me your weapon." He takes my gun and I hurry down onto the raft.

I follow this procedure with the soldier following me, and then the same scene is repeated in rapid succession. Soon loaded, we cast off, and the raft's motor roars into action. We're heading for shore.

"Well, Bill, what do you think about this big welcome that we're getting here in France?"

"I don't think you'll ever hear me complain again, after seeing this. Maybe, like a lot of people, we don't always appreciate it when we're well off. It sort of got to me, George, when I saw all the markers of graves there on the hillside. We paid a pretty heavy price for this beach head in the way of men's lives. Of course, I know that it could have been worse. And without that sacrifice, we wouldn't be able to land like we're doing today.



"You're right, Bill," I reply. A person can listen to the news on the radio concerning the war, but he has to be here, and in it, to get to realize more of what it's all about. They don't mention much about these cemeteries on the radio. It's just more of the glamorous side of the picture. But the next of kin also goes through a lot of suffering.

"Do you happen to know just section of the Normandy beach that we're landing on?"

"No. But Brad here, is our navigator. Where are we at, Brad?"

"Most of what I know is from the grapevine, fellows. I do know that this is the Bay of Seine, so named because the Seine River flows into it near the port city of Havre. It's about fifty kilometers to our east and a little north. And since this is the Provence of Normandy, this is as you said, the Normandy Beach. I guess you could also say that this is also a section of the Cherbourg Peninsula. The grapevine has it that this is section 'E' of Omaha Beach. Utah Beach is a number of kilometers farther to the west."

As Brad is filling us in, our raft has entered a breakwater opening. The breakwater itself is constructed from what looks like the sunken hulks of boats, anchored together. Probably they are the remains of some of the invasion fleet.

"Do you have any other tidbits of information, Brad?" I inquire. We'll soon be landing."

"Not too much, George," he continues. "The information is that the fifteenth Corps landed at section 'D' on July tenth, and since they



are a part of the Third Army, the same as we are also attached to, we can presume that General Patton is pushing his armor along not too far ahead of us. Say - his name is George also, how about that?

"You were saying that the fighting still seems to be quite close to this place, even after 'D' day plus 36. Well, it is close. We heard that the First Army had captured the port city of Cherbourg just ten days ago on July the second, while we were still at Bournemouth. Someone had a radio on last night, and we were listening to the Armed Forces Radio news. Just three days ago the British Army captured the city of Caen - that was on July the ninth. The Germans had as many as seven tank or panzer units in that area. The British had to employ a strong Naval bombardment of the city.

"And here's where we get off!" Brad interrupts himself.

The raft grinds ashore on the sand. It's a quick debarking, with the soldiers leaping across a small bit of water, to shore. With a heavy load, it isn't easy. "Whoops," I got one shoe wet. We're on French soil and the continent of Europe. Today is July 12, 1944, and our 'D' day. There's a much greater chance for survival today, but even for a unit like ours, with a huge target priority rating by the enemy, there is still a very strong risk.

We load ourselves and our gear into the waiting trucks. They have kept their motors idling during the loading, and we soon start up the hill.

We look back over the Bay of Seine filled with the vessels of war. The unloading is an endless job. There's the Queen's yacht that we came on," Bud observes.



"That large pall of smoke that we saw to the east is still hanging there," Brad observes. That must be from the city of Caen. The city should be in that general direction."

The one artillery gun west of the cemetery ceases to fire momentarily as our long convoy passes beneath its range of fire. Then it rejoins the others in their rhythm of man made thunder. The sound is deafening. We crest the hill and have a last glimpse of the harbor of ships and men. The overhead blimps give an ominous warning.

Our last view of Omaha Beach leaves a permanent picture in our memory - from the top we look back down over the field of white markers. And now our convoy blends in with the winding road of the French country side. Our thoughts are the same, and we're quiet for awhile. We've been reminiscing about the scene at the beach.

"Did you know that there were over ten thousand aircraft and four thousand boats that took part in the invasion?" Brad injects. "We heard that over the news one day."

"Most of the planes must have flown over us when we were at Lymington on 'D' day," I add.

On all sides of us there is the evidence of much farming. It's easy to guess that there isn't as much production since the German occupation, but the potential is still here. There are quite a few apple orchards to be seen, as well as some other fruit trees. It reminds me in many ways of my home town of Yakima, Washington. We have a lot of apple orchards there also - so there are some things in common.



Our distance of travel from the beach is under ten miles, when we turn off the road and enter one of the many orchards. The trees will make good camouflage for our units. The vehicles are dispersed far apart, power generators are started up, wires connected, and the 3253 Signal Service CO. is in business. My first shift will be in the evening or on the swing shift.

"Well, Brad, what's the name of this little branch in the road?" I ask him between bites of my 'K' ration lunch.

"This little village near here is known as Colleville Sur Mer, or as my poor French would translate: 'Colleville over or above the sea.' We've been traveling almost parallel with the Normandy Beach, only inland a few miles. We can't see the water, but it must be near here somewhere - I can't see the town either for that matter.

"This must be quite a concentration area with all of the elements of the Third Army landing near here during the last week. We can't see them either, but I've a feeling that they are quite near," Brad concludes."

"When you two fellows finish eating, I want you to go down to the end of the orchard and dig a latrine. Some other fellows are already digging a garbage pit." This is the First Sergeant giving his orders for the work details.

We rest for just a few minutes after lunch, and then proceed to get some tools of the trade - two shovels and a small pick from the supply truck. We carry the tools with us down the gentle slope to the end of the orchard, with our trusty carbines by our sides.



"Well, I guess we need some exercise anyway, Brad. We've not done much walking for the last several days. I've the feeling that we're going to have to curtail some of our walking over in this neck of the woods. It isn't a very pleasant sensation knowing that someone is hunting for you, or has you as the possible target in his gun sights.

"Does this look like a suitable site for our first, fresh air rest-room in France?" I inquire.

"It suits me, George," Brad answers. "It's just a toilet anyway. It's not very private, but we'll probably dig them out in the open fields before we're through with this tour. I think the French are quite used to such procedures over here by now.

"All we have to do is dig this thing deep enough, and long enough. And if it's very rocky, it's not going to be very deep - so, let's get to work."

We finish our work, pick up our tools and carbines, and head back to our bivouac area. I get out my bed roll, and spread it along side of Bud's blankets. We'll both be having the same shift - and he has the other shelter half of our tent. Lying on the ground for a few minutes, I conclude that it's quite hard. We'll just have to get used to such discomforts - anyway, it'll be warm, and I should be tired after working the swing shift. Sleep should come easy then.

As I'm resting for a few minutes, I look up at a few scattered apples on the branches of the tree. What there are of them, seem mostly wormy. Later in the afternoon, I decide to try out our handiwork in the lower orchard. The First Sergeant must have had the same idea and he's following about twenty feet behind me. As we near the bottom of the



slope near the latrine, there is a loud 'Bang!' behind me. Dirt sprays in the air from a bullet that has landed in the ground just six feet in back of me. I look around and see the Sergeant down on one knee, picking up his carbine. He gets up dusting himself off, and approaches me.

"Are you all right, George," he asks. "I'm sorry, but I stumbled on this root here. I guess I didn't have my safety on either. If you're alright, don't tell anyone about what happened. I could get into big trouble over it."

"I'm alright, Sergeant. It happened so fast that I didn't have a chance to get scared. It's beginning to sink in a little bit now as to what just happened. You'd better watch that safety though. No, I won't tell anyone - there's no need to." I return to our camp a few minutes later to reflect on what had happened.

Soon after after having our first cooked dinner in France, I join the rest of the crew in our HQ for our evening shift. There'll be three working shifts, working twenty-four hours around the clock, and seven days a week - unless we're moving. Roy has installed some long wire antennae for testing, and the reception is coming in good.

Some of the nets have already been established with verified call signs, and the search continues for new ones. There's a heavy concentration of traffic from the south - some is clear text, which means that there's movement and contact with the enemy. This would be in the St. Lo region and farther to the south where we already know that there's a large number of German troops - Nazi, or what other names that we hear them called. And depending upon which way one looks at it, they are either



close to us, or we're close to them. After seeing the buildup and strength of our forces, I know that the later applies.

It's after midnight when we pass along the nets to the next shift. I get a small cup of coffee before I leave the HQ. I hope that it isn't enough to keep me awake.

Tonight we're sleeping out under the stars - or branches of the apple trees. It's like Lymington, only here the ground is our springs. I pull a blanket over me, and place my carbine by my side. Bud, who's on the same shift, is sleeping several feet away. Before I can drop off to sleep, I hear the familiar varied drone of a lone German plane. There's no need to reveal our location to the enemy. The plane flies out of sound. There's the faint sound of distant anti-aircraft fire, then once more, except for the sound of our generators, all is quiet. I fall asleep.

Today, Thursday, July first, is going to be another day for travel. We'll get to see some more of the French country side. Hopefully, the night shift will get to sleep later in the afternoon. Some kind souls fill in both of the pits, and we soon start to roll. Someone mentions that we might have 'C' rations for lunch. They're generally better than the 'K's, and, oh well, we had a nice breakfast that was warm and filling, so, we're not hurting.

We head a little north to Isigny (by the sea), and then we proceed westerly past the towns of Carentan, St. Sauveur, Le Vicomte, and finally we reach the east coast of the Cherbourg peninsula at a city called Barneville. Our bivouac area is outside the town, at a place called



Senoville. We've traveled a distance of a little over thirty miles this morning. It's nice to get under partial cover again. We had to take cover to the side of the road during the trip, as a precaution, at one time.

Looking back on our travels today, we know that Carentan was captured by the First Army on June 14th, according to our radio news. The road to our city of Barneville was cleared on June 18th. That isn't very long ago, and there may still be some pockets of Nazis near us. The ravages of war could plainly be seen on our travels today. Dead animals still remain in the fields, and many of the trees have been pruned by low level artillery fire as well as from the bombings. The small villages are also the victims of the war, either that they are entirely a large heap of brick and rubble, or it's a partial job like that of some hungry brick-eating monster - a bite here, and a bite there. The poor French have taken a beating from both sides in this war - and there have been wars here during the last two thousand years. Come to think of it, this Province of Normandy was named after the Norsemen, around the year of 911.

Our bivouac area here near Barneville shows the signs of the two-way destruction of war. Maybe this place used to be a small apple orchard, but with the tops of the trees chewed off, it would be hard to identify. Some of our vehicles can't be hidden, so the camouflage netting is brought out and used.

Our menu for today is the famous 'C' ration, verifying the rumor. It makes a good lunch or meal, and it's better for serving a larger group like six men or more. There are more varieties with these than with the 'Ks'. It seems like everybody in this country likes to fight. We've



just opened up a quart size can of blackberry preserves, or jam, and we have used about half of it, when a swarm of yellow-jackets start to claim possession. "We're going to have to do something about these pests, fellows." one of our group announces as he swats a couple of them. "Swatting at them only makes them madder. They're trying to get at my lunch meat, also."

Ken seems to believe that he has the solution. He picks up the partial empty can of jam and places it on the ground about twenty feet away. The yellow-jackets swarm over to it. For the most part then, we're left alone. But just in case - we hurry through our meal.

Part of the agenda for this afternoon seems to be a repeat performance of yesterday's. "Nobody is going to want to associate with me." I complain to Ken, who's helping me dig a garbage pit. "The Sergeant seems to want to pick me and anyone else that eating with me, for work detail. Anyway, I guess maybe I can consider that I got a promotion over yesterday's latrine assignment. I think, though, that the rocks seem bigger on this side of the peninsula."

"My luck has always been about the same as yours," Ken replies. I generally get on all of the details. And cheer up, we might find gold or some relic from the Norsemen's invasion."

"With our luck then, we'll probably find a skeleton of some sort," I add. "By the way, how did your net go last night?"

"It was quiet about the first part of the evening, and then the traffic started to pick up about ten. Most of the fellows were real busy the same as you were. The direction finders were picking it up mostly to the



south of us. That's the St. Lo and Avranches area - and it was quite heavy.

"One of our officers was telling us the reason for our success in identifying the German nets and call signs, as well as how to decipher their codes," Ken confides to me. "This is top secret. During the African campaign we came across their complete documents of operations. They were photographed and returned back to their possession without them ever being aware of what had taken place. How about that?"

"I was thinking that it was something like that," I tell him. "It comes under the category of things you would like to know but are afraid to ask. I hope that they don't ever find out, or change their set-up."

We had just finished our digging, when a group of men from our Company return from their first explorations of the area around our little Command Post. They have what appears to be an underfed German-police dog on a leash. Her tail is between her legs in a defeated fashion, and she is shivering. But she is hungry for any affection that she can get - especially from someone in a uniform.

"What have you got there, fellows?" I ask.

"We were out looking for some cognac," one of them replies. "We didn't find any, but we found this dog, and we're going to name her 'Cognac.'"

"You mean, you're going to brag to everyone that you really did get some cognac?" Ken asks jokingly. "I hope that you don't really intend to keep her. She's all skin and bones, besides being shell-shocked."



"Sure thing, we're going to keep her. This is the new mascot of the 3253 Signal Service Company. We're on our way now to get something from the kitchen for her to eat. There's nothing in the Regulation of War saying that we can't have a mascot." With that remark they leave in quest of their objective. The dog paws at our garbage hole as she goes by.

"She's friendly, even though a little mangy-looking," Ken remarks. She must have belonged to some German soldiers who left her. Maybe with a little food and care, she'll make us a nice watch dog."

"I don't know what the CO will say about us having a German dog in camp," I kid. "And a female at that."

"We're through here, so what do you say that we dig us each a little fox hole? We don't want to get the shakes like that dog. And if we've got time to dig a garbage hole, then we've got time to dig a fox-hole."

"It suits me," Ken replies. "The General said that we wouldn't have time to dig any holes. We've got the sea on one side of us, the enemy is on the other side, and the General, with his armor, is in front of us. We can't move until he does - but when he does, we're going to follow like a stack of dominoes. Say, we did hear a little anti-aircraft fire this afternoon - so lets get digging."

The kitchen is in operation for our evening meal. A hot meal is a good morale-booster, and we need all of the boosting we can get. It's nice to start our evening shift with a full, warm stomach, also. When we have finished our evening shift, I comment to Bud the advantages of working



this swing shift.

"I agree with you, George," and then he adds: "The trouble with the midnight shift is that, if we have to move, then we'll miss our sleep. Then there's the daily choice of having our sleep disrupted by the noon meal, or miss the meal in favor of the sleep."

The scene as we look up at the sky tonight, is different than from that of our previous night. Last night we had the silhouette of branches and leaves against the sky of stars. Tonight we have the silhouette of stumps and limbs.

Bud must have taken notice of this when he lay down on his bed, also.

"Say George, didn't you say that there was a song called: 'Apple Blossom Time in Normandy?'" And then without waiting for a confirmation, he adds: "Well, someone must not have liked the song, and tried to shoot all of the trees down."

"Goodnight, Bud!"

It's another day, and I'm thankful for a fairly peaceful night's sleep. There was some air activity, it sounded like the drone of one lone German observation plane. There was also the distant anti-aircraft fire during intervals. We're virtually in the center of a protective ring of fire-power. This is the center, like the eye of a hurricane, and it would mean almost suicide for any enemy craft to approach us. The Germans do have planes, but it's a relatively small number compared with what they had at the onset of their hostilities.

It would be interesting to view the battle maps of the Allied Supreme Command which is still located in England. It's certain that their location will move to the continent as soon as the Port of Cherbourg



is restored, and we've established several airbases. But the maps will come with them. Ours is a very important front, but it's just one of the many other fronts that are, or will soon be in operations. The bright colored pins identify even the smallest unit and their location. Of equal importance are the pins showing the identity and locations of the enemy units. The locations and description of all enemy military targets are also shown by a different colored pin marker.

Our 3253 Signal Service Company acts as a sensor for the ever-changing battle front. There're other intelligence units such as ours, and there are other ways of gathering useful intelligence information that's passed along to the Command. There's the contact information that comes from the unit Commanders, observations by our Airforce, and information from captured prisoners.

The data that we collect is passed along to the Supreme Command through the communications of the Fifteenth Corps that handles such communications. General Wade H. Haislip, commands this Corps. Some of the intelligence information is also relayed to front-line units in the field for their use. Some information is relayed to our Airforce for urgent target missions.

The Fifteenth Corps has the 79th and the 90th Infantry Divisions with their Commanding Generals in this District. There's also the 5th Armored Division that will take part in the impending offensive. Of course, we know there are a large number of other units that make up the Third Army, commanded by General Patton. There'll probably be other units that will join us later in the offensive. Some should be French units.



As Ken predicted, we wouldn't be moving right away, but we would be taking up the old waiting game. It isn't the waiting game with idleness, but the waiting to go down the 'chute' ahead, and through the next town that eventually leads to victory and the road home. We're very busy, and our work goes on around the clock. The information that we gather helps to decide when or where our next move will be.

But being in one location for awhile, does have the advantage of allowing our mail to catch up with us. "Letter for Sanford, letter for Brown," the Sergeant calls out the names. He takes some of the mail to where some of the men are working in the HOs.

My letters back home now read: "Somewhere in France." And I wonder after I write this one, if it is any consolation for her. I generally write home about once a week. Other events may warrant faster replies. I compare this with the letters that Brown writes and receives - one a day is the goal that he has set. In his spare time you'll always find him writing. And that's wonderful, I only wonder how he can find so many things to write about. We also hope that their romance continues to flourish.

Everyone has some quirks that come to the surface during this period of immobility. "Have you seen that small foot locker that two of the fellows carry along with us in the truck?" Bud asks me one day.

"Yes, I've seen it," I reply. "I don't know what's in it, but it has a lock on it. So it must be pretty valuable."

"Someone was saying that it was full of all kinds of goodies from home," he continues. "They're Jewish, so I guess there must be some Jewish food for their special holidays. I bet that they keep it mostly



for their own use. I'm not envious, but I just wonder what is the need of carrying so much excess baggage with us. Most of us are satisfied with our eats, and we get chocolate rations also. Of course it's nice to get presents from home - within reason."

"I agree with you, Bud," I add. "Maybe like you said, it's nice to get something from home. And I guess if they can get someone to help them pack it around the country - well, good luck to them."

The air war isn't forgotten in the ensuing days. The Jerries continue their nightly harrassment, and groups of our planes can be seen speeding towards their lines. No matter what plane appears, Cognac will go into a state of shell shock; shivering and hunting for a cave or place of shelter. Yes, Cognac is still around and getting all she wants to eat.

Some of the fellows resume their search for the liquid cognac, or other spirits to make them forget the war - it's a daily routine. Others think more about God - seeking his help.

On Saturday morning, July 22nd, we receive the awaited news to move our location. This means that some action has started on the front lines. We have time to pack and clean up our area. "Don't leave a scrap of paper or anything else lying around," the Sergeant demands. And we've heard that warning before. The identity of our unit must be kept secret. Even though we've captured an area doesn't mean that it's free from spying. Any writing that we do in the HO is supposed to stay there and be given to message center. An empty envelope from a letter laying around outside, could be almost as bad.



The trailers with the power generators are connected to the trucks, and the other equipment such as tool and barracks bags are loaded by nine. We pull out of our area and start moving in a southeasterly direction along a narrow French country road. The 3253 Signal Service Company can boast of one extra member on this trip, Cognac, our mascot.

Our trip today is a short one of about five miles. The scenery remains about the same; shot off trees, some dead animals scattered around, and the remains of what could have been a small village. There are a couple of small farm buildings with part of one wall still standing on each.

"Was this move really necessary?" I ask Bud while we are setting up some of the equipment.

"You know the old saying, George; 'Ours is not to wonder why - ours is but to do or die.' If that can be of any comfort to us. Really though, I didn't hear any reason. Maybe we had to make room for another unit. Or maybe it's like the regulations of some of the parks in the United States where they say that you can only camp in an area for a limited number of days."

"Anyway, Bud, it gives us a chance to try out some of these new varieties of 'K' rations. This one is ham and cheese. I suppose that you have the same."

We are just starting with our lunch when the Sergeant approaches us. That can only mean one thing - a work detail. "Sanford, and Bill over there - when you get through eating, I'll show you where I want you to dig a



garage pit. You can pick up the tools at the kitchen."

"Well, it was nice of him to tell us that we could wait until after we eat before we start our digging." Bill comments after the Sergeant had left.

"What's the name of this place?" I ask Bill later when we had just about finished digging our big project. "It'll be nice to know just where about in France we dig all of these holes. I think that this is a little easier digging than the last one we volunteered for, however."

"Someone said that this is St. Pierre D' Artheglise, if that means anything. We didn't find any gold or buried treasure, so we might as well stop digging. Cognac had a lot of fun helping us dig, anyway. She probably thinks that this is an air-raid shelter for her. Say - are you going to dig a fox hole this time?"

"No, Bill," I reply. "The planes didn't do any damage at the last place, just put a little fear in us, that's all. We can always dig one if the need arises. We don't know how long we'll be here either. Speaking about Cognac - she's starting to put on a little weight already with the good food. She still shakes every time a plane comes over."

Our stay at St. Pierre stretches into days. But being immobile for awhile does give the mail a chance to keep coming. And we get another chance to wash out some change of underwear and socks. Sleeping with our clothes on, seems to get them dirty in a hurry. We also have DDT powder to sprinkle on the blankets for lice, or what have you. And we also have time to have a couple of baths. The bathtub in this case



consists of a helmet full of warm water, soap, a wash rag, and a towel. Some of the fellows call it a "spit" bath. But it serves the intended purpose of trying to keep a little clean - and healthy. And so goes our time while we're here.

During this period, the fly-overs of the German planes, continue. They fly over in the evening or at night in sort of a harrassing way. Some of them are observation planes, and we can always hear our anti-aircraft fire in the distance.

As the last days of July approach, our Airforce is increasing its striking intensity. We must now have an airbase on the Peninsula, as squadrons of our fighter planes can be seen flying low on their daily missions. The size and frequency of our bomber flights has also increased, both day and night.

Some of the fellows are complaining that they are having trouble trying to get any more wine or cognac from the French. I often wonder what will happen to the supply of such spirits by the time the last soldier of the Army crosses an area. I imagine that it'll be pretty dry by then, unless they can include more of the staff in the GI rations. So, if the place is drying up, maybe it's time for us to be moving on.

Monday, July 31st, is picked for our morning of travel. We've been at St. Pierre D' Arthrglise for eight days. We don't mind it being here, but we realize that the road home leads past the German lines to our south. The big push will soon start, or it has started already. Our bomber activity has already confirmed such moves. There has been real heavy fighting around the vicinity of St. Lo, and from the news, we



know that the city itself was captured only one week ago. Our direction of travel today, is south-east, and toward that same city of St. Lo.

The scenery along this new stretch of winding French country road continues to be nearly the same as what we've seen along the last two points of travel. The landscape looks as if someone had been carving it with rifle fire. Dead horses and livestock lie in the nearby fields; bloated, and feet up. We approach an area that might be a town. "What's the name of this village?" I ask Brad.

"You've got to be kidding, George," he answers. All I can see is a pile of rubble - bricks and splintered timbers. But I'll look it up when we get to our next area and tell you what used to be here."

"Thanks, Brad"

The next town has a couple of structures with two walls left standing. "We'd better not tell them about this, Brad, or they might want to come back and finish the job."

-He laughs.

Such destruction is a part of war, and the French are glad to get their land back. But this is a serious business, lives have been lost, and the property damage is total - these were their homes.

About twelve miles down the road, our convoy pulls into an area that resembles a large dairy farm - or used to. Brad later identifies our location as St. Martin D' Aubigny. It's just outside of a former little village called Perier. And, oh yes, he said that the pile of rubble we saw a while back on the road, was from a town called Lessay.



Our new location today is about half-way between where we were near Barneville, and the city of St. Lo. The distance would be about eighteen miles either way. St. Lo has been a key German defense position. Its capture means that our forces are now free to proceed further southward. There'll no doubt continue to be some mopping up operations.

The city of St. Lo is located on the Vire River. It has, in the past, boasted of having the beautiful large structure called the Gothic Church of Notre Dame. If we can compare its present destruction with the damage that we've seen today, then we know that the city has been very badly damaged. There must have been some leather processing plants in the city also, as there was a large supply of the raw products needed, going to waste in the fields we saw today.

And there's a large supply of that same material going to waste in the adjoining pasture, about two hundred feet south of our new camp. "They must have had orders to shoot anything that moves," Bud comments. "This is summer, and I don't think that I'm going to like it here."

Most of the animals have just recently been shot. But with legs up, and some on their sides, they are already bloated and beginning to smell. We try to cover some of the nearby ones by shoveling some dirt on them. But it's a hopeless task. It would take a bulldozer to do a proper job. We have two consolations; maybe we're upwind from most of them, and maybe we won't be here too long.

Our area for bivouac is to the north of the pasture, and under some larger trees. And surprise, the trees have not all been pruned with gun fire. This condition will give us a better camouflage.



It's now lunch time, and like our meals on every move, we have a chance to try out a favorite new 'K' ration. I'm eating next to Bud, with the belief that we're well hidden from the First Sergeant, but oh no, here he comes again looking for his work detail..Sanford and Anthony; I see that you have just about finished eating. Come with me and I'll show you where I want you to dig another garbage pit.

The Sergeant had laid out the area for us and we're just starting to dig, when Lt. Jones just happens to stroll by. You might think that some of our officers don't know what's going on because they are quiet and you don't see much of them. But they are busy, and they do know what's going on. His approach faces the Sergeant as he is leaving. "Sergeant, I've noticed that you have picked Sanford for a work detail on every move so far. I'd like to remind you that we have other men in our Company. Give some of them a break."

There's a meek, "Yes sir," from the Sergeant as the dialog ends.

We finish digging the garbage pit, and consider the digging of a fox hole for this area. "We didn't need one for the last area," Bud reminds me. "But of course that's no guarantee for this place."

"Let's skip it then," I agree. "Our troops have captured St. Lo, so we've probably taken over a few of those close airfields of the Germans also. Besides as a clincher, this ground is hard digging." We didn't dig any, but Cognac, our favorite mascot, found herself a large boulder for a hiding place.

What made it a little worse for us to work today after lunch,



is the knowledge that we would also be working the night shift on intercept. We had a standing rule that the crew working at night would get a chance to sleep in the daytime - except in emergencies. Oh well, we spread out our blankets and get a little sleep in the afternoon, and again in the evening after a nice dinner from our chuck-wagon. The name 'chuck-wagon' seems more fitting with all of the beef lying around.

We noticed at our last location that our Airforce had stepped up its activities. Tonight during our shift, the number of flights is increased even more. At one time during a flight, the duration seems to last for over an hour. We can't resist taking a few minutes off, to get a glimpse of them from the outside. It's partly cloudy, with a small moon casting a silver lining on them. The waves of night bombers black out both the moon and the clouds. Their motors vibrate the ground on their low flights. Later we can hear the distant explosions.

"It reminds me of the time before 'D' day, when we were at Lymington," Ken comments about the display of power. "I'm sure glad I'm not on the receiving end of that load."

The morning news on the radio confirms the meaning of these heavy strikes. Our Third Army has captured Avranches, breaking their defense line, and they are still rolling. The First Army is also moving south, as are some of the British units to the east.

"It sounds like we might not be around here much longer either, to smell these cows. We're with the Third Army. But back to the subject of cows, just where do all of these critters come from - the United States?" I ask Bud as we're leaving the HQ.



"No, George," he answers. "It's the other way around. We probably got our cows from here. There're two islands to the west of us here, off the Cherbourg Peninsula that are named 'Jersey' and 'Guernsey'. That must carry some meaning or something. I'd really like to know more about the subject. It's an interesting question."

After breakfast, Lt. Belou comes around with the announcement that our CO is seeking volunteers to bury a German pilot whose plane had been shot down not too far from this area. "He'll make it worth your while," he adds. "We don't want to leave him there like these cows either."

The Lieutenant later secures his needed volunteers - maybe the thought of possible souvenirs influenced their decision. The night shift, including myself, grasps the opportunity to get some needed sleep.

The volunteer complete their unenvied mission later in the day, and they distribute some of their extra booty of war. I get a couple of yards of some silk-like material from a parachute, and I make plans to send it home later as a souvenir of war. The fellows who are looking after Cognac get some extra yardage of the same material, and make their plans to construct a small pup tent for our mascot.

There've been several flights of our fighters over our area during the day. They're flying low and heading east. They disturb our sleep a little, but it's more of a comforting feeling, rather than the fear that grips us when we know the enemy is at the control of the plane.

The British night bombers are out again tonight during our shift. It sounds like a repeat performance of the previous night. Our desks in the HQ vibrate for long durations. We continue our copy, being alert



for the possible urgent German messages that could follow such a raid. There are more flights of our fighters the following day, and again the following night, but their volume has decreased in numbers and in sound. The climax of their assault appears to have been on July 31th, our first night at this location. The last raids appear to be aimed at a specific target, rather than a general assault type of mission.

As Ken remarked the other night, it reminds us of 'D' day while we were still at Lymington. Things are starting to move, and we're going with them. Today is August 3rd, and our convoy plus one mascot are heading south toward the city of Avranches. This was a key German defense city that was captured by our forces, just four days ago. It's nice, maybe, to move before the weather gets any warmer, and the smells from the dead cows increase. But we're liable to see some more, and grimmer scenes.

Our route south is from six to eight miles inland from the western side of the peninsula. This natural barrier of water, which is a part of the English Channel, has been serving as a protective flank for us. When and if we pass Avranches, both of our flanks will be exposed to the enemy.

We pass the villages of Coutance and Canvay - both are piles of rubble. And we continue moving south. About one mile before we come to the city of Avranches, we pull off on a dirt road that runs parallel with a hedge row. We follow this dirt road for about two blocks to a spot where we set up our operations.

This little cross-roads on the map is called Marcilly for some unknown reason. It's a deceptively peaceful looking scene with the



green hedgerow and the clear field on each side of us. Hedgerows are made of shrubs and sawed off trees to form a fence that separates one farm from another. These growing barriers have also served through the years for another purpose, as military defense lines. With today's modern weaponry however, such use could be questionable. Some of the trees where we are located are just a little taller, so, if not for the purpose of stopping a few bullets, they serve as a partial camouflage.

Avranches is located on a bay portion of the coast known as the Gulf of St. Malo. We're about seventy miles south of Cherbourg. The location of the city makes it the gateway between Normandy and Brittany. At this time, this spot on the map has taken on a new importance. This small city just a matter of days ago served as a key anchor point for a very strong German line that was built for the purpose of keeping our troops contained in the Cherbourg Peninsula. The Third Army's heavy armor units, with the aid of our Airforce, have breached their defense and continue to roll on south like a steam-roller. It would take a lot of power to stop this combination of force.

This is the area that was heavily bombed by our planes that flew over our place at St. Martin D' Aubigny, less than a week ago. It looks peaceful now and we can see no other troops around. But, we know from our previous intercept work, as well as from the traffic that we're picking up today, that there's an enormous build-up of German forces directly to our east. With that in mind, some of the fellows including myself, take on the project of digging foxholes. Some of the fellows think we're chicken, and maybe we are. The General said that we wouldn't



have time for such luxuries - but he has a tank.

We're enjoying a good old 'K' ration again when some German planes flying low, pass over head. They didn't drop anything, but their harrassing tactics bring a fear to us. Some of our non-chicken gang decide to switch sides and dig some holes of their own. A few still hold out. There's more harrassing by the German planes during our evening meal. The tension continues to build up as their flyovers at night disturb our sleep, and keep those working in the HOs on edge. I'm glad I have the evening shift.

The next morning as I get in the chow line for breakfast, the Jerries are in the air again like a swarm of yellow jackets. We don't stay in line any longer than necessary before we disperse to eat. The scene is repeated again at lunchtime.

I've been working the evening shift of intercept and I can feel the tension build up with the fellows. But the messages that we're intercepting from the Germans reflect a growing tension also. There're urgent clear text messages where contact has been made with elements of our Third Army. We've taken the initiative and we're forcing them to act.

Before the evening meal and my shift on duty, I join in a rap session that about a dozen of the fellows are having by some old posts next to the hedge-row. Generally such subjects are about girls, or the lighter subjects. But tonight they are of a more serious nature. The men have that contained fear of a plane flying overhead with possible live bombs. It's a fear that only one going through such an



experience can realize. Such fear can affect one person more than another - it's a fear that words alone can't express.

Brad is trying to express his feelings: I believe that most of us who have been trained in radio work have a built-in temperament that reacts faster and stronger to fear than someone else would. Copying code alone, could put one under high tension, and add to that another tension of fear, and it could lead to the breaking point. Maybe it's because our minds are more active with this type of work, that we realize an impending or existing danger faster than someone else would."

It's a pretty good spontaneous discussion, and strictly voluntary. And it soon turns to thoughts about religion.- about God. In some ways it sounds like an old-fashioned revival meeting, or confession night. It's better to talk it off, than keep such thoughts closed up. I believe it did most of us a lot of good.

Bill adds his comment about God: "Maybe it's because we're more sensitive, or have such a temperament, that we realize we have to put our trust in someone other than man who causes such destruction as this. There has to be a creator - a God, someone that we can put our trust in. It isn't that God will always keep us out of trouble. He can't as long as we make most of the decisions that get us into trouble. But it's comforting to know that He is there, and will help us get out of such trouble."

One of the fellows who had previously expressed his belief of no God, again reaffirms his stand on the matter.



Ken has a reply for him that's given, not with the idea of condemning, but rather with the idea of setting forth his own thoughts openly.

"You can express your belief that there's no God, but really what you are saying is that there's no other God than me. Someone has to be in charge of your life. It'll be interesting to hear your views when we get through with this war. I hope that you'll change, and put your faith and trust in the same God that we do."

I express my agreement with him and the others. The rap-session ends. It was strange, in a way, to hear supposedly tough soldiers talk in such an open manner. Had they grown soft or weak? I believe that these fellows could shoot and kill as well as any other soldier. But does that make them tough any more than drinking or cussing? I believe it takes more courage to express their beliefs as they did.

I'm awakened several times in the night by the drone of the German planes. Fear is still with me, but their discussions and talk about God did help.

It's another day, Saturday, the fifth of August, and the Jerries are still persistent in their flyovers. They still resemble a swarm of bees whose hive has been disturbed by a bear. All day long their planes continue to put fear into us as they size up the situation for the best way to attack.

I've just finished cleaning up after our evening meal, when I hear them again. I'm just getting ready to go on shift. "There are a bunch of



them, and they're coming in low from the west!" someone hollers.

I hear the explosions in the direction of Avranches as I dive for my foxhole. I have company on top of me - the lad who had thought it not worth his while to dig one has changed his mind. "This is no time to dilly dally," he cries. I crouch as low as I can. It's the same feeling that I had on the infiltration course. I'm paralyzed with fear, and try to dig deeper with my fingers. There's the whistle of a bomb, and I pray; "God give me just ten seconds more to live and for this to pass, and I'll be forever thankful."

There're no more explosions after that one, and it grows quiet for a few seconds. Then they return again - lower and on a strafing mission. One of the planes is spraying the field to our north with machine gun fire. He continues his firing as he approaches the hedgerow in front of our unit. We hear the bullets hit the earth - some "whine, whine," as they glance off of some hard object. Then it's the peaceful silence once more.

But the silence soon grows into the excited hum of voices as the men crawl out of their hiding places and check for any possible damage. "I got one hole in the fender of my truck!" one of the drivers announces, quite concerned.

"After all of that fireworks, and we only got one hit? How lucky can we be?" Someone proclaims.

"Lucky? Or God's protection?" I think out loud. And I know others share the same thoughts.



There are some speculative conversations going on. Would the enemy planes be back? Would this raid be followed by an Infantry advance to regain control of this town and isolate our troops again in the Cherbourg Peninsula? The later action would be the most likely. And if that's to be the case, will we retreat? We know that our only protection lies ahead with the strong armored units of the Third Army. It's an Army that's already after bigger prey.

The questions are soon answered for us by an order from the First Sergeant: "The CO says to have your equipment packed and loaded. We'll be moving out as soon as it's dark."

"Darkness," it can be an enemy, but it can also be an ally.

And it's dark when we start to roll with our convoy. Our drivers have been trained for night driving. We have small pilot lights on the trucks, and we follow bumper to bumper. The scene changes briefly as the road leads through the city of Avranches. Once again it's like daylight from the orange and red flames of the burning buildings on each side of us. Avranches is a city aflame - black smoke fills the air. We take off again on a dark road, and for a brief while we can look back at the glow of the city. Like a lost lamb hunting for its mother, we know that our protection lies ahead with the Third Army, to our east.

On two occasions we believe that we hear a plane overhead. We pass several places that look in the dark like they could have been towns, or piles of rubble. We could learn their names tomorrow, if we cared to. The road leads on in the dark, and it's after midnight when we pull into our new bivouac area.



We are soon in operations again. The time for our shift was spent in travel, and it's time for the night crew to take over operations. They lost some sleep on that move. With all of the activity, they should have a busy night, with lots of urgent traffic.

I spread my blanket out next to where Bud is, and try to get some sleep. There are some branches of taller trees overhead. All we can hear is the sound of the generators. But before the sound lulls me to sleep, I briefly review the past, fast-moving, events. It was a miracle that we escaped, and with a prayer I thank God for His protection.

Before breakfast on this Sunday morning, August 26th, some of the fellows from the night crew call a few of us into the HO to listen to the news on a spare receiver. It's from the Armed Forces Radio Network. They're coming in loud and clear. It's important for us to find out what is going on in the situation that we now find ourselves.

"The Allied Command announced this morning that elements of the German Army had recaptured the town of Avranches during the night. This action again contains the Allied forces to the Peninsula, and it now isolates units of the Third Army which breached their lines at this town on July 30th. In other news; Allied Warplanes...."

"That's us they're talking about, fellows," Bill emphasizes. And the word soon spreads around our unit. There's speculation.

"Our trucks were the last ones through!" What would it mean? There exists concern for our safety. "Will we be captured?"



But we did escape, and I made a promise to remember God daily with a prayer of thanks for getting us out of that situation, and for His continued protection.

Just as a lot of us have faith in God, we also have the knowledge of the power of our own forces. We've a powerful lot of armor ahead of us that's combined with our Airforce. And we also know that there're two French Divisions scheduled to join our Corps. With that knowledge, we can ask the question; "Who is cutting whom off?" By remaining in the area and trying to seal us off again, they are merely shortening their time for any means of their own escape. They are themselves being encircled. There are many German Divisions in this area, as our reports show. British and Canadian troops are moving down from the north, and we're moving around from the southeast. It'll be a bloody battle and many lives will be lost. But if they're captured it'll be a big prize, and Patton knows this.

"Here are some vital statistics for your diary if you want," Brad informs me soon after breakfast. "I'll try and mark them off on my map on each move and give them to you - the main ones where we stay anyway. If you want the names of some of the others, you can always get them later."

In our hurried exit last night we passed through five towns - or what was left of them. The names of the towns are Ducey, St. Hilair, Du Harcourt, Fougeres, La Criexille, and St. Juen Des T. You can put them down later if you want to copy them from the map where I've circled. Of main concern for you is the place where we are now, and this is known as Olivert or Port Brillet. As you can see from the map



we're ten miles from the city of Laval which is located on the Mayenne River. We traveled nearly fifty miles last night, which places us about one hundred and fifteen miles from the Port of Cherbourg. Because of our triangular route of travel we're just about the same distance from Paris as when we started out from Omaha Beach.

"The news reports state that the town of Laval was captured - or maybe liberated is the word - just yesterday on August the fifth," Brad adds. "So you can see that we're keeping up with the whole gang."

"Thank you, Brad. While we may feel a little pessimistic about being cut off from the Peninsula temporarily, nothing has slowed down our drive so far. Anyway, we might as well stay optimistic about our situation."

"This seems like a river bottom area where we are now, and the Mayenne River is east of us. These rivers seem to flow south, which means that there are some hills to our north," he continues. "They must flow from the hills of Normandy. That's the area we'll be encircling if our drive keeps going the way it is. And that's the area the large number of German units are holed up."

"Thanks again, Brad," I reply. "We'll soon find out how our speculation turns out. For now, I'm going to get some rest while it's still peaceful. The other night showed us that you don't always know what to expect."

Our brief two-day stay at Olivert is relatively peaceful. At the same time we're having quite a lot of traffic coming from other large pockets of Germans - to our north as well as other directions.

The Nazi are occupied, so



maybe that's why we've had it more peaceful. Our other fronts continue to push, and we receive news that the Supreme Headquarters for the Allied Expeditionary Forces, or SHAEF, has moved their Headquarters to the continent at Cherbourg. And before we move on Tuesday morning August 8th, we receive the good news from our Radio Network, that the city of Avranches has again been retaken by our forces. That means that the area has been recaptured, and I don't believe there's much left of the city by now.

Our speculation is correct, and we're moving in the direction of the small industrial city of Le Mans. We pass through the small village of Vaiges on our route, and continue on toward the next town of St. Denis. There's the litter of war on each side of us.

The 3253 Signal Service Company has a very high priority rating for a unit that has very small fire power. Such a rating clears us for our travel on the road - sometimes too far as we learn today. We've traveled twenty-five miles and we're approaching the little town of St. Denis, which is about twenty miles east of Laval. We start passing some empty Infantry trucks, and then we pass some that are still unloading troops. Next we pass long columns of Infantry Soldiers spaced in battle formation of twenty feet apart, on each side of the road.

We pass the foot soldiers and proceed two miles further along the deserted looking road. We approach the small town whose quietness gives us cause for apprehension. Has our priority gotten us into trouble? Are we casually supposed to be passing foot soldiers? We would be a



dead Company if there's a machine gun waiting for us in ambush. As our trucks enter the city streets, and the identity of them can be seen, French civilians rush from their doorways shouting welcomes and warnings, as they wave their arms and point to the various buildings and barns surrounding their location. "La Bouch, La Bouch," or words to that effect, they shout as they point. Whether the words are cuss words or not, I don't know. But it's a word that we'll probably be hearing many more times. The international sign language that they use are words enough. There are Nazis hiding in those buildings for us to capture.

We wave back to the civilians while we keep a firm grip on our carbines. Our trucks don't stop and nobody gets out. We make what could be an illegal 'U' turn at the first intersection and head back in the direction of the approaching doughboys from the 79th, or 90th Divisions. We'll give them the credit for the liberation of that town - after all, that's their mission for today.

"And how lucky can we be?" Some of the fellows comment again. "That could have meant big trouble for us."

We make a strategic withdrawal of several miles behind our Infantry and set up operations a half mile off the road near a group of trees. "Did you notice anything strange about that town we were in today?" I ask Bud as we're about to start our evening shift.

"Nothing," he replies. "Except maybe we shouldn't have been there. Come to think of it, that's the first little town we've seen that wasn't completely demolished."



Our stay near St. Denis has been a busy one - for two days of copy. The Third Army is on the move again east and we're swept along with them. Our moves seem to be made about two days after the capture of a town. Today is Thursday, August 10th, and our new temporary bivouac area, for today, is called Sarge Des Le Mans. We're near a village called Neauville, but we're also close to the larger city of Le Mans. Notes from the diary relate that during the advance of the Fifteenth Corps from the Mayenne River to Le Mans, both of our flanks were exposed. Between these two points however, the 80th Division protected the communications of the Fifteenth Corps on the north side.

Le Mans was captured 082300. The Corps of Engineers built several bridges across the Sarthe River to the north of Le Mans, that our three Divisions followed by the 2nd French Armored Division, crossed on.

Our crew is working the day shift this week. I've escaped the garbage pit detail for awhile, and the digging of foxholes has not taken place. There're two reasons; we've been moving too fast, and while we've spotted a few planes, they've left us alone. I believe that they're too busy with their own problems.

And some of those problems we've seen early today on our travels.

Although some of the towns are starting to escape total destruction, the other debris of war starts to show up in increasing quantity. There've been a number of German tanks, or panzerkampfwagens, on their sides and still burning. There were some burned out trucks and halftracks. And there have been a score of dead Germans besides their vehicles or along side of the ditch by the road.



"How about a pass, or trying to get us a furlough to Paris this weekend?" Bud asks me after we had enjoyed a nice evening meal served warm from our chuck-wagon. "Brad's map shows that it's only one hundred and fifteen miles to the big city."

"It sounds like a good thought, Bud," I reply. The only trouble is I don't believe they would spare us any time off, aside from the more serious aspect that Paris is still in German hands.

"Changing the subject slightly, do you know anything about this city of Le Mans that we're so near and yet so far from?"

"Just what I've heard mostly from news stories, and maybe some from school. You've probably heard the same. It's a rail and industrial center. There must be eighty thousand people living there. Automobiles, machinery of the heavy type, textiles, chemicals, and shoes are manufactured there. Of course there's the processing of all the other products, such as food, that keeps such a center humming.

"George, maybe our historian, Brad, could fill us in on some of the history. It's interesting, and you never know - we might not pass this way again."

"I don't know too much either, fellows," Brad relates. "I do know that it's an old city dating back to pre-Roman times. So it has many historic buildings dating back to those times. It has been the center of many wars, because of its location. This city was conquered by William the Conqueror during the Hundred Years War. There've been numerous other wars fought here, including the



Vendeems War, the Franco- German War in 1871, and of course, the present war.

"Oh, and another item that might be of interest, is an architectural showpiece. It's the cathedral of St. Julian, which was built in the 11th, and 12th centuries. some of the oldest stained glass in France is found here. The building also contains the tomb of a queen - Berangaria, Queen of Richard Couer De Lion. So now you know - and that'll give you something to dream about tonight, rather than planes and tanks."

"Thank you Bud, and Brad. The subject will give us something to think about anyway, even if we can't go to sleep. I wonder how you remember all of that information, Brad. You're a regular walking encyclopedia - or something."

"Well, you all are welcome fellows. We're on a free escorted tour, so we might as well get all out of it we can. I'll confess a little secret though; I do have a small travel guide of France that gives a brief history and description of the major cities. So if the information I give you is wrong, I have someone to pass the buck onto."

Conversation - that's one way to pass the time, and the subjects are many and varied. There are a few card games going on. And any spare time is also used to catch up on the work - to keep everything ready for the next move. It involves keeping the trucks gassed, greased, oiled, and in repair. The generators need gas and upkeep, and the receivers need checking. These are just a few of the jobs that seem endless. There's also some guard duty, and always a letter to write home. Come to think about it, we haven't received any mail for a while. I guess we're moving



too fast lately for it to keep up with us.

It's not too much work to get ready for bed, sometimes we don't even take our boots off. It's summer and we just pull a blanket over us and go to sleep. And sleep comes quickly, if the planes and other instruments of war leave us alone.

The next two days we see plenty of planes, but they're not German. There appears to be mass flights again of our fighters and bombers circling in the vicinity of the Hills of Normandy. This is the area of heavy German troop concentration, and it's now the area of heavy fighting.

Someone said that today is Sunday, but it seems like just another day since we've been working around the clock, and we've been working that way since we landed in France over one month ago. But since our convoy is on the road again today, I guess we could call this a Sunday drive - but we shouldn't. Today is August the thirteenth.

"Well George, are we going on our furlough to Paris today?" Bud asks again jokingly.

"Sorry to disappoint you, Bud, but we're heading north in the direction of the heavy fighting. You'll have to get a raincheck on that Paris trip. Our escorted tour is now leaving the vicinity of Le Mans which as Brad informed us is the Capitol of the Sarthe Department. Welcome aboard, everyone."

"Very good," Bud injects. "And you might add that since we're traveling nearly parallel to the Sarthe River towards the Hills of



Normandy, that we're actually being taken for a ride up the river."

"OK, Bud," I admit. "You win - you said it, and I won't try to top it."

We joke and laugh a lot. Maybe it's as good of a way as any when you can see death and destruction on all sides of you. We thought that the scene of destruction leading into the area by Le Mans was bad enough. "The Valley of the Shadow of Death," could be the name of the place where we are traveling along today. There's no set pattern for the destruction. Groups of wrecked vehicles can sometimes be seen, but it's generally in the terms of singles that we see them. It's as though they were traveling in battle formation. A group of burned out supply trucks can be seen in the ditch, some of them have been pulled by horses after being converted to that type of wagon. Dead soldiers are scattered around the field and in the ditch, and some of their bodies can be seen in the still smoking tanks or half-tracks. There's a chance that some of these destroyed vehicles could be ours, but they appear to be mostly German.

Our road follows parallel, but about two to eight miles east of the Sarthe River. While most roads may curve, as most roads over here seem to do, the river curves more yet. About half-way between Le Mans and Alençon, or fifteen miles, the river curves east enough to meet the road. Near this location there's another small village called Beumont Sur Sarthe. The location of the river is self-described. We continue northward. Although there are groups of trees especially near the river, most of the higher ground appears to have been used for agriculture of some sort, and it's more open type of land.



We appear to be heading for the city of Alencon. While we were still back near Le Mans, I glanced at Brad's little book regarding this city, just in case it would be on our route of travel. Alencon is the Capitol of the Department of Orne. It's located at the junction of the Sarthe and Briante Rivers, and about 36 miles north of Le Mans. Boots, bricks, and shoes are manufactured here. As early as 1665 the town was famous for the manufacturing of a fine lace called, "Point D' Alencon." There's weaving, bleaching, and printing done here. What interests me a great deal, since I'm a rockhound, is that a smokey quartz is found in this region. It's also known as the "Alencon Diamond."

Before we reach Alencon there is an area on our right or east that's posted as off-limits. It's known as the Foret De Rerseigne, and for whatever reasons - mines or whatever, it's bypassed by all units of our Corps.

"Well, Brad, it looks as if we've reached the city of Alencon. The book said that about fifteen thousand people live here. It's supposed to be at the junction of two rivers, but I don't see them. Of course, from the back end of this truck it's hard to see much of anything except where we've been".

"The book might not be right, either," he replies. "They say that there's a city here also, but all that I can see is one pile of brick after another."

Alencon is on a flat sloping area to the north - a plateau that leads up to the Hills of Normandy, about twenty-five miles northwest of us. Continuing on in the same direction, and the same distance of twenty-five miles there's the city of Argentan. When our troops have secured this



city, and the Canadian units who are approaching from the opposite direction, have secured the city of Falaise, it will leave a gap or escape route of only twelve miles for the Germans. This is the direction that our Armor and Infantry units are approaching. If the Germans should try and escape from this gap, there will be some very severe fighting, that would reflect in our interest.

The block after block piles of brick marks the location of the city of Alencon that was captured by our troops just yesterday on August the twelfth. The Corps of Engineers have heavy scoop shovels clearing piles of brick from the main street so that the convoys may pass by easier. We leave the city of rubble, and bivouac about two miles northeast on an open slope.

There's no natural camouflage protection for us, and it makes me feel like we are on display in a glass case. Our only safeguard is that the Luftwaffe is limited in number, and that they have their hands full with their own plight. From our glass view case, we can watch the war being fought before us, in the same perspective that a sports fan could watch a football game. Flight after flight of our planes circle an area and then dive-bomb their target. Occasional billows of smoke can be seen and there's the distant sound of explosions. Other targets are picked, and the procedure is repeated.

We've watch this display of power while getting the nourishment of a 'K' ration for lunch. The generators have by this time been connected to our HOs. I'm working the day shift, so I go in with the rest of our crew and start to work. I feel that the bombing will



continue for at least as long as it's light. If the bombs aren't killing the Nazi, it's putting the fear in them that'll last them the rest of their lives. If we can compare it in any way with the fear that their planes have put into us already, then we know that this is indeed true. But this is no time to feel sorry for them, as we have a job to do. There is urgent traffic coming in that will locate more targets for our Airforce, and some will reveal their plans and troop movements. The war goes on.

After our shift and dinner, we spend some time talking and watching the never-ending bombing in the Hills of Normandy. There are a couple of lone planes spotted, but they don't bother us. Whether they are German planes or some of our own observation planes for artillery spotting, no one seems to know. I go to sleep later in the evening under the stars, with the sounds of our generators, and the distant rumble of explosions.

In the morning the activity in the area where we saw it in the evening is less severe, but still quite active. Our nets on the day shift continue to keep us busy.

On the evening news we learn that Argentan has been captured today. During the push on this city, the 2nd, and 5th Armor Divisions with the 90th Infantry Division took part in it's capture. The 79th Infantry Division remained here and branched east, moving toward the town of Montagne. Today comes word that the 90th Infantry Division is to relieve the 5th Armor Division which will join the 79th Infantry Division for the eastward push.



The area where the two units remain near Argentan and north is known as the Falaise gap . The gap has a width of near fifteen miles which represents the only possible escape route of the strong German units, from a now nearly complete encirclement of them. It's certain that they won't surrender without quite a fight.

While these victories are good for the total war picture, each one represents a large toll of human lives for us as well as them . But it is the victories, or good news on the war effort by our forces, that's the deciding factor in bringing this holocaust to a finish. Some of the good news today comes from Southern France, where the Seventh Army, under the command of General Patch have started an invasion with some beach landings. Several new sectors in Western France have also been captured by other forces. This news over the radio is encouraging.

Tuesday morning of August the fifteenth, the convoy of the 3253 Signal Service Company is retracing its path through the brick rubble of Alencon. At the first junction of the road past these ruins, we turn to the east.

And our turn of direction brings an exclamation from Bud. "Yea!" He cries. "It looks like we're heading in the direction of Paris."

"Calm down, Bud," I reason. "There are still a lot of Germans in the 120 miles between here and Paris. Then too, we don't know if they'll give us a pass. The shock of seeing all of those girls would be too much for us to stand also. Seriously though, I'm very thankful that we're not heading the other direction towards the Falaise Gap."

The litter of war is still with us along the roadside, even though it has stopped smoking. We continue to stay on the high plateau region during the eighteen miles of travel to our new bivouac area of



operations. We're at a place on the map named St. Jouin De Blavon.

Although we have split some of our forces at Alencon and are now following the front lines of another front, our work can be considered even more important than it was. Since the invasion of Southern France has started, we are more spread out on the continent. It's like a large checker game being played with human lives. If we can learn of the movements or the thoughts of the enemy, then we have the advantage of being able to move before he does. The length of time that we spend in an area does not always guarantee more information.

Our stay here at St. Jouin De Blavon is as short as any that we've had. Just time for less than a day's copy, some warm food and some sleep.

On the sixteenth we're again traveling east. We pass the village of Montagne to a place called called Villiers. In this area we start to drop into a watershed that feeds the Eure River, and thus the Seine River to the north and west, which eventually drains into the English Channel.

It's time to once again set up operations. The generators are connected, and the day shift starts to work. "I guess that we can take our time in eating our 'Ks' today, Brad," I comment. "We're on the night shift so we'll have to try and get some sleep pretty soon."

"I've got a nice quiet place picked out for a bed," he replies. "We didn't go too far today. Bud was saying that he wanted to get a little closer to Paris. Sorry about that, Bud."

"I'm disappointed too, fellows," Bud agrees. "But at least we're heading in that direction."



"Get your gear packed and loaded. We're moving out in twenty minutes." This is the First Sergeant speaking with some new orders.

This will make the first time that we've made two moves in one day." I remark. "The only reason for it that I can see is that they've heard your complaint, Bud, and they're just trying to grant your wish - that is, if we keep going in the same direction."

With the trailers hitched on and the equipment reloaded we're once again on our way in the same direction, but a new location. It would be interesting to listen in on the discussion from the ones deciding to make such changes of locations - that would be with the CO, and the other officers. The location of our sites are determined with the cooperation of our Corps or Army. But a lot of things could come about that could effect the need for a change of location. One thing is certain; it would have to be in a definite spot that's known to them.

It's comforting to know that, even though the strength of our Corps has been cut in nearly half since Argentan, our south flank has been protected by the ~~Fifteenth~~<sup>XX</sup> Corps. They've been moving eastward from Le Mans to the Eure River. We have crossed the Eure River already near its source, and if we keep going in the same general direction, we'll continue to follow it as it curves and runs parallel with the Seine River for about thirty miles.

As we continue part two of our journey on this same sixteenth day of August we come to the small city Chateauneuf En Thymerais. It's a small city with a big name, but there's a lot of crossroads here to make up for it. We continue across in the same general direction, much to Buds delight.



Our new bivouac area for today has the name of St. John De Rebenvilliers.

"It has a name similar to that of our last place. Could that be the reason that there was some sort of a mixup?" I ask Bud.

"That sounds possible, George," he replies. "Anyway, now we're only 60 miles from the German-held city of Paris. We're getting closer, and that makes me happy."

The area that we're now in, is lower river drainage land. The valleys are wider and greener. By the same token, even the hills on each side are generally steeper and more prominent. It's on one of these hills with an east face, that we set up operations again today.

Before I try and get some more sleep or rest for our night's shift, several of our gang do a little exploring around the area. We go back down the road a short distance to watch some activity that's taking place in one corner of a large field to our east. There are about six large trucks and trailer rigs and a number of men working.

The weather today is threatening rain, and maybe that's what prompts Ken to ask what the rest of us had concluded. "It looks as if they're gathering a large pile of small logs for firewood." But then he reasons: "But why would they do that?"

We watch for a short time, and then it dawns on all of us at the same time. Communication by speaking was not necessary. This is a morgue receiving or transfer station. We silently go back up the hill. Although the physical destruction of the cities is much less than in the Normandy area, soldiers are still being killed. And for any of us over here, there is that potential danger.



Ken has a reply for him that's given, not with the idea of condemning, but rather with the idea of setting forth his own thoughts openly.

"You can express your belief that there's no God, but really what you are saying is that there's no other God than me. Someone has to be in charge of your life. It'll be interesting to hear your views when we get through with this war. I hope that you'll change, and put your faith and trust in the same God that we do."

I express my agreement with him and the others. The rap-session ends. It was strange, in a way, to hear supposedly tough soldiers talk in such an open manner. Had they grown soft or weak? I believe that these fellows could shoot and kill as well as any other soldier. But does that make them tough any more than drinking or cussing? I believe it takes more courage to express their beliefs as they did.

I'm awakened several times in the night by the drone of the German planes. Fear is still with me, but their discussions and talk about God did help.

It's another day, Saturday, the fifth of August, and the Jerries are still persistent in their flyovers. They still resemble a swarm of bees whose hive has been disturbed by a bear. All day long their planes continue to put fear into us as they size up the situation for the best way to attack.

I've just finished cleaning up after our evening meal, when I hear them again. I'm just getting ready to go on shift. "There are a bunch of



them, and they're coming in low from the west!" someone hollers.

I hear the explosions in the direction of Avranches as I dive for my foxhole. I have company on top of me - the lad who had thought it not worth his while to dig one has changed his mind. "This is no time to dilly dally," he cries. I crouch as low as I can. It's the same feeling that I had on the infiltration course. I'm paralyzed with fear, and try to dig deeper with my fingers. There's the whistle of a bomb, and I pray; "God give me just ten seconds more to live and for this to pass, and I'll be forever thankful."

There're no more explosions after that one, and it grows quiet for a few seconds. Then they return again - lower and on a strafing mission. One of the planes is spraying the field to our north with machine gun fire. He continues his firing as he approaches the hedgerow in front of our unit. We hear the bullets hit the earth - some "whine, whine," as they glance off of some hard object. Then it's the peaceful silence once more.

But the silence soon grows into the excited hum of voices as the men crawl out of their hiding places and check for any possible damage. "I got one hole in the fender of my truck!" one of the drivers announces, quite concerned.

"After all of that fireworks, and we only got one hit? How lucky can we be?" Someone proclaims.

"Lucky? Or God's protection?" I think out loud. And I know others share the same thoughts.



There are some speculative conversations going on. Would the enemy planes be back? Would this raid be followed by an Infantry advance to regain control of this town and isolate our troops again in the Cherbourg Peninsula? The later action would be the most likely. And if that's to be the case, will we retreat? We know that our only protection lies ahead with the strong armored units of the Third Army. It's an Army that's already after bigger prey.

The questions are soon answered for us by an order from the First Sergeant: "The CO says to have your equipment packed and loaded. We'll be moving out as soon as it's dark."

"Darkness," it can be an enemy, but it can also be an ally.

And it's dark when we start to roll with our convoy. Our drivers have been trained for night driving. We have small pilot lights on the trucks, and we follow bumper to bumper. The scene changes briefly as the road leads through the city of Avranches. Once again it's like daylight from the orange and red flames of the burning buildings on each side of us. Avranches is a city aflame - black smoke fills the air. We take off again on a dark road, and for a brief while we can look back at the glow of the city. Like a lost lamb hunting for its mother, we know that our protection lies ahead with the Third Army, to our east.

On two occasions we believe that we hear a plane overhead. We pass several places that look in the dark like they could have been towns, or piles of rubble. We could learn their names tomorrow, if we cared to. The road leads on in the dark, and it's after midnight when we pull into our new bivouac area.



We are soon in operations again. The time for our shift was spent in travel, and it's time for the night crew to take over operations. They lost some sleep on that move. With all of the activity, they should have a busy night, with lots of urgent traffic.

I spread my blanket out next to where Bud is, and try to get some sleep. There are some branches of taller trees overhead. All we can hear is the sound of the generators. But before the sound lulls me to sleep, I briefly review the past, fast-moving, events. It was a miracle that we escaped, and with a prayer I thank God for His protection.

Before breakfast on this Sunday morning, August 26th, some of the fellows from the night crew call a few of us into the HO to listen to the news on a spare receiver. It's from the Armed Forces Radio Network. They're coming in loud and clear. It's important for us to find out what is going on in the situation that we now find ourselves.

"The Allied Command announced this morning that elements of the German Army had recaptured the town of Avranches during the night. This action again contains the Allied forces to the Peninsula, and it now isolates units of the Third Army which breached their lines at this town on July 30th. In other news; Allied Warplanes...."

"That's us they're talking about, fellows," Bill emphasizes. And the word soon spreads around our unit. There's speculation.

"Our trucks were the last ones through!" What would it mean? There exists concern for our safety. "Will we be captured?"



But we did escape, and I made a promise to remember God daily with a prayer of thanks for getting us out of that situation, and for His continued protection.

Just as a lot of us have faith in God, we also have the knowledge of the power of our own forces. We've a powerful lot of armor ahead of us that's combined with our Airforce. And we also know that there're two French Divisions scheduled to join our Corps. With that knowledge, we can ask the question; "Who is cutting whom off?" By remaining in the area and trying to seal us off again, they are merely shortening their time for any means of their own escape. They are themselves being encircled. There are many German Divisions in this area, as our reports show. British and Canadian troops are moving down from the north, and we're moving around from the southeast. It'll be a bloody battle and many lives will be lost. But if they're captured it'll be a big prize, and Patton knows this.

"Here are some vital statistics for your diary if you want," Brad informs me soon after breakfast. "I'll try and mark them off on my map on each move and give them to you - the main ones where we stay anyway. If you want the names of some of the others, you can always get them later."

In our hurried exit last night we passed through five towns - or what was left of them. The names of the towns are Ducey, St. Hilair, Du Harcourt, Fougères, La Criexille, and St. Juen Des T. You can put them down later if you want to copy them from the map where I've circled. Of main concern for you is the place where we are now, and this is known as Olivert or Port Brillet. As you can see from the map



we're ten miles from the city of Laval which is located on the Mayenne River. We traveled nearly fifty miles last night, which places us about one hundred and fifteen miles from the Port of Cherbourg. Because of our triangular route of travel we're just about the same distance from Paris as when we started out from Omaha Beach.

"The news reports state that the town of Laval was captured - or maybe liberated is the word - just yesterday on August the fifth," Brad adds. "So you can see that we're keeping up with the whole gang."

"Thank you, Brad. While we may feel a little pessimistic about being cut off from the Peninsula temporarily, nothing has slowed down our drive so far. Anyway, we might as well stay optimistic about our situation."

"This seems like a river bottom area where we are now, and the Mayenne River is east of us. These rivers seem to flow south, which means that there are some hills to our north," he continues. "They must flow from the hills of Normandy. That's the area we'll be encircling if our drive keeps going the way it is. And that's the area the large number of German units are holed up."

"Thanks again, Brad," I reply. "We'll soon find out how our speculation turns out. For now, I'm going to get some rest while it's still peaceful. The other night showed us that you don't always know what to expect."

Our brief two-day stay at Olivert is relatively peaceful. At the same time we're having quite a lot of traffic coming from other large pockets of Germans - to our north as well as other directions.

The Nazi are occupied, so



maybe that's why we've had it more peaceful. Our other fronts continue to push, and we receive news that the Supreme Headquarters for the Allied Expeditionary Forces, or SHAEF, has moved their Headquarters to the continent at Cherbourg. And before we move on Tuesday morning August 8th, we receive the good news from our Radio Network, that the city of Avranches has again been retaken by our forces. That means that the area has been recaptured, and I don't believe there's much left of the city by now.

Our speculation is correct, and we're moving in the direction of the small industrial city of Le Mans. We pass through the small village of Vaiges on our route, and continue on toward the next town of St. Denis. There's the litter of war on each side of us.

The 3253 Signal Service Company has a very high priority rating for a unit that has very small fire power. Such a rating clears us for our travel on the road - sometimes too far as we learn today. We've traveled twenty-five miles and we're approaching the little town of St. Denis, which is about twenty miles east of Laval. We start passing some empty Infantry trucks, and then we pass some that are still unloading troops. Next we pass long columns of Infantry Soldiers spaced in battle formation of twenty feet apart, on each side of the road.

We pass the foot soldiers and proceed two miles further along the deserted looking road. We approach the small town whose quietness gives us cause for apprehension. Has our priority gotten us into trouble? Are we casually supposed to be passing foot soldiers? We would be a



dead Company if there's a machine gun waiting for us in ambush. As our trucks enter the city streets, and the identity of them can be seen, French civilians rush from their doorways shouting welcomes and warnings, as they wave their arms and point to the various buildings and barns surrounding their location. "La Bouch, La Bouch," or words to that effect, they shout as they point. Whether the words are cuss words or not, I don't know. But it's a word that we'll probably be hearing many more times. The international sign language that they use are words enough. There are Nazis hiding in those buildings for us to capture.

We wave back to the civilians while we keep a firm grip on our carbines. Our trucks don't stop and nobody gets out. We make what could be an illegal 'U' turn at the first intersection and head back in the direction of the approaching doughboys from the 79th, or 90th Divisions. We'll give them the credit for the liberation of that town - after all, that's their mission for today.

"And how lucky can we be?" Some of the fellows comment again. "That could have meant big trouble for us."

We make a strategic withdrawal of several miles behind our Infantry and set up operations a half mile off the road near a group of trees. "Did you notice anything strange about that town we were in today?" I ask Bud as we're about to start our evening shift.

"Nothing," he replies. "Except maybe we shouldn't have been there. Come to think of it, that's the first little town we've seen that wasn't completely demolished."



Our stay near St. Denis has been a busy one - for two days of copy. The Third Army is on the move again east and we're swept along with them. Our moves seem to be made about two days after the capture of a town. Today is Thursday, August 10th, and our new temporary bivouac area, for today, is called Sarge Des Le Mans. We're near a village called Neuville, but we're also close to the larger city of Le Mans. Notes from the diary relate that during the advance of the Fifteenth Corps from the Mayenne River to Le Mans, both of our flanks were exposed. Between these two points however, the 80th Division protected the communications of the Fifteenth Corps on the north side.

Le Mans was captured 082300. The Corps of Engineers built several bridges across the Sarthe River to the north of Le Mans, that our three Divisions followed by the 2nd French Armored Division, crossed on.

Our crew is working the day shift this week. I've escaped the garbage pit detail for awhile, and the digging of foxholes has not taken place. There're two reasons; we've been moving too fast, and while we've spotted a few planes, they've left us alone. I believe that they're too busy with their own problems.

And some of those problems we've seen early today on our travels. Although some of the towns are starting to escape total destruction, the other debris of war starts to show up in increasing quantity. There've been a number of German tanks, or panzerkampfwagens, on their sides and still burning. There were some burned out trucks and halftracks. And there have been a score of dead Germans besides their vehicles or along side of the ditch by the road.



"How about a pass, or trying to get us a furlough to Paris this week-end?" Bud asks me after we had enjoyed a nice evening meal served warm from our chuck-wagon. "Brad's map shows that it's only one hundred and fifteen miles to the big city."

"It sounds like a good thought, Bud," I reply. The only trouble is I don't believe they would spare us any time off, aside from the more serious aspect that Paris is still in German hands.

"Changing the subject slightly, do you know anything about this city of Le Mans that we're so near and yet so far from?"

"Just what I've heard mostly from news stories, and maybe some from school. You've probably heard the same. It's a rail and industrial center. There must be eighty thousand people living there. Automobiles, machinery of the heavy type, textiles, chemicals, and shoes are manufactured there. Of course there's the processing of all the other products, such as food, that keeps such a center humming.

"George, maybe our historian, Brad, could fill us in on some of the history. It's interesting, and you never know - we might not pass this way again."

"I don't know too much either, fellows," Brad relates. "I do know that it's an old city dating back to pre-Roman times. So it has many historic buildings dating back to those times. It has been the center of many wars, because of its location. This city was conquered by William the Conqueror during the Hundred Years War. There've been numerous other wars fought here, including the



Vendeems War, the Franco- German War in 1871, and of course, the present war.

"Oh, and another item that might be of interest, is an architectural showpiece. It's the cathedral of St. Julian, which was built in the 11th, and 12th centuries. some of the oldest stained glass in France is found here. The building also contains the tomb of a queen - Berangaria, Queen of Richard Couer De Lion. So now you know - and that'll give you something to dream about tonight, rather than planes and tanks."

"Thank you Bud, and Brad. The subject will give us something to think about anyway, even if we can't go to sleep. I wonder how you remember all of that information, Brad. You're a regular walking encyclopedia - or something."

"Well, you all are welcome fellows. We're on a free escorted tour, so we might as well get all out of it we can. I'll confess a little secret though; I do have a small travel guide of France that gives a brief history and description of the major cities. So if the information I give you is wrong, I have someone to pass the buck onto."

Conversation - that's one way to pass the time, and the subjects are many and varied. There are a few card games going on. And any spare time is also used to catch up on the work - to keep everything ready for the next move. It involves keeping the trucks gassed, greased, oiled, and in repair. The generators need gas and upkeep, and the receivers need checking. These are just a few of the jobs that seem endless. There's also some guard duty, and always a letter to write home. Come to think about it, we haven't received any mail for a while. I guess we're moving



too fast lately for it to keep up with us.

It's not too much work to get ready for bed, sometimes we don't even take our boots off. It's summer and we just pull a blanket over us and go to sleep. And sleep comes quickly, if the planes and other instruments of war leave us alone.

The next two days we see plenty of planes, but they're not German. There appears to be mass flights again of our fighters and bombers circling in the vicinity of the Hills of Normandy. This is the area of heavy German troop concentration, and it's now the area of heavy fighting.

Someone said that today is Sunday, but it seems like just another day since we've been working around the clock, and we've been working that way since we landed in France over one month ago. But since our convoy is on the road again today, I guess we could call this a Sunday drive - but we shouldn't. Today is August the thirteenth.

"Well George, are we going on our furlough to Paris today?" Bud asks again jokingly.

"Sorry to disappoint you, Bud, but we're heading north in the direction of the heavy fighting. You'll have to get a raincheck on that Paris trip. Our escorted tour is now leaving the vicinity of Le Mans which as Brad informed us is the Capitol of the Sarthe Department. Welcome aboard , everyone."

"Very good," Bud injects. "And you might add that since we're traveling nearly parallel to the Sarthe River towards the Hills of



Normandy, that we're actually being taken for a ride up the river."

"OK, Bud," I admit. "You win - you said it, and I won't try to top it."

We joke and laugh a lot. Maybe it's as good of a way as any when you can see death and destruction on all sides of you. We thought that the scene of destruction leading into the area by Le Mans was bad enough. "The Valley of the Shadow of Death," could be the name of the place where we are traveling along today. There's no set pattern for the destruction. Groups of wrecked vehicles can sometimes be seen, but it's generally in the terms of singles that we see them. It's as though they were traveling in battle formation. A group of burned out supply trucks can be seen in the ditch, some of them have been pulled by horses after being converted to that type of wagon. Dead soldiers are scattered around the field and in the ditch, and some of their bodies can be seen in the still smoking tanks or half-tracks. There's a chance that some of these destroyed vehicles could be ours, but they appear to be mostly German.

Our road follows parallel, but about two to eight miles east of the Sarthe River. While most roads may curve, as most roads over here seem to do, the river curves more yet. About half-way between Le Mans and Alençon, or fifteen miles, the river curves east enough to meet the road. Near this location there's another small village called Beumont Sur Sarthe. The location of the river is self-described. We continue northward. Although there are groups of trees especially near the river, most of the higher ground appears to have been used for agriculture of some sort, and it's more open type of land.



We appear to be heading for the city of Alencon. While we were still back near Le Mans, I glanced at Brad's little book regarding this city, just in case it would be on our route of travel. Alencon is the Capitol of the Department of Orne. It's located at the junction of the Sarthe and Briante Rivers, and about 36 miles north of Le Mans. Boots, bricks, and shoes are manufactured here. As early as 1665 the town was famous for the manufacturing of a fine lace called, "Point D' Alencon." There's weaving, bleaching, and printing done here. What interests me a great deal, since I'm a rockhound, is that a smokey quartz is found in this region. It's also known as the "Alencon Diamond."

Before we reach Alencon there is an area on our right or east that's posted as off-limits. It's known as the Foret De Rerseigne, and for whatever reasons - mines or whatever, it's bypassed by all units of our Corps.

"Well, Brad, it looks as if we've reached the city of Alencon. The book said that about fifteen thousand people live here. It's supposed to be at the junction of two rivers, but I don't see them. Of course, from the back end of this truck it's hard to see much of anything except where we've been".

"The book might not be right, either," he replies. "They say that there's a city here also, but all that I can see is one pile of brick after another."

Alencon is on a flat sloping area to the north - a plateau that leads up to the Hills of Normandy, about twenty-five miles northwest of us. Continuing on in the same direction, and the same distance of twenty-five miles there's the city of Argentan. When our troops have secured this



city, and the Canadian units who are approaching from the opposite direction, have secured the city of Falaise, it will leave a gap or escape route of only twelve miles for the Germans. This is the direction that our Armor and Infantry units are approaching. If the Germans should try and escape from this gap, there will be some very severe fighting, that would reflect in our interest.

The block after block piles of brick marks the location of the city of Alencon that was captured by our troops just yesterday on August the twelfth. The Corps of Engineers have heavy scoop shovels clearing piles of brick from the main street so that the convoys may pass by easier. We leave the city of rubble, and bivouac about two miles northeast on an open slope.

There's no natural camouflage protection for us, and it makes me feel like we are on display in a glass case. Our only safeguard is that the Luftwaffe is limited in number, and that they have their hands full with their own plight. From our glass view case, we can watch the war being fought before us, in the same perspective that a sports fan could watch a football game. Flight after flight of our planes circle an area and then dive-bomb their target. Occasional billows of smoke can be seen and there's the distant sound of explosions. Other targets are picked, and the procedure is repeated.

We've watch this display of power while getting the nourishment of a 'K' ration for lunch. The generators have by this time been connected to our HOs. I'm working the day shift, so I go in with the rest of our crew and start to work. I feel that the bombing will



continue for at least as long as it's light. If the bombs aren't killing the Nazi, it's putting the fear in them that'll last them the rest of their lives. If we can compare it in any way with the fear that their planes have put into us already, then we know that this is indeed true. But this is no time to feel sorry for them, as we have a job to do. There is urgent traffic coming in that will locate more targets for our Airforce, and some will reveal their plans and troop movements. The war goes on.

After our shift and dinner, we spend some time talking and watching the never-ending bombing in the Hills of Normandy. There are a couple of lone planes spotted, but they don't bother us. Whether they are German planes or some of our own observation planes for artillery spotting, no one seems to know. I go to sleep later in the evening under the stars, with the sounds of our generators, and the distant rumble of explosions.

In the morning the activity in the area where we saw it in the evening is less severe, but still quite active. Our nets on the day shift continue to keep us busy.

On the evening news we learn that Argentan has been captured today. During the push on this city, the 2nd, and 5th Armor Divisions with the 90th Infantry Division took part in it's capture. The 79th Infantry Division remained here and branched east, moving toward the town of Montagne. Today comes word that the 90th Infantry Division is to relieve the 5th Armor Division which will join the 79th Infantry Division for the eastward push.



The area where the two units remain near Argentan and north is known as the Falaise gap . The gap has a width of near fifteen miles which represents the only possible escape route of the strong German units, from a now nearly complete encirclement of them. It's certain that they won't surrender without quite a fight.

While these victories are good for the total war picture, each one represents a large toll of human lives for us as well as them . But it is the victories, or good news on the war effort by our forces, that's the deciding factor in bringing this holocaust to a finish. Some of the good news today comes from Southern France, where the Seventh Army, under the command of General Patch have started an invasion with some beach landings. Several new sectors in Western France have also been captured by other forces. This news over the radio is encouraging.

Tuesday morning of August the fifteenth, the convoy of the 3253 Signal Service Company is retracing its path through the brick rubble of Alencon. At the first junction of the road past these ruins, we turn to the east.

And our turn of direction brings an exclamation from Bud. "Yea!" He cries. "It looks like we're heading in the direction of Paris."

"Calm down, Bud," I reason. "There are still a lot of Germans in the 120 miles between here and Paris. Then too, we don't know if they'll give us a pass. The shock of seeing all of those girls would be too much for us to stand also. Seriously though, I'm very thankful that we're not heading the other direction towards the Falaise Gap."

The litter of war is still with us along the roadside, even though it has stopped smoking. We continue to stay on the high plateau region during the eighteen miles of travel to our new bivouac area of



operations. We're at a place on the map named St. Jouin De Blavon.

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Our stay here at St. Jouin De Blavon is as short as any that we've had. Just time for less than a day's copy, some warm food and some sleep.

On the sixteenth we're again traveling east. We pass the village of Montagne to a place called called Villiers. In this area we start to drop into a watershed that feeds the Eure River, and thus the Seine River to the north and west, which eventually drains into the English Channel.

It's time to once again set up operations. The generators are connected, and the day shift starts to work. "I guess that we can take our time in eating our 'Ks' today, Brad," I comment. "We're on the night shift so we'll have to try and get some sleep pretty soon."

"I've got a nice quiet place picked out for a bed," he replies. "We didn't go too far today. Bud was saying that he wanted to get a little closer to Paris. Sorry about that, Bud."

"I'm disappointed too, fellows," Bud agrees. "But at least we're heading in that direction."



"Get your gear packed and loaded. We're moving out in twenty minutes." This is the First Sergeant speaking with some new orders.

This will make the first time that we've made two moves in one day." I remark. "The only reason for it that I can see is that they've heard your complaint, Bud, and they're just trying to grant your wish - that is, if we keep going in the same direction."

With the trailers hitched on and the equipment reloaded we're once again on our way in the same direction, but a new location. It would be interesting to listen in on the discussion from the ones deciding to make such changes of locations - that would be with the CO, and the other officers. The location of our sites are determined with the cooperation of our Corps or Army. But a lot of things could come about that could effect the need for a change of location. One thing is certain; it would have to be in a definite spot that's known to them.

It's comforting to know that, even though the strength of our Corps has been cut in nearly half since Argentan, our south flank has been protected by the ~~Fifteenth~~<sup>XX</sup> Corps. They've been moving eastward from Le Mans to the Eure River. We have crossed the Eure River already near its source, and if we keep going in the same general direction, we'll continue to follow it as it curves and runs parallel with the Seine River for about thirty miles.

As we continue part two of our journey on this same sixteenth day of August we come to the small city Chateaufort En Thymerais. It's a small city with a big name, but there's a lot of crossroads here to make up for it. We continue across in the same general direction, much to Bud's delight.



Our new bivouac area for today has the name of St. John De Rebevilliers.

"It has a name similar to that of our last place. Could that be the reason that there was some sort of a mixup?" I ask Bud.

"That sounds possible, George," he replies. "Anyway, now we're only 60 miles from the German-held city of Paris. We're getting closer, and that makes me happy."

The area that we're now in, is lower river drainage land. The valleys are wider and greener. By the same token, even the hills on each side are generally steeper and more prominent. It's on one of these hills with an east face, that we set up operations again today.

Before I try and get some more sleep or rest for our night's shift, several of our gang do a little exploring around the area. We go back down the road a short distance to watch some activity that's taking place in one corner of a large field to our east. There are about six large trucks and trailer rigs and a number of men working.

The weather today is threatening rain, and maybe that's what prompts Ken to ask what the rest of us had concluded. "It looks as if they're gathering a large pile of small logs for firewood." But then he reasons: "But why would they do that?"

We watch for a short time, and then it dawns on all of us at the same time. Communication by speaking was not necessary. This is a morgue receiving or transfer station. We silently go back up the hill. Although the physical destruction of the cities is much less than in the Normandy area, soldiers are still being killed. And for any of us over here, there is that potential danger.



For our shift, we get in three night's of copy at this location before it's time to move in a northeast direction again. Our travels take us past the cities of Nogent Le Roi, Pavrolles, Boutigny, and Houdan. From the reports at our last bivouac area we knew that Houdan was captured less than two days ago, on the seventeenth of August. From Houdan, our road leads us in a more northerly direction toward the river Seine, and the larger city of Mantes Gaascourt which is itself built around the river like Paris. The city was captured just yesterday, on August the eighteenth, so there's still heavy fighting still going on around the area.

Our bivouac area, with threatening rain, is one hundred feet from the Seine River, at a spot on the map called Boissets. This place has a pasture-like setting similar in some ways like the one pasture we used for a bivouac back in Normandy. It's much greener here. The trees are still standing, and while there aren't as many cows, what few that can be seen, are at least walking around. Maybe all that would be needed to make a more serene picture is to have a milkmaid out there sitting on a stool and milking one of the cows.

In the lay-out of our site, the Seine River is on our north. It's a popular river that's associated with romance and songs like; "The Seine has gone a-wooing...." Now we should write a war song about the popular river. To the east of our camp is the open pasture, and to our south and west there are block patches of deciduous trees.



To make the scene more complete, the milkmaid that I was mentally picturing out in the middle of the pasture, actually does come out there and is now starting to milk a cow.

In the evening after a good warm meal and some rest, I ask Bud how he likes this pretty French setting. "Isn't this what you've always dreamed about, Bud. And to make it better, we're only 35 miles from Paris, just up a curvy little river. Maybe we'll all get passes soon."

"This isn't quite how I pictured it, George," he replies. "Maybe the scenery is pretty, but well - I've changed my mind. They didn't have to go to all of this trouble just because I wanted to go to Paris. We have a machine-gun set up to the east of us only 200 feet. It sounds like there are a half a dozen artillery pieces set up within three blocks of here. They're firing continually. I haven't heard this much noise since Omaha beach. Poor Cognac, she hasn't stopped shivering since we've been here."

"I know, Bud," I reply. "But all of this will be worth it, just to see the grand old city. Seriously though, I hope that most of this fire keeps going out and not much of it is returned."

We didn't get much sleep before going on with our night shift. It's still noisy as well as scary. But it's a good prompter to remind me to give another one of my nightly prayers of thanks to God, and ask Him for his continued protection.

The noise of the artillery continues throughout the night on our shift, most of it is going out. For a variety though, that noise was mixed with



the sounds of rolling thunder and rain. Every so often I have songs that keep running through my head - maybe I hear them earlier on the radio. On this night, the song is : "Three Little Fishes - and they swam, and they swam all over the dam." But I guess maybe I can blame everything on that score, on the noise of the river and the rain.

Before leaving the HQ in the morning I've time to listen to the news. "There's still heavy fighting in the Falaise Gap area." This is the first of two important news items heard. "General Patche's Seventh Army continues to make important gains up from the Southern France sector." It's all good news, as far as the over-all war news is concerned.

And today is a nice sunny day with no more rain in sight. The artillery however continues its serenade. It's going to be a warm day, by the way that it's starting out. I feel grimey from having to sleep with my clothes on for such a long time. Such a feeling calls for one of those quickie type baths. I have a helmet with hot water, some soap, a wash rag, and a towel. Also a change of underwear and some socks. I find some privacy in a clump of trees to our south, and start to work. About two blocks away in the pasture, the milk-maid is also going about her daily chores of milking her cows.

From out of the northwest comes the sound, and then the sight, of a low flying plane. It's following along the bed of the river and is approaching our bivouac area. There's machine-gun fire from our gunners, and as the plane comes closer there's unmistakable German markings visible. Our gunners continue their fire on the plane which is already starting to emit smoke. The muzzle of the gun turns white-



hot as it continues to fire at point blank range. The gunners reverse their direction of fire as the plane passes over them. The plane goes into a long gliding descent and crashes about a half mile beyond where the girl is continuing to milk the one cow in the pasture. I continue my bath, and wash out a few things - then return to camp. The serenade of the artillery continues. this is war - but still somewhere in between all of it there's just a little humor as life goes on.

All day long, and throughout most of the following night, the bombardment from the artillery continues. By morning however, things are relatively quiet. The gunners have evidently moved forward to new positions. I guess that is as good of a cue as any for us to move also. We have reports that our 5th Armored Division have been ordered back from their forward position, to an area southeast of Mantes Gaassicourt. They are making way for some British units that are advancing from the other direction. In consideration of these reports, it's most likely that we'll be retracing our path back south for a short distance. With such a maneuver there'll be the need to have time for regrouping. The next big push will continue to be east in the direction of Germany, it's our only way home.

We hear some news on the Armed Forces radio Network concerning the front that we're on. It's news that most of us knew, but the confirmation by the radio makes it interesting. "The city of Mantes Gaassicourt was captured on August 18th, with the Allies establishing the first bridgehead over the Seine on the night of August 19th-20th."

Today is August 21th, and our convoy is circling back south on another road. We go past the little town of Longnes, for a distance of not



over eight miles. Our new site is one that resembles an old river bed. There's some gravel and lots of small trees. For identification the place is named Favrieux.

A break for regrouping doesn't mean that the war is over by any means. For as long as the war goes on, anyone in that war zone is subject of being a target by the enemy, and the enemy can be anywhere. Aside from that fact, the environment for us here at Favrieux seems pretty nice. Except for the noise of our generators, it's quiet enough for Cognac, and the rest of us to stop shaking a little. And here for the first time in nearly six weeks, we're afforded the luxury of a shower. Our thanks go to the quartermasters. It's a small portable field outfit heated by gas. Oh, there are the regulations regarding its use; you get wet, turn it off and soap up, and then turn it back on to rinse off.

It's big news and something to write home about. "Somewhere in France, I had my first shower! And it wasn't rain, either." I wrote the one letter and got two in return. The mail is catching up with us again. All of the news from home was, or seemed good, and I'm glad to receive the letters. The news in the letters represents the other side of the war on the home front, from the families of one hundred and fifty men. Such news can't always be good. But whatever the trouble; death, sickness, or broken homes; we know that life goes on there, too, and all that we can do from here is to pray for the best.

The two Jewish boys from New York seem to fare pretty well on their mail call. Besides their letters, they get another box of goodies from home to keep their little locker full. That represents a lot of



love, as does the mail that any of us receive. And how about the lad who's writing a letter a day? Well, he's still keeping up with his schedule, and he has a lot of back mail to read at this location.

During our stay here we continue to keep up with the war news besides that of our intercept. On August the 25th, there's news the German forces in Paris surrendered to the French Second Armored Division. This is the Division that was with us for awhile. This marks a big morale victory for the Allies.

And there's news of other victories also. After very heavy fighting in the Falaise Gap region, the Germans on August 27th, surrendered to our units. It's estimated that 15,000 prisoners were taken, or 12 to 14 of the German Divisions destroyed or captured. This represents a big victory, and it will be a determining factor in the next moves that we'll be making. General Eisenhower also issued a report on the total invasion effort to date. It lists five Panzer Divisions, and twenty German Infantry Divisions destroyed. It also lists their casualties as over 400,000 dead, wounded or captured. And the report tops it off by saying that 2,500 of their planes had been destroyed.

We've a little cause for celebration in our own outfit when Lt. Belou reads a letter of commendation praising one of our intercept operators for having identified a German operator from his fist on the key of his radio transmitter. Such identification from a previous encounter or copy from the operator, now established the fact that his unit has relocated and regrouped. We're all happy to learn of any good that our outfit is doing, and we give our operator an applause at this assembly.



Everyone has heard about the German's idea concerning their so-called super race. To fulfill this fanatic desire, they have carried out a war of total destruction of any race that doesn't meet a set standard that they've established. A big part of their education was spent toward the effort in identifying the profile and features of the 'true' German. All of the others - the Jews and such, were to be eliminated. We can hear about it, but it doesn't always sink in until someone has a personal encounter with such Germans. But even in our own outfit?

Our German interpreter speaks with a German type accent, but I didn't hold that against him. I was getting dressed one day after having a shower when I noticed that he was sizing me up. "Are you Jewish?" He inquires as if it were an everyday question.

"Not that I know of," I reply. "Not any more than you, and not that it matters. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I was just wondering," he replies.

He didn't have to give me his reason, for his question had already answered that. It was on his mind, and that is what he had been thinking. This was actual the first time that he had spoken to me, but that one question put some suspicion of loyalty on him that I would not soon forget.

On August 29th, after being here for eight days, we're once again on the move and retracing our way back past the cities of Houdan and Gambais. Our bivouac for the rest of the day and overnight is called Bourdone.



On Wednesday morning August 30th, we're moving in a southerly direction through the town of Rambouillet to the town of Ablis. From here we travel in an easterly direction through the villages of Estampes, and Milly to the town of Fontainebleau. From this town we change our direction of travel to north or northeast. We go past the towns of Machault, Breau, Mormant, and Ozouer Le Repos to the town of Rosoy En Brie. This is a very pretty name for a town, but most of the French towns seem to have very pretty or descriptive names. Our place of residence is called Courpalay.

And this is a very pretty little place, or maybe it should be called an estate. There's one larger Chalet-like structure, with others of the same design grouped around. The larger structure has only recently been damaged a little by what looks like the results of an incendiary bomb. There're many large trees including evergreens around the area. We've seen many places similar to this on our travels today. Our journey today has taken us on a half circle path of an average radius of 35 miles from the center of Paris. It's no doubt, that many of these Chateaus had formerly belonged to wealthy Parisians. Less than a week ago this region was in German control, and some of these fancy places were occupied by them.

"Well, Bud, we're a little closer to Paris than we were. We've traveled over a hundred miles today, but we're still not any closer than 30 miles to the city of Paris. I think they're just tempting us."

"I think you're right, George," he replies. "And to emphasize the point, Lt. Jones has issued an order stating that although this may be considered a rest period for awhile, there'll be no passes to Paris."



And although we joked about going to Paris, we knew that there was enough trouble there without us adding to it. Paris is a big city, and it's hungry. There's already an almost endless caravan of Army tractor-trailer rigs hauling food supplies to them. We've seen some of them in our travels today.

Brad seems to be the one to bring us any announcement of interest, as he does today on September the first. "We're going to have a chance to see the "Dinah Shore" show," he announces. "Most all of us will have a chance to see it."

"That sounds great," Bud agrees. "I guess maybe that we're close enough to Paris to say that we saw the show there - by stretching it just a little."

Most of us got to see the show, but a few had to stay back and tend shop, as there's still a war going on, and messages to be intercepted. The show itself was great as everyone agreed. The last show of this type that I saw, was the Irving Berlin show in Belfast, Ireland. But there're gals in this show, so in some ways maybe it's a bigger attraction for the soldiers who at this time would love nothing better than some female companionship. Maybe that accounts for the large crowd. The building was a large place, and it was a long ways up to the stage - of course we were at the back. But it was nice to see someone besides soldiers, and as for Dinah; she's well known and liked. Her picture must be with many a soldier.

Now that Paris is again a free city, and shows like this can fly in, there are sure to be more such shows in the near future. But Paris has been free for only a short time, and there's still the danger of air



attacks by the enemy to any such troupe of entertainers. It's really quite a risk for such nice volunteers. That they're appreciated, is evident. For us soldiers, we'll soon be on our way again with just nice memories. For most of us the show will just increase our desire to get on with the war so that we'll soon be home to a half way normal life again.

Our stay at Rosoy En Brie can be considered a rest period. We saw a nice show, there is mail from home, and we have a chance to clean up again with showers, and wash out some clothes. But really, our delay gives the other fighting units a chance to regroup. The French 2nd Armored Division is again joining up with our 79th Infantry Division ahead of us near the city of Troyes. It's southeast from here. Also at this time the Seventh Army is pushing up from the south. We'll join them in the new drive east and become a part of the Seventh rather than the Third Army.

The length of our stay at Rosoy En Brie resembles the length of our stay at St. Martin D' Aubigny just before the big push of the Third Army through Avranches. We've been here for nine days.

Today is September the ninth, as we head in a southeasterly direction away from the city of Paris. We pass the towns of Jouey Le Chatel, Chenoise, St. Hilliers, Provins, to Nogent Sur Seine. As the name of the town indicates, it's located on the Seine River. At this point the river is about sixty miles upstream from the Paris vicinity where we were at Rosoy En Brie. We continue to follow the road east on the same general course of the river, to the town of Lery Sur Seine. From this point the river goes on up in a southeast direction to the city of Troyes.



We leave the Seine River as our road takes us east to the town of Lusigny Sur Barse.

The towns we passed through today showed the signs of hit and miss war. You could tell where the fighting had taken place, and what had been missed. There wasn't the total destruction that we had seen earlier in Normandy, France.

"Just what does your little travel guide say about the big city of Troyes that we went through awhile back?" I ask Brad after we had set up our operations.

"That was a pretty nice city, or what we could see of it, anyway. I believe that this is the first place where there was a small crowd of people lining the streets to welcome us. I'm not counting the town that we went through before the Infantry, however.

"But back to your question and the book. It tells us that Troyes is located 104 miles southeast by east of Paris. It has a population of 40,000, and there are two principal buildings of historic note in the city. There's a Cathedral that was first built in the ninth century, and there's the Church of St. Urban. Cotton, linen, and woolen goods are manufactured here. Since this is the center of a large agricultural region, there's much trade in those commodities also. And that's it."

"Thank you Brad," I acknowledge.

"You're studying that man real hard, bud," I comment. "What lies ahead for us?"

"I was looking at the terrain up ahead, fellows," he replies. "No matter



which road we take, we're going to have to curve around a lot of hills or valleys. It looks like there could be a lot of hiding places for the Germans. The land seems to flatten out more as it reaches the higher plateau region that leads up to the Vosges Mountains. And Switzerland is only about 200 miles southeast of here. That sounds great for a trip!"

"So, it's going to be Switzerland now, instead of Paris?" I ask him. "Sure, the trip sounds good. But I believe that they've bought our tickets already for Germany. And that country, by some coincidence, is also only 200 miles away."

Now that we know where we are on the map, we have a limited idea as to where our next move will be. There's always a lot of 'ifs' involved in any of these war situations. The French Armored Division is patrolling the area to our south, and the 79th Infantry Division is moving east from our north. The French farmers or civilians in the region can be very helpful in locating pockets of Germans. But as a self-contained unit we must keep alert with a guard for our own protection.

This is hilly country with valleys, which means that we must pick hilltop locations for our reception of intercept. As far as security is concerned, being up high has its good points as well as bad. But one thing is certain, we sure get an overall picture of the war from this high perch. Our crew is working nights again, and this afternoon before getting some needed rest, we can see smoke rising from a spot where our artillery has zeroed in on an enemy target. And



later, a group of our fighter planes can be seen dive-bombing the same place. There has also two groups of larger bombers flying past our location to larger German targets.

On September 11th, we're on our way again, northeast about fifty miles to a place on our map named Wassy or Vallerest. The Marne River lies eight miles to the east. On our trip today we went through the towns of Vendeuvre, Brienne Le Chateau, and Montier En Der. Our bivouac is on the top of a hill again. It seems to be a pretty good indication that the terrain will be hilly when we see a town with the name 'Mont' connected with it.

Several of our group take one of the exploring trips around the perimeter of our new quarters. We can look down on the valleys that are on either side of our ridge. It's rich looking farm land that follow these river low lands. They form a checker board pattern, with the different crops.

"I think I hear an airplane!" Bill cautions as we near the east end of the ridge.

We search the sky for awhile, and then Ken sights it. "There it is below us on the north!" He exclaims.

It's a german plane traveling low in the valley to avoid detection and anti-aircraft fire. We stay partially hidden under some trees until after it had passed, and then we proceed back to camp.

On September 14, the 2nd French Armored Division establishes contact with units of the Seventh Army at Baigneux and Chatillon. Liaison was first established at Combernon on September 11th. These reports



were made known after their action against the enemy on 13 September 1944.

Our 3253rd Signal Service Company leaves Wassy on the morning of Wednesday, September 13th.

Today marks the period of two months since our arrival on the continent, but no one seems to notice the event. We are traveling south and east, crossing the Marne River at Joinville. The 79th Infantry Division had rushed through this town just three days before. From here we travel northeast to Houdelaincourt, then southeast past Condrecourt, Gruex, Dommeny to Coussey. We're near a little larger town by the name of Neufchateau. There're a lot of early Roman Catholic Churches located in this region.

From Coussey we curve back up around another valley, north past the towns Harchechamp, and Removille to another hill top location called Aouze. The name of the town sounds wet, and it is threatening rain.

The town of Neufchateau was captured just the day before, and we have traveled ten miles past there to this location. This confirms that we're keeping right up with the front. From our bivouac area on this hill our group does some more exploring and we come across the scene of a recent battle. There are bits of flesh still scattered around. "Some of the pieces are bits of brains," Ken comments. "I've seen them before."

We take his word for that fact, and we don't stay around any longer for any further investigation. Our bivouac area about two blocks away is a little nicer. This is the night that our shift changes hours, and we take over the graveyard shift - oh, don't say that, night shift sounds better.



We leave Auoze the next morning, September 14th, and wind or 'ooze' our way around some more hills and valleys, northeast to a small town. Then we travel southeast past the village of Aroffe, and then back northeast again through the towns of Tramont, Lassus, Pecocourt, to Vandeleville. The road swings just a little more east, past Eulmont, and Vaudemont to our bivouac area named Sion. The route sounds like a broken record with the winding road following around the many hills. While it would only be about 27 miles straight across in an easterly direction, we traveled close to fifty miles. It must have been someone around here that wrote the popular song of; "It's a long, long trail a winding into the land of my dreams."

This region is noted for the many early Roman Catholic Churches established here. There's one of them located near our camp named the Notre Dame De Sion. I haven't seen it, but from what the map shows, it's on a hill, a short distance to the north of us. Our operations are set up on a gentle south slope in a nice wooded area for camouflage. We're up high, but not on top. It's more open to our east, so we should have good radio reception.

This is the middle of September, and there's a fall chill in the air. We've had some rain in some of the other areas, and it's threatening rain again here at Sion. The approach of fall and winter weather generally means bad news for the soldier - especially the foot soldier of the Infantry. Sleeping cold, or having wet feet for long periods of time can spell lots of trouble. Many of the Infantry soldiers have been issued sleeping bags already for cold weather protection. With the issue of the bags, there has arisen some unforeseen trouble. During some night attacks by the enemy, many of the soldiers haven't been able



to get out of their bags in time, and they have been slaughtered. They're exchanging the bags again for blankets, so maybe we'll be the lucky recipients of the bags. Of course, they'll be warmer and we don't have the fears of any night attacks by the enemy - or do we? Of course we could leave them partially unzipped, just in case. We've always slept with our carbines by our sides for that possibility.

As it has been our practice again lately, we set out for an exploring trip around our area. There're some other groups that set out in different directions and for various reasons. For some it was a good excuse to hunt for some wine or cognac from some French farmer. It's starting to sprinkle and so our wandering is rather limited, and we return to camp. Another group has been gone a little longer, and their return causes a bit of excitement for awhile.

"Stalneker, Mahoney, and Gallo have just captured 37 prisoners," Andre informs us.

They are taken to an area down the road away from camp where they'll be guarded by some more men. Later they'll be transported to Infantry Headquarters for interrogation.

"How do you say 'surrender, throw down your arms, and raise your hands', in German, Andre?" I ask, and he answers:

"Ergen sie sich! Waffen niederlegen! Hande hoch!" Just as if he had been studying it, or was German.

Of course, we're all supposed to know those phrases, and if not, we always have the little phrase book that was issued to us.



We know from our reports that a Regiment from the 79th Infantry Division had cleared the area to our north by the 11th of September, but in the area to our south there has been more resistance. It was only with the aid of the northern Regiment, that it was cleared by September 15th.

As the rainy days continue , our troops continue their advance. On September 17th, I intercept a German cleartext message indicating that 'amerikanische soldaten' were advancing on their defences at Nancy, which is a town about twenty-five miles to our north. With such communications from them we're able to determine the location of our own troops, as well as learn some of their plans for defence.

Rain with dirt on the ground, combined with 150 soldiers in a confined area, can only result in extreme muddy conditions. It goes with the old saying that a griping soldier is a happy soldier, or something like that. One night after wading through the mud back to our tent following our shift, I find that Bud had already taken off his boots, and was already in his bag. We speak a few words as I enter the tent. I take off my rain coat, and then I lean out the front of the tent to take off my muddy boots. There's a lot of merit in at least trying to keep a clean tent and bed. Bud couldn't resist a temptation after seeing that I was bent over and having trouble taking them off. He coils up his feet behind me inside his bag, and then he uncoils. I land in the mud with one hand, but I'm able to wipe most of that off. I take my other boot off and get in bed. We laugh about it. Maybe it was time we both had a furlough, but the incident seems to fit right in with the crazy conditions we now find ourselves in.



Even after a few days of rain and mud, it begins to seem like a bad dream if we don't kid a little to relieve the pressure of such a life.

The rains continue as we leave our little mud wallow on September 19th. Maybe we'll get into something just as bad. We head east around some more hills and valleys. There're still Germans out there, and the war must go on. As I think about that, I reflect back to the capture of the Germans at our last camp. They gave up, but what would have happened if they had preferred to fight and strike at night? It's always comforting to feel the closeness of my carbine at all times. But it seems like a stronger comfort to have a God to whom I can give thanks and depend upon for protection under these present conditions. Yes, I still remember Avranches, and I go to sleep every night with a prayer.

The road on our travels today takes us through the towns of Forcelles, Housseville, Marainville to the city of Charmes on the Moselle River. The city and the surrounding area was cleared by our forces just four days ago, on September the 15th. It's a good size town, with some manufacturing buildings, and a good size area of residential district. The people are in a celebration mood with the liberation of their city, and line up on the side to wave to us. Our convoy has stopped for awhile - for some unknown reason, maybe our copilot had to recheck the map to find the next road. Some nice-looking French girls blow some kisses to us. The temptation is just too much for about a dozen fellows - some from our truck. They leave their guns and jump from the trucks. They rush over to where the girls are, and cash in on the blown kisses for some real ones with some strong hugs. The little



interlude of affection is broken up as our convoy starts to pull away. They run to jump on the trucks. "Merci, Mademoiselle!" They yell.

"Hey, we could write a song about that, Bill," I quip. "I met a Mademoiselle on the Moselle River. How about that?"

"I think we all need a rest, George," he answers curtly.

Our convoy turns north and we proceed about five miles north, parallel downstream with the Moselle River to a small town by the name of Socourt. The valley along this river is much wider than some of the smaller ones that we have just passed through in the last weeks. It resembles the Seine and Eure River valleys west of Paris. Our new bivouac grounds is also similar to our camp at Favrieux in that region. There's more gravel around, which will be beneficial to us with the threatening rains.

The weather has cleared up for awhile with the sun trying to break through as we're starting to set up camp and operations. It's nice to put up the pup tents while it isn't raining. It'll also give us a chance to air out our bedding and clothes. They might even dry out if the sun stays out.

"Hurray!" Bud shouts. "Anyone who's not on shift can go on the trucks to a mobile field shower location."

It's good news - a chance to wash off some of the mud and maybe even wash out a few clothes. We climb into the trucks and take off for a location somewhere near the city of Charmes.

The days pass at Socourt, and raincoats seem to continue to be the



order for the day. But we're fortunate that we've a warm dry place to work, and a dry place to sleep in our tents.

There are promotions made in the field and our Commanding Officer is the recipient of one. He's now Captain Jones. The fellows are all happy about it and give him a big hand. He deserves the promotion, and it's nice now to have a Captain in charge of our Company. Like many of the officers in combat, he keeps a low profile, but he's always there looking out for the men. There's one thing that I had taken notice of before, and that is, he has been always the last one in the chow line to eat. It's a practice that helps to establish that all of the men will have equal rations or meals - even the last one in line. It's just a little thing maybe, but it shows a lot of consideration.

Maybe it's in honor of the event, or it's just by coincidence that we hear the news: "The trucks are leaving at one-thirty for the Bing Crosby Show. Anyone that's not on duty and wants to go, be on time."

We had heard for some time about the show - two days ago. I had always liked his singing, and had looked forward to going. Luck is with me today, as we have the evening shift, and I'm not on duty.

Our large group of Crosby fans arrive at Charmes, and find that the entertainment is being held in a very large building that had formerly been used for the manufacture of auto or machinery parts of some sort. Many of the parts can be seen lying around. The building is packed with GIs. The whole 15th Corps must be here, some are sitting, but most of us are standing. Unlike the Dinah Shore Show, this appears to be an all male cast of entertainers. But Bing is a big name in show business - he's well-liked, and well received, with a thunderous



applause. He has a nice orchestra and they play and sing some of the old favorite songs. Of course Bing makes several jokes about his pal, Bob Hope.

About half way through his show there's a slight interruption as we hear the "Ka-Boom" of the anti-aircraft guns nearby. Everyone stays put, and Bing relates several stories to us about some near-misses that their troupe has had during their trip. In one story he tell about a German fighter plane that took out after their transport.

It's still September but that doesn't stop Bing from closing his show with the old favorite that he has made famous: "White Christmas." He gets a standing ovation as he concludes his program - of course, many of the fellows were standing already.

The rains continue at Socourt, and our stay stretches into two weeks. It was wet, but fortunately not muddy.

It's on the morning of October 3rd that our convoy is again proceeding north, parallel with the Moselle River to the city of Bayon. Here we cross the river to the east, and then continue on past the village of Lamath to the larger city of Luneville. The city is on the west slope of a wide valley - the high side is on the west. There're two separate rivers that divide the city; one on the north flowing west, and the other on the west and flowing north. These two rivers join at a place located a couple miles northwest of the city.

In our travels today we have covered a distance of twenty-five miles from Socourt to this location. We wind our way through some of the city streets to the hill on the west. Some of the French people wave to us,



while a few others seem to hang their heads. They have bald heads also - they are women. "That's their punishment for having fraternized or helped the Nazi." Bill comments. "I've heard that they do that, but it's the first evidence I've seen of it."

We proceed west to the top of the hill and pull off into a parking area just short of the top, and still on the west slope with the city. We're king of the hill again, and we should get some good reception for our radios, as well as another ring-side seat for the war that's going on all around us.

Our operations are set up, but now where do we put our pup tents?

The question is answered by the announcement: "This'll be our first indoor quarters for the winter. Your sleeping places will be in these small buildings. Try and keep the same shifts together if you can."

What these buildings have previously been used for, I guess it really doesn't matter. We sweep them out a little, pick out a wooden bunk-bed and we have a place to reside. "Let it rain." But then I think about the poor Foot Soldier out there in his foxhole and I cancel out that thought. However, if it did rain, we would have a new supply of clean water. The roofs on all of the buildings form a collective system and all of the water drains into some rain barrels. We could then have nice soft rain water to wash with - quite a luxury.

Sleeping inside does have some benefits as well as some drawbacks for us. Sleeping in the rain, in our tents, no one had a cold, but now that we're inside of buildings, everyone has the sniffles.

The Seventh Army has a wide front to advance on, and clear. It seems



that our stay here may be for an extended period of time.

It's time to write another letter home. Our Captain had informed us earlier that we could have a camera and take some pictures of the country if we wanted to. So with that in mind, this letter is a good chance to ask Mom to send me a camera and some film. If she's able to send one right away, maybe it could catch up with me before we leave Luneville.

Our extended stay here gives us a chance to catch up on our social life. For a few, contacts for a fresh supply of wine or cognac are found. There's a limited chance for some of us to try out our limited French that we've been practicing lately. Of course, there're some men in our outfit who speak French fluently. Then there's the opportunity for some of our gang to takes walks into town and spend some of our French francs for the first time. Of course, we always go as a group for company, as well as a safety precaution.

I buy some maps of the surrounding country on one of my big spending sprees. At another time I purchase some picture postcards. It's no big deal to make the purchases with the invasion money. The shopkeepers are mostly honest and helpful. Some of these merchants even speak English. If our communications with the spoken language fails, we resort to the universal language of arm or hand signs. The maps that I purchased show in better detail, some of the twisting roads that we had recently traveled over.

The postcards of Luneville show "10 Vues choisies." There's a general view of the city, with the captions of course, all being written in French. There're three views of Le Chateau; one showing just the building, one is with a park or garden, and one shows the street and



park leading up to the Chateau. There's a picture of the statue of General Lasalle, a couple of other park scenes, and a picture of a church called: "Eglise Saint Jacques." Another picture shows an old building called: "Maison du XVIII- siecle." And there's an air view of the Chateau and the surrounding buildings. They're all beautiful pictures that were taken by photographers in the city, and printed here. So, they do some very artistic work in this little town.

I receive an invitation with a couple of other fellows to have coffee at a French home. The hospitality is wonderful, but I do have some reservations about the coffee. Quoting a German word, it's "ersatz" coffee in a thick paste form to which we add some cream and just a little water. But that doesn't spoil our good time - some of our gang speak French so there is communication.

We have another invitation for a complete meal. It's nice again to have some French speaking soldiers in our company. We enjoy a nice meal topped off with some cherry pie. While eating the pie I start to have some stomach cramps which reminds me for a while of my episode at Fort Douglas. But this time the cramps do go away, for which I'm very thankful. Our hosts have been wonderful. We leave early, and thinking that our hosts might feel hurt, we explain to them in French that I don't feel too well.

And of course there are some romances flourishing also, or at least some of the girls either thought or hoped so. Some of the guys are faithful to a wife and marriage back home. But for some of the fellows it's a case of love them and leave them in these new affairs. Most of the French girls have very rigid discipline in regards to dating. To most of



them, love goes with marriage and it's a one time affair. On a visit to town one day, I'm introduced to one of the fair ladies. She's already possessed with the fear that the soldier she's been dating will soon be leaving and she won't see him again. She makes a vow that if he does not return to her after the war then she would join a convent. All of us knew that the soldier was already married, and had no intentions of coming back after the war. The plot has all of the makings that one could hear on a soap opera. To add to the drama, maybe a little out of sympathetic reaction, and then maybe because she's a very pretty young French girl, I ask her if she would please give me her name and address so that I could write to her.

She consents, and starts saying what it is. After seeing the trouble that I was having in writing it -I was lost with the spelling - she decides to write it down for me; "Mademoiselle J. Troestler, 10 Place Des Carmes, Luneville, Mthe et Melle, France," she writes

"Merci, Mademoiselle," I tell her as we leave.

Yes, she's real pretty, and then - you never know. But I do know that the outcome between her and the soldier will turn out to be rather sad. There's liable to be a lot more broken hearts before the end of this war. But then again, some may flourish like the one between Brown and the English girl that he keeps writing to.

With all of the social activities we're writing home about, they won't believe that there's a war going on." I tell the gang back at camp.

"Have a cigar, George," Bud greets me for an answer. "Maybe you're right."

"Oh, no, Bud!" Don't tell me ... " I reply



"Don't get any wrong ideas," he interrupts. "But we do have our share of social life -it's Cognac. The Sergeant looking after her, left some cigars. If you don't smoke he said you could give it to someone that does. Cognac's the proud mother of nine pups. So the 3253rd Signal Service Company does get around socially - at least one member."

We hurry outside and approach the litter with caution, as we don't want to disturb the new mother. The pups are cute, and she's proud to show them off - at least to us.

But social life or not, the war goes on even for us. Intercept messages keep coming in as our fronts change positions. One of our missions is to search for one of General Patton's Third Army Armored unit. It's been missing for some time now. He didn't stop his advance where he was ordered to do so. How can an Army unit get lost? But it is lost, and we finally locate the units through some intercept messages from some German troops that have made contact with his forces. The High Command isn't going to like that episode. But maybe that's how wars are won. He was under orders just like the rest of us are, and we wonder if we could disobey his orders in the same way.

There's a German railroad gun that we've been trying to get a fix of location on - this is a priority. Then we have some other targets to locate and more information to gather.

On November the 15th, just in time to break up the routine, I receive a package from home. It's the camera and several rolls of film. "Thanks, Mom, and everyone on the home front!"

There's also guard duty in this war. There's one post around camp, and one along the road on top of the ridge. I'm generally assigned to walk



the road on the ridge. The time seems to be at night with a fog to cope with. At such a time faith in God and a prayer comes in handy. Cognac used to walk the post with me and I liked having her, but she is busy with her pups now. In the fog I can't see very far, and every noise seems to magnify itself with the moisture on everything. If there's trouble all that I can hope to do is get out a warning shot. And I do hear sounds out there in the bushes by the side of the road. I stop walking and listen for awhile -it's probably just a small animal. Once again all that I can hear is the sound of my own walking, and perhaps the slight pounding of my heart. Then at long last, my tour ends without incident, the dawn breaks with the sun, and the fog disappears.

There have been some warnings issued regarding an increase in German spy activity around our area. We've been told that we're to take special precautions. Some of their work includes the planting of booby traps on vehicles. Defense has already been taken for protection against wire that's strung at head height across the road at night. Some of the warnings are repeated in our Stars and Stripes Newspaper.

The newspaper is published once a week, and this edition has been printed in the cities of New York, Paris, and London. So our paper must come from Paris. There are the comics that everyone reads: Lil Abner, Terry and the Pirates, and Hubert. In addition there's the war news in case we don't hear it all on the radio. A map shows the war from just a little east of where we are, to a line north to Belgium and Holland, and south to Switzerland. Churchill says: "Big Allied Blows to Open Last Lap." A story tells of the British landings in Holland taking the foe by surprise. And there's news about the Pacific War also: "Toll Rises for Routed Jap Fleet."



In recent articles there has also been news regarding a new weapon of war created by the Germans called the "V2," a flying missile or bomb. It has been shown in comic form lately depicting its predicted failure. It shows Hitler shooting one off with a caption underneath saying: "I shot a V2 in the air, it fell to earth, I know not where - I lose more V2s that way." While it might have some short comings at this date, it could also prove to be a very dangerous weapon. It requires no pilots.

And to those who don't want to read any more war news, there's the sports section. There's also news about a new film depicting the life story of the war correspondent, Ernie Pyle. He's well liked, and noted for the help that he's given the soldiers through his articles. Then last but not least, our paper always has a pin-up girl. This time it's "Hedy La-Ma" - that's right, she's expecting a baby.

But the war does go on as our paper states. We can watch the daily bombings and shellings along the front. We can see our planes circle an area, and then watch the smoke rise from the hits. It'll grow quiet in one location, then on another day we can see the scene repeated farther to the east. It's a long front that we're on, and the gains that we make are taken, not given to us. Winter is approaching fast, and that'll mean more suffering for our soldiers. The war must keep rolling during the remaining days of better weather.

The war is moving east to Germany. The country is less than 70 miles away as compared with the distance of 200 miles that we now are from the city of Paris. The columns of distant smoke mark our advance. Today is Sunday, November the 19th, 1944, as our Company moves east to keep up with the front. There are now 150 men, Cognac, and her nine pups in our convoy.



We've been in Luneville a little over six weeks, and have made many friends here that we'll long remember. They've taken the time to be friendly with us. Maybe that's partly because they're a part of this war along with us. They've lost loved ones in the fighting as well as property. And there'll be some Mademoiselles hoping for the return of a new found love. And we know that most of the French people will be praying for our safety and an end to this war - they told us they would. It's ironic that there's a German song that has some application to our leaving Luneville, and it's making its rounds in my thoughts: "Underneath the lamp-post by the barracks gate, standing all alone by the moon you'll see her wait. She waits for her love who's gone away..."

We travel east by a little south through the villages of Marsinviller, and Ogeviller to a place on the map called Petonville. It is - or was - a small village also. This is one of those total or partial destruction areas. The land looks like it was rather barren to begin with, but now what few trees that were here have been shot or blown off. Most of the buildings are but piles of brick. What few structures remain are badly damaged. There're shell holes through some, with partial walls remaining, and most doors and windows knocked out.

"Don't run down our new home, George," Brad informs me as he sees me surveying the damage. "At least we won't be bothered by any neighbors. The towns deserted except for us, maybe we could rename it 'Pupville, or Cognacville.' But enough talk - we'd better find us a house."

Our shift finds one that's in fairly good shape - just one shellhole through it for ventilation. It has a door - though the windows are all missing. I even find a bunk wooden bed with a feather mattress. I just



hope that there are no lice, but I dust on a little DDT just as a precaution. Our new home sweet home is quite a sight, in a real war setting. But as Brad stated, 'at least the neighbors won't bother us. And the name of our town is still Petonville. We are now fifteen miles southeast of Luneville.

We've been at this intercept location for three days on November the 22nd, and it's time to be moving on. We'll leave the skeleton town of Petonville for some other unit, or maybe just for the rats and the mice. Before too many days, perhaps the former town's residents will move back in and rebuild - providing some of those residents still exist.

We backtrack on the road, northwest to the village of Herbeviller, and then we turn northeast. Our travels for this morning takes us past the town of Blamont to the much larger town of Sarrebourg for a total distance of twenty-eight miles. There are some larger buildings in the main part of town, and a large residential area stretches to the top of the hill on the south.

For our stay in Sarrebourg, our Company is divided with our headquarters and eating facilities occupying a large two-story building in the main part of town. Our operations and billets for sleeping are located in the residential area on top of the south hill. The arrangement seems to be alright for security and operations. One drawback might be that extra guards will have to be posted, but we've plenty of men for that task.

It's sort of nice to have the larger building to eat and rest in. There are some large open rooms in the building, and one of them on the second floor could be classified as an auditorium furnished complete with a



piano. There are several fellows that I know who can play a piano, but a talented one called Leonard Tobias takes over the keyboard to entertain us with some favorite old melodies - he's very good.

I believe that we're very much in need of some diversion such as this type of entertainment. We've been working over five months of twenty-four hours a day since landing on the continent. All of the ingredients are present that would play on one's nerves. Some of the fellows have already displayed little outbursts to relieve their tensions. That's probably better than some of us who might keep things well in to burst out at a later date. There's always a supply of alcoholic drinks, for those who believe that is the remedy for their troubles. Many of us can and do seek God's help, but that doesn't alter the setup of our present environmental structure - the potential is still here.

As the name of the town indicates, we are entering a region that has had a strong German influence over the years. Someone has stated that the people have a set of two flags, French and German, that they can display depending upon who's in control of the city. We're about half way between Luneville and the German border, or thirty miles each way. So the fact that the people might have some reservations in their friendliness, has a part in reflecting some of our tensions that builds up.

"Our German translator almost got shot last night." Ken tells me one morning after we had been here in Sarrebourg for one week. "One of our guards in town asked him to approach and identify himself. Well he did in a way - but he answered with his German accent, and it was about too much for the guard. It ended alright, anyway."

"I guessthe incident could be the result of the realization of the



guard that we're getting close to the German border. It was dark out last night also, with the blackout and no moon. But why was he out wandering around at night?"

After I'd asked the question, my thoughts tie in with the time that he had asked me if I was Jewish. I'd nearly forgotten about that incident, but this affair makes me reflect back.

From our vantage point of our billets on the hill we continue to watch as well as hear the war go on all around us. Large flights of our bombers, day and night strike at the Germans in their own homeland. They are feeling how it is to be on the receiving end of what they've been doing to others. But our raids are not without incident or casualties. Numerous days I've watched and seen one or two of our planes return smoking and crash into the hills on our north. The crash will be followed by a large billow of smoke and flame. All I can do is pray that as many as possible could parachute safely in our own lines. Some of the planes are seen limping back to our airfields with one or two engines knocked out. The scene reminds me of our Airforce song: "Coming in on a wing and a prayer..."

"Fellows!" Brad calls into our billets one morning. "Come outside quick if you want to see one of them 'buz' bombs we've been hearing about."

Some of us make it outside in time to see a wobbly object disappear over the nearby hills. "It's a good thing that they didn't have those things a year ago," Bud comments. "And I hope that they don't have too many of them now. Airplanes flying over your head with bombs is



frightening enough, but these things are something beyond that. It's sort of like those Japanese suicide planes that we've been reading about."

It's thing like the use of such weapons that makes us keep hoping that we can keep on pushing like a team to soon end the war. It always has been Hitler's desire to divide the Allies and weaken our war effort.

On December the eighth we leave Sarrebourg and continue our push northeast past the towns of Lixheim, Bickenholtz, Sieweller, and Lohr to a little farming town of Peterbach. We're billeted in private homes and we set up operations nearby.

This is winter time, whether or not the calendar agrees. The weather is wet and cool, and the roads are muddy. We feel fortunate to be inside protected from the weather. We've seen people use wooden shoes before on our trek through France, and now we realize more than ever their practical use.

We have the regular chores to perform, but staying more confined inside takes some readjusting of our spare time. There are card games, reading, and letter writing to pass the time. We even have a bet on as to who's living in the richest home. There're some odd guide-lines for this judging. The house with the largest stack of manure piled in the front yard, belongs to the richest farmer. And in a way it makes sense, for it means that he has more cattle. Anyway, our house ties for first, or the richest farmer's house.

Our push to the northeast takes our units to the town of Bitch. But on December the 16th, our intercept reflects the news that's flashed over



our Armed Forces Radio Network. The Germans under the Command of General Von Rundstedt have launched a big counter attack in the Belgian portion of the Ardennes.

On December the 22nd we receive orders to move west and north to the town of Sarralbe. We reach there by traveling through the smaller towns of Ottweiler, Drulingen, and a larger village called Saar Union. We've supposedly taken up a defensive position and we're closing ranks on the front.

Our new quarters is a large two story building of some origin, and there are apartment buildings of the same type of design in the blocks surrounding us. Our sleeping quarters is in one of the many upstairs rooms, and on the floor. Our HOs and other equipment for operations are located in a large courtyard to the south rear of our building.

"George," Bud comments after we had settled down. "Someone said that we'd gone to the dogs after we got Cognac. I guess now they could say that we're for the birds. There's a pigeon Company that's just moved in with us - in the vacant space out front. Come on out and take a look."

We go over to their outfit and look around at the trucks with their cages of birds. "Pretty fancy birds, Bud," I tell him. If the Germans should ever cut off our lines of communications and entrap us, at least we'll always be able to get a message out. Maybe we're for the birds like you said, but I guess one might also say that we're really banded together."

The German 'break through,' really was serious and a threat to our lines.



This is the Christmas weekend, and Monday is Christmas. The newspapers in the United States have been making headlines out of the stories of the Nazi large scale offensive, or what's now referred to as the 'battle of the bulge.' Our Armed Forces Radio Network informs us about what some of these banner headlines consists of: "Nazi drive grows in fury; 45 mile gap torn in U.S. lines." "Nazi gaining in Luxembourg; U.S. loss worst since Bastian." and: "Yanks hit back but Nazi put 600 tanks and 150,000 men in the battle." These are a few of the headlines mentioned according to our radio.

We've been cut off by the Germans before in their counter attack at Avranches. But is the first all-out, large scale counter attack by them since the invasion started. However, like the time at Avranches, I continue to have faith in the strength and striking power of our massive machine. And we hear about some of the results of this massive machine that strikes out over the weekend. It's again broadcast over our radio news: "The sun came out Saturday for the first time in a week, and 4,000 British and American planes slug rail lines feeding the drive. The planes swarmed over the ancient city of Trier facing the Luxembourg border at the southern end of the Rundstedt line and a chain of rail centers feeding the German offensive. The Germans lost 178 planes in large scale dogfights, and at least 50 more were damaged. The thunderbolts destroyed 47 trucks in one packed enemy convoy. Saturday night 100 Mosquitoes carrying 4,000 pounders, slug a German rail center on the Rhine near Colblenz."

There're heavy casualties on both sides, and the heavy fighting continues. One American correspondent has estimated that an unprecedented concentration of armor and 1,000,000 men face each other in what he



forecast as one of the greatest land battles of the war. The battlefield is an area of 30 miles wide by a little more than 30 miles deep. The fighting is in cold weather and the tracks on the tanks are freezing. Troops have to chop through frozen ground in digging foxholes and other fortifications. The frozen ground does however offer advantages, in that it affords easier and faster movement by the vehicles.

"Merry Christmas, George." Bud hands me an early edition of the Stars and Stripes Newspaper with the salutation of the season.

"Merry Christmas to you, also Bud," I reply. "Thanks for the paper. Let's hope our next Christmas will be at home."

So this is Christmas in Saaralben, France 1944. The copy of the newspaper that I now have was printed in Strasbourg, France. This is a city that really isn't too far from here. The paper is an early printed Christmas edition. There's the war news, the comics, the sports, and a pinup girl as usual. On the front page there's a picture of Lt. Gen.

A.M. Patch and his Christmas message to the officers and men of the Seventh Army. It's written in appreciation of our combined efforts in: "Speeding the day when, reunited with our families, we may once again say; peace, good will toward men!"

As the General states, maybe we don't have too much to be happy about this year, but the Christmas spirit can be a condition of the heart, whether here, in a foxhole, or back home. While we must keep up with our operations and other duties, we also try to make this day a little more special. We place a few decorations up, and our cooks do their part in adding to the festivities. Writing a letter home today seems to be the order for things to do also - everyone takes part. There's



the loneliness on the homefront also. We've much to thank God for on this day. And, compared with the foot-soldier and others in the cold foxholes on all of the fronts, we can't complain at all. One thing we must be certain of even on this day, is that we must not become complacent. We're still close to the Germans in this area as well as any other area - even in the main 'bulge.'

Most of our members seem to be quite content on this day. I haven't noticed any excess drinking, but I know that there's plenty to be had, if one desires. And what could be better than to have some nice live music on this Christmas day? To fulfill this desire or dream, a half dozen musicians from the town of Sarralbe are engaged and render their talents in music fitting for such a day. They perform well, and we find that Christmas music is a universal language. It's a language that speaks of peace, and it adds the final touch that makes our day.

Thoughts of Christmas and peace are nice, but we're still surrounded by war, so it pays to be alert and keep our eyes and ears open. Some of our biggest victories of our revolutionary war came about by the enemy doing too much celebrating of Christmas. I'm thinking about this before our night shift while I'm glancing at some articles in our Stars and Stripes Newspaper. "Alert tightened as spies work in Allied area." For some reason I think back about about our civilian musicians. This marks the first time that civilians have been permitted this close to our operations. I continue to read more of the article. "The Provost Marshal and the French Radio warned that spies and saboteurs in Allied uniforms and civilian clothes were operating behind the lines. An AP article states that four German soldiers, wearing American uniforms and riding a jeep, were captured by six MPs in Belgium. They had three loaded machine guns, five hand grenades and enough dynamite to blow



up a bridge. The three would-be saboteurs were Lieutenants and the other was a Sergeant. The four had complete identification, knew the pass word for the day, and spoke good English. One of them was born in Brooklyn. But the MPs were suspicious when they didn't beef when we stopped them."

The article is something to think about, but not to let my imagination work overtime and worry about it. I read some other articles that I'd missed, and glance at the comics once more.

Our night shift passes without incidence, as does our shift on the next evening. On Wednesday, December the 27th, we change back to the day shift. The news on the radio confirms the heavy fighting that's still going on in the 'bulge' area, but that our forces continue to hold.

Thursday evening after dinner as darkness closes in, we prepare for an early good night's sleep. "What's that noise?" Ken asks in a startled voice.

There's no need to answer his question, for the loud swishing noise with the explosion and vibration that follows, speaks the answer for him and all of us. But others in the building did answer as if to confirm any doubts: "We're being shelled!" There's the sound of quick footsteps and excited voices.

More shells whistle in, followed by explosions. There's the thought of self survival. Quick decisions are made: "I think I'll go down in the basement. It should be safer there. Are you coming?" Some of the fellows go down in the basement.

Others decide to remain upstairs. "If they hit us it won't make much



difference where we are!" they exclaim. I decide to stay upstairs in the room where I've been. But I take another position away from the one large window. I position myself low on the floor, and pull the bag up to protect my face and most of my body from any small flying objects. All that's left to be done is to pray - and I do that fervently, while at the same time thanking God for the protection that He has already provided. And my prayers continue. I know that most of the others are doing the same thing. And this episode might make some believers out of any who professed otherwise

I think about the fellows who are on shift in the HOs, and wonder if they're still copying. One of them soon appears to confirm that they were, with the excited new: "A shell just landed just six feet away from our HO! It buried itself in the ground but it didn't explode."

If it had exploded it would have disintegrated the units as well as some of our building.

Later in the night, after a nearby hit and explosion, a woman comes in our building screaming. "They've hit our building! Some of my family have been hurt. Can anybody come and help me?"

Whether anybody went over, I don't know. But the shelling continues and a circle of buildings around us are hit, so there must be other injuries also. We have our own safety to realize at this time - we're the intended target. And in between the periods of shelling I find time to think about what has taken place, and the recent article we had read about spies. It seems evident that someone has informed the enemy of our exact location, and it's possible that someone from this town is still directing the fire of their guns. I momentarily wonder about



our Christmas musicians. The shells coming in were of a large size, so the artillery piece must also be large. Since the shelling didn't start until after dark, it seems obvious that the gun is one that remains hidden in the daytime, such as a mobile unit. If the firing should cease in the daylight to follow, it would confirm the possibilities that it's another railway gun that we've been trying to get a fix on.

With daylight the firing does cease. And also very soon after daybreak our trucks are loaded and our convoy is heading back south at full speed. We had no injuries or direct hits other than the one shell that landed next to our HOs. Every building around us had fallen victim to the shelling. Was it all just luck, or our continued protection by God. If anyone got any sleep last night for any length of time, they were lucky. I hear no complaints about heading back south. It isn't with the idea of escaping the war, for that'll still surround us. But it's mandatory that we seek another location away from the known sights of the enemy's artillery.

Our convoy travels eight kilometers south to the small town of Saar-Union, then west four kilometers to the village of Harskirchen. We continue on another four kilometers to a little place called Altweiler. Until further notice our housekeeping is set up in a Chateau called Bonne Fontane, or Neuweyer. In this seesaw game of war it's hard to ascertain just who had recently occupied this large two story structure. This whole area, until fairly recently, has been under German control. Some of the painting and other furnishings of the Chateau have been previously stored in a couple of rooms, like treasures in King Tut's tomb.

Most of the large rooms are downstairs within the center portion of



the 'U' shaped, inside design. There are stairways on the east and west ends of the building that rise to the north. There's an open walkway around the entire upstairs leading to the adjacent series of rooms. We have a roof to keep us dry! Now if the Krauts don't find out about our new location, we'll be alright.

Our intercept operations are set up on the east side of the building, under cover of some trees. And we're in a heavily forested area of evergreens. There's a forested ridge about a mile to our north, and on our south there's a fifteen acre open field. We have an access road on the west of the Chateau, running north and south connecting a main road on the north about one quarter of a mile away. The access road connects another main road on the south, one quarter of a mile away also.

We settle down in these new winter quarters, keeping up with our nets as well as the war news - especially the 'bulge' area where the heavy fighting continues. There's no more artillery for us to contend with at this location, but we do keep alert for that, or any other danger. Until the fighting in the 'bulge' is contained, anything is possible. Plans are reviewed for the destruction of our records and equipment in the event of imminent capture. These thoughts stay with us as we continue to do our work.

The New Year comes, but there's no celebration. No civilians are allowed near our operations, even though homes are not too far away. As if to enforce these undeclared regulations, Cognac does her part. She must have had guard duty training at some time with the Germans. Bill



brought it to my attention one time, and soon most of us had watched her proficiency. With the homes around our area, the field is an ideal spot for the people to take short-cuts - or it used to be. It's a long way to either corner of the field, but if a civilian should cut across the field for any reason, they now find that they have a very mean-looking police dog in their pursuit. Maybe she is just protecting her pups or our unit, or both. The civilians soon learn to stick to the tree area and take the long way around the field. While most all of these people are French and friendly, she has every right to associate any stranger to our outfit with the potentials of possible shelling or bombings, and so do we.

Snow falls with the winter weather and soldiers must have fun. "Hey, George. A bunch of the fellows are going sledding on a hill west of here. Come on along." Brad gives the invitation to me. We are working nights, and have the day for supposed rest.

We walk a mile southwest near to a small settlement, and there, as Brad had outlined, is a snow covered hill about 150 feet long and four real sleds. "The only catch to the deal," Brad confides to me. "Is that you have to share the ride going down the hill with the girl who owns the sled."

"Have to?" I question Brad. "Either way you state that, it sounds like we've been over here too long."

The only real trouble seems to be that there's not enough sleds and girls - or there are too many soldiers. And the French girls must have had a poor opinion of our steering the sleds. Every time that we get near the bottom of the hill, the sled turns over, and we have to help



the girls back up on their feet.

Back at the Chateau, to help fill in our spare time, we once again engage in the routine pastimes of reading, card games, and answering letters from home. Some of the reading I do, is from my Bible. I also find time to put some finishing touches on the sketches that I started back at Lymington, England.

The other work details, such as guard duty, is a part of the life here also. For some reason they associate me with the road west of our Chateau, and I'm generally given that post for walking at night. Our group have walked this same road during daylight on some of our exploration treks, and it's been fun. But walking this same road alone at night can be mighty scary. There are owls in these woods, and their screeching and hooting at night always sends chilling tingles over my spine. I learn to expect their noises, but they always catch me off-guard, and I never can quite relax - maybe that's good.

But I'm lucky in some ways on most of these night vigils. Cognac and I are good friends, and she thinks that taking these night time walks is great sport. She stays a little ways behind me and keeps alert. If there should be any enemy confrontation on one of these assignments, all I can do is pray that I can get off a warning shot to signal the other guard or someone working in the HOs. The lives of our Company is very much dependent on the guards who are on duty. And I depend a lot on prayer.

I always like the last day of January because it's my birthday. But another reason for liking it is the knowledge that it'll soon be spring and the snow will soon be gone. For my birthday I receive a nice card



and letter from Mom. This is my second birthday overseas, and I pray that before my next one I'll have my feet on good old United States soil.

The end of January this year does bring some good news from our fighting front, around the German break-through. On December the 23rd, we had been informed that the Third Army had launched an attack from the south. On January the 3rd, 1945, our radio gave details of an attack on the north by our First Army. And now, by the end of January, we've the news that the entire salient by the enemy has been eliminated. The Germans had a loss of over 220,000 men and a large quantity of equipment of war.

We had suffered heavily on the front as they had, and to compensate for that loss and to prepare for our certain spring offensive, a directive is issued to all units. The order directs all non- Infantry outfits to screen their men with physicals for their possible transfer to Infantry duty. Our unit could be no exception to this directive. But standing orders from higher authority also forbid such a transfer from our unit to Infantry, or to any other service where any possibility of capture existed. All of our members knew too much top secret information about the enemy, as well as our own set-up.

To keep up with these directives coming from two directions, and to keep the records clean for prying eyes, we're issued orders from our own officers. For these required Infantry physicals in mid-February we've been given special instructions. "Present any physical disability that has bothered you in the past, and outline it on your examination. If you don't have any, then we'll make up one to serve the purpose."

I noted my eye trouble during the examination, which was correct. The



others set forth their own disabilities as seen. The examinations are completed and the records are in order for any inspection that might occur. "You fellows are sure a sickly bunch of soldiers for even being overseas," an officer notes after reading the reports.

Later in February we receive the news that two of our officers, 2nd Lieutenants Belou, and Rozich, have been promoted to First Lieutenants. They're well liked in our close-knit organization, and congratulations are in order. They're still in the war with us, but at least they'll get more money.

Spring isn't officially here yet but the weather is getting nicer. The ground is even getting dry in spots. And with the good weather comes the news that the front is starting to move again in the direction of Germany. On March 13, 1945, we receive our orders bright and early. "Pack and load your equipment. We're moving out in an hour."

It's been quite awhile since our last hectic move from the shelling. Our gear stays mostly packed and ready most of the time, so there's no big problem in packing. We're alone on this move, as the Pigeon Company that had been with us earlier in the winter, had previously gone their way.

The last of our convoy are just starting to leave the area when a barrage of small shells start whizzing in over us and the Chateau. The steady firing continues and we put things into high gear to clear the area.

"How's that for a send-off?" I ask Bill.

"It's terrific, George," he replies. "It's almost as good as the one



we got when we left Saaralben after Christmas."

We escape from whatever was using us as a target, without any casualties, and continue eastward at a slower pace past the village of Harskirchen, to the larger town of Saar Union. Instead of proceeding north at this point to the city of Saaralben where we were shelled, we veer off on another road and travel in a northeasterly direction for 8 kilometers to a farm just before the village of Oermingen. This places us on the map 8 kilometers east of Saaralben, or Sarralbe as it is shown on some maps. And our first outdoor residence for this year is the Lutterbacherhof Farm, which sports the address of Poste Oermingen.

"Well Bud, I guess it's about time to air out our nuptents again."

"I don't mind too much," he replies. "At least it isn't muddy - not yet anyway, even though it's threatening a little. I think that we're really better off outside with more fresh air for sleeping.

"One thing that I could do without, though, is the noise from our nearby artillery units. I guess we need to have them, though. They sound like the same babies that serenaded us when we were on the Seine River west of Paris."

We finish setting up our tents and try to get a little rest before our night shift on intercept. The other crew is already in operation. The other men go about their respective jobs, such as cleaning and refueling the vehicles. The crew on the chuckwagon go about their never-ending job of trying to feed 150 men, one dog, and several pups.

After our evening meal, Captain Jones informs us of the details



surrounding our hostile farewell shelling from the Chateau this morning. Our communications with the Fifteenth Corps has again been established. "The shelling we went through this morning was from our own guns of a Tank Company. They were getting in some target practice firing at the hill to our north and over our heads, under the presumption that our unit had moved out the day before," he informs us.

Our copy at night is relatively quiet, but the artillery barrage is everything but quiet. It's a good night to read some from my Bible, between copy. There's also a little thunder of God's creation that gets into the act. I pray like the others that most of this mail is going out. And from the booming echoes of the guns through the network of canyons leading away from us, we can tell as the sound fades, that it is. But sometimes there are cross echoes that cause me to wonder whether it's coming, or going out. Memories from terrifying nights, that are like these, I'm sure will long be with me. But I also know that the comfort experience that I receive from reading God's word will be a part of such memories.

Once back at the Chateau, we had a period of silence for two days from the German radio nets. It was cause to have us fear that they had learned about our complete knowledge of their radio operations. But they started in again with their regular call-signs and procedures. We're still haunted with those thoughts every time there's an extended period of silence.

I try doing some drawing during some of the quiet periods, but the results are not too satisfactory. Things are generally too tense. We're either trying to strain our ear for a distant weak signal, or searching



for another station. And concentrated listening is the important job.

The artillery barrage continues for four days before our gunners advance to new positions to resume their ceaseless pounding of the enemy. They've softened up the front for our attack on Germany. We've seen new waves of our fighter planes dive-bombing targets again in this all-out effort. There're the flights of the larger bombers also.

The squeeze play on Germany is now on , from all fronts. The Red Army started their mighty offensive aimed at the final destruction of the Nazi Armies on the Eastern Front in mid-January. An equally powerful assault was launched on February the 23rd, by the Western Allied Armies who were poised on the western border of Germany. On March the 7th, a fast moving Armored Division of the U.S. First Army captured a railroad bridge over the Rhine River at Remagen that was partially intact. The advance sounds easy on paper, but there are still lots of casualties and suffering for every advance. For the soldier, sometimes the risk of death beats sweating out an uncertain fate in a wet foxhole during winter.

On March the 19th, it's time once more for us to move ahead. It's just a couple of days before Spring and the weather seems just a little nicer. Our resumed outdoor life has the prospects of being better, if such a condition could ever be that way in time of war. We're still in France, but the names of the towns that we pass through have the new German sound. We were 30 kilometers from the German border when our convoy started out this morning. The towns we pass through are Cermingen, Kalhausen, Achen, and Gross Rederching. Bill said that the name of that last town sounded like a mixture of Chinese, and so it does. And Rimling



is the name of our new bivouac area. We're in a wooded place on a northeast slope above the town of Obergailbach.

There's something about this new place that seems to demand that we don't do any wandering around. We've been warned by our officers, and if that isn't enough there are those familiar warning signs: "Gefahr, Mines. or Danger Mines!" Anyway, it isn't for us to question their warnings, and we remain good little fellows by doing our jobs and staying close to home-base for the next two days. Even Cognac stays around close - that is with the aid of a leash. Of course there's one advantage that is if we can't walk around and explore, it's certain that except from air, the enemy can't get too close to us either.

We've a late start from our mine fields at Himling on March 21, 1945, leaving in the afternoon. It's the first day of Spring so maybe we have an excuse, besides not having orders to move until now.

There've been some warning signs put up ahead concerning the road conditions. One of them reads: "Drive Carefully, Death Is So Permanent."

"That would be a good one to put up back home," Bud comments. And he reads another one that our Army has erected, as we approach it: "Warning! This section of the road is under observation of the enemy and artillery fire. Drive with care!"

Our convoy spaces out as we increase speed.

We pass through the towns of Guiderkirch, Epping, Volmunster which is in France, and then to Hornbach, which is our first town in Germany.



"It's now 1800 hours!" Bill announces, marking the occasion.

We continue past Hornbach in a more northerly direction to the key defense town on the Siegfried Line, Zweibruecken. The small city shows the tell-tale signs of all-out warfare. It has had a severe taste of the bombings, strafings, and military fire, with the mopping up operations by our Infantry. The fighting has been recent, within a day for some of it. There are but a few people on the streets, and those we see aren't very anxious to show their faces. We don't have the desire to linger there very long either.

At an intersection, our convoy breaks off the main road to another road that leads to the base of a hill or ridge - and the start of the Siegfried Line. As we start up the hill on the road running parallel with the fortifications, Ken has been looking out over the side of the truck at the road up ahead. "There's a dead German laying in the road that the trucks are running over!" he announces.

We had noticed several dead soldiers along the road before. Whether we actually ran over this one, I'm not sure, but I take his word for it. Of course as Brad comments: "I guess he wouldn't know the difference - it's just the idea. We're in no position to get out and move him, even if we wanted to."

We proceed up the hill along side the fortifications for about two miles. For our work we seem to love to be on the highest point around, and we seem to find it along side of some bunkers and tank traps.

It's getting late, so it comes as no surprise when the good old 'K'



rations are distributed - at least we'll eat. And for a few minutes we enjoy a meal, while the rest of the crew sets up operations. "So this is the famous Siefried Line," Bud comments. "Up close, where we are, it doesn't seem very fierce, but I wouldn't want to approach it when it was fully operating by the enemy. With the mine fields on each side of the tiger-teeth for the tank traps, and then with all of the light and heavy gun turrets, it could present quite an obstacle for any trespasser."

"I guess that what we see is only a very small portion of the fortifications," Andre adds. They're like icebergs, and they have more underground than they do on top. If they're like the diagrams I've seen of the ones on the Maginot Line, they go down for as many as five stories. There're rooms for munitions on the lower floor, with other floors available for sleeping, eating and recreation. Machinery fills up other levels. There's a connecting elevator to the different levels. Enough steel and concrete is on top to withstand quite heavy bombs."

"Well thanks, fellows," I conclude after we had finished eating. That was real interesting."

We hurry to set up our pup tents before it gets too dark. "I've seen pictures of some of these fortifications, Bud," I relate. "But I never dreamed that I'd be sleeping on top of it. Some of the rooms might be under our camp area. That gives me an odd feeling."

"I don't believe that I'd like to camp here very long, or for the fun of it," he adds. "You like to write songs - maybe you could write a song about it. You know, like; 'We're tenting tonight on the old



Siegfried Line, Give it a try sometime, George."

"Let us hurry and get this puppet up, Bud," I inject. "I think we both need some rest or sleep."

And we get a little rest before starting our night shift. About day-break we're told by a guard that he has noticed some smoke coming from an air vent at one of the bunkers or pillbox. "I alerted the officers and some men. They're on their way over there now to investigate."

The warning alerts us also, and we check our firearms - just in case. A short while later we see a group returning from the pillbox. There are two German soldiers walking in front of them, with their hands in back of their heads. They'll be transported back to Corps.

Later we learn their story for being there from our German interpreter, who questioned them. They had been sick, and when they had returned to rejoin their outfit, it had left. That was their story anyway.

I've often wondered about the business of surrendering on either side. There're certain times when it would be impossible to surrender even if desired. Those flying a plane or driving a tank don't always have an opportunity, nor do those on the receiving end of such an assault. The Infantry in battle doesn't always have the time to take prisoners, and so they are just shot. Then the revenge for a dead buddy also plays in the picture. So the enemy has a little better chance for survival if they surrender to troops not engaged in the actual front line killing. But then in war circumstances do not always turn out as they may be planned.



On March 24th, 1945, we leave the 'Great Wall of Germany' early in the morning on a road in the familiar northeast direction. We pass cities that we can locate later on the map: Kashofen, Martinshoehe, Landstuhl, and Kaiserlautern. According to another travel book of Bill's, Kaiserlautern is a city of about 50,000, and is located 40 miles west of Mannheim, which is a much larger city on the Rhine River. It existed as early as 800, and it is quite a manufacturing center. Frederick 1, built a castle here in the year of 1152, but it was later destroyed by the French in 1700. So, this place has been the scene of many military engagements - and we're adding another one to the 'list.

From here we proceed past the towns of Enkenbach, Ramsen, Eisenberg, and Ebertsheim, to a place near the village of Quirheim. At this location we set up for a two-day period of operations.

On March the 26th, we're again going on our way northeast toward the Rhine River. The towns we pass, for some reason their names all seem to end with the letters of 'eim.' Kindenheim, Alheim, Monsheim, Pfeddersheim, Pfifflligheim, and Leiselreim. If we were to proceed over the ridge that we're now on, and go south for several miles we would come to the city of Worms. And Worms, according to our little book, has a history that dates back to the years before Christ. It's located 10 miles north, or down river from Mannheim, and has a population of nearly 40,000. Worms has been the scene of many battles by the early Romans, invading Huns led by Attila, and the Napoleonic Wars. As a protestant stronghold with a history surrounding the Holy Roman Empire, it was subjected to severe reprisals.

So, the city has a very interesting history, and has been rebuilt several times. Another rebuilding will be due, if the city has been



besieged like some of the other towns that we went through today. It's remarkable that through all of these turmoils, the vineyards thrive, and the wine is produced like it has since the city was founded.

Instead of traveling south to Worms, we proceed north on the east slope of the ridge that overlooks the Rhine River and Valley. We go north for only one mile to set up our operations in an open area overlooking the Rhine. There's no camouflage, or cover of trees around, so we'll have to get through this one on faith. We should be in the habit of doing it that way by now, anyway. But there are some recently dug ditches below us - several lines of them. They resemble the start of some water or sewer project for a city that isn't here. We are told, as maybe we could have guessed, that they are Volksturm trenches. Or trenches made by and for the German's Peoples Army. They could be used by us in an emergency, but there's always the danger of booby-traps in such a place.

We pitch our tents in scattered fashion around the site, and then start up operations. This is one of our top of the world locations where we get good radio reception from a lot of the battle fronts. Traffic is heavy and I receive one clear-text message from a German Artillery unit stating that they have sighted an American column advancing along a certain sector. Of course the message is in German, but many of their words are easily translated with just a little study. I wonder just how the situation will turn out - if they will fire on the column, or if the column can be warned, or if their artillery can be destroyed by our aircraft. Their lives are of concern, but I'll never know the outcome of this human drama. Meanwhile I continue to copy.



We finish our day shift of operations and enjoy a nice hot meal that our cooks have prepared. After cleaning up, we walk down to look closer at the trenches. Then we sit down and talk, while we watch the war being fought below and in front of us. From up here the river doesn't look too big. We have a pontoon bridge across the Rhine at a position below and slightly south of where we are. At least we can guess that there's a bridge there. A dense smoke screen has been set up to hide most of the activities taking place there. We do have artillery gunners in operation on either side of the bridge. They are at least four miles away from us, and while we hear very little of the firing, we can see the belching of their guns, and see the smoke from the targets they hit on ahead. It's always the softening-up process for another advance.

It's getting late when I return to our tent area. I had stayed outside at this observation point longer than I should have remained. Most of the gang are in their tents; some are asleep, and some are talking. My late return to our tent brings a near hostile remark from the occupant of another tent. "'Who's walking around out there?" comes the challenge.

"It's just me," I reply, as I identify myself. "I'm on my way to bed."

"You'd better watch out where you are after dark," comes their warning.

"You could get shot easily around here."

I respect their concern - and my own neck also. I hurry a little faster back to our tent which isn't too far away. Such are the fears of war - of hunting, and being hunted. These fears have been with us from the start and they're natural. They are natural, anyway, for man who believes



in peaceful coexistence. Our fears have increased more since our entry into the German fatherland. In France we were the liberators, but in this region we're the occupiers.

The smoke-screen still surrounds the bridge section of the river the next morning, and the gunners keep clearing the path ahead. Our position may seem secret and isolated to us, but someone must know where we are, for today we receive some mail and a copy of the Stars and Stripes Newspaper.

This edition of the paper was printed in Nancy, France, on Friday, March 23, 1945. That was four days ago. So that's pretty good delivery service. The previous editions of the paper were printed in Strasbourg. There are a few more comics in this edition. They must feel that we need more laughs. Besides "Up Front," by Mauldin, there are "Lil Abner, Blondie, Dick Tracy, Abbie an Slats, and Terry and the Pirates." They are all good for a few laughs, and they take our memories back to more peaceful times.

Besides the sports news, most of the stories are devoted to the war. There're items about the Jap War, and the Eastern, or Russian Front. Most of this war news is devoted to our sector. "Germans' Escape Gap cut to 30 Miles; Airforce Rake Retreat Sector; PW Cages Bulge; and Allies Strike Foe From Dawn To Twilight With 8,000 Planes - this is the biggest beating since 'D' day." These are a few of the headlines, but there are many more follow-up stories, and other items that relate to our own encounters. There's a story about our fellows returning to the town of Bitche - this time to stay. A Chaplain has submitted a



poem which is in tribute to the men who fought and died to hold the line of the German breakthrough last winter. The article recalls memories to me of the General of the Paratroop Division who was asked last winter by the Germans to surrender. His answer came back with the publicized slang word of, "Tuts." This was a tribute to the defenders of Bastogne.

"There are no pin-up girls in this edition," Ken comments to me.

"I've noticed that something was missing, Ken," I reply. "That's hard on our morale too. There's an article written about pinup girls, however. Some of our colored soldiers are asking for equal coverage for colored pinup girls. Or should that be uncoverage? They say that while white girls are attractive, there are some very nice-looking colored girls that appeal more to them. Do you have any comment?"

"None what so ever, George," he answers. "I guess that problem is just between them and the newspaper."

By the evening of the 29th, it's quiet in the direction of our bridge-head across the Rhine, and observation confirms that our artillery has moved on ahead. The following morning, Thursday, March 29th, we are anxious to join them in travel. We circle back south on the ridge to the main road that takes us down to and across the Rhine River on the pontoon bridge. Crossing this natural barrier gives us the feeling that we're really in Germany. Many of our other Army Units have already, or are now crossing the Rhine. We're closing in on the heart of the German homeland.

Again we pass through several villages whose names end with the letters 'Heim' - Nordheim, and Wattenheim. We then continue on past the towns of



Biblis, Gross Hausen, Lorsch, and Bensheim. Along the way, we see as always, the destruction that the path of war has made. None of it seems to be as total as what was seen in Normandy, but it's still here. Enemy strongholds have been hit with artillery and bombs. Rail centers and many bridges have been destroyed, but some have been left intact for our own advantage in our swift advance. We come across burned-out convoys by the side of the road, and other overturned vehicles of war. Their gas shortage has made it mandatory that many of their vehicles be converted, so that they can be pulled by horses. So there are dead horses, as well as soldiers, to be seen. For whatever reason, we have already noted that the people in Germany clean up the dead, or bury them faster than it was observed in France.

We set up operations outside the town of Bensheim and by the Castle Schoenberg - it's an overnight affair. There's time to keep up with our copy, and get in two nice warm meals. Some fellows don't care much for the reconstituted powdered eggs for breakfast. But the cooks do their best to make them appetizing and I think they do a pretty good job. I bring up the subject of our eats, including the eggs, to Andre.

"I don't mind them, George," he replies. "At least and most of our other food are a lot better the best of the German food that we got back in France near Petersbach. That was the time, at the start of the German break through, and our lines were a little extended. We were short of our own rations of food, but we had some captured German supplies that we were using. You remember that, don't you?"

"I keep trying to forget about it, Andre. I believe that they canned the worms with the apples and other fruit to add more protein. And as



for the meat, I don't know what kind of animal it was from, as there wasn't any label, but they sure didn't waste anything in that either. So, even without that in mind, I believe that our quartermaster and cooks deserve a big bouquet."

Today is Friday, March 30, 1945, as we return to the town of Bensheim and head north through a light to heavily forested region. The landscape looks deceptively peaceful in spots. This must be the northern portion of the Black Forest range, or whatever the name for it may be in German. The ground under the trees in most places is free from any fallen brush. It resembles a park in many ways to see the smooth needle-strewn ground underneath the evergreens. One can imagine that everything burnable has been salvaged for fuel in their homes. This is a part of the scene.

Our route takes us past Zwingenberg, Bickenbach, Ramstadt, and then turning more eastward, we go past Rossdorf, Dieburg, Richen, and Klein Umstadt. Our bivouac area is at a place called Badheim, which is just outside of Gross Umstadt.

In this hilly region with its many canyons twisting in every direction, we are once again on top of a hill, to hear and see the war continue to take its toll, before us. As some of the fellows stated before, we've seen and heard as much about the war as anyone else taking part. Maybe our observations have been more from a distance, but it's always there around us. And the war isn't over with yet, as Bill just informed me.

About twenty-five ~~miles~~ to our northeast lies the city of Aschaffenburg.



The city is situated on the Main River. This is a large river which has its source east of here in the Bohemian Forest, near the Czechoslovakian border. It flows like a giant snake, winding its way in large loops from east to west, eating its path by cities like Bamberg, and Aschaffenburg until it joins forces with the Rhine River farther to the west.

But there's something besides water that's flowing into the city today. We've finally caught up with our Artillery Companies. They've formed a semi-circle around the stubbornly defended city of Aschaffenburg. For five days we watch as the artillery, aided by our Airforce bombers, give the city a relentless pounding. Smoke rolls from the ruins.

This is the scene that is constantly before our eyes when we're not performing our operational duties, or sleeping. But there are a few other activities going on. Besides the possibilities of having rounded up a few bottles of cognac, our presence has resulted in the capture of five prisoners. That would amount to the average of one per day. And speaking of Cognac, our faithful Cognac is once more the proud mother of nine pups. "Hey, fellows, you forgot the cigars this time," someone complains. But they inform us that it's only for the first event that such a ceremony is observed. Besides, they're fresh out of cigars.

Our travels on April the 5th, takes us northeast past the town of Gross Ostheim, and through what is left of the city of Aschaffenburg. The sight of the ruins bring out many comments. "What a mess, and I'm glad we were not on the receiving end here in this place."

We now travel in a more easterly direction past Hoesbach, and across



For our shift, we get in three night's of copy at this location before it's time to move in a northeast direction again. Our travels take us past the cities of Nogent Le Roi, Favrolles, Boutigny, and Houdan. From the reports at our last bivouac area we knew that Houdan was captured less than two days ago, on the seventeenth of August. From Houdan, our road leads us in a more northerly direction toward the river Seine, and the larger city of Mantes Gaascourt which is itself built around the river like Paris. The city was captured just yesterday, on August the eighteenth, so there's still heavy fighting still going on around the area.

Our bivouac area, with threatening rain, is one hundred feet from the Seine River, at a spot on the map called Boissets. This place has a pasture-like setting similar in some ways like the one pasture we used for a bivouac back in Normandy. It's much greener here. The trees are still standing, and while there aren't as many cows, what few that can be seen, are at least walking around. Maybe all that would be needed to make a more serene picture is to have a milkmaid out there sitting on a stool and milking one of the cows.

In the lay-out of our site, the Seine River is on our north. It's a popular river that's associated with romance and songs like; "The Seine has gone a-wooing...." Now we should write a war song about the popular river. To the east of our camp is the open pasture, and to our south and west there are block patches of deciduous trees.



To make the scene more complete, the milkmaid that I was mentally picturing out in the middle of the pasture, actually does come out there and is now starting to milk a cow.

In the evening after a good warm meal and some rest, I ask Bud how he likes this pretty French setting. "Isn't this what you've always dreamed about, Bud. And to make it better, we're only 35 miles from Paris, just up a curvy little river. Maybe we'll all get passes soon."

"This isn't quite how I pictured it, George," he replies. "Maybe the scenery is pretty, but well - I've changed my mind. They didn't have to go to all of this trouble just because I wanted to go to Paris. We have a machine-gun set up to the east of us only 200 feet. It sounds like there are a half a dozen artillery pieces set up within three blocks of here. They're firing continually. I haven't heard this much noise since Omaha beach. Poor Cognac, she hasn't stopped shivering since we've been here."

"I know, Bud," I reply. "But all of this will be worth it, just to see the grand old city. Seriously though, I hope that most of this fire keeps going out and not much of it is returned."

We didn't get much sleep before going on with our night shift. It's still noisy as well as scary. But it's a good prompter to remind me to give another one of my nightly prayers of thanks to God, and ask Him for his continued protection.

The noise of the artillery continues throughout the night on our shift, most of it is going out. For a variety though, that noise was mixed with



the sounds of rolling thunder and rain. Every so often I have songs that keep running through my head - maybe I hear them earlier on the radio. On this night, the song is : "Three Little Fishes - and they swam, and they swam all over the dam." But I guess maybe I can blame everything on that score, on the noise of the river and the rain.

Before leaving the HQ in the morning I've time to listen to the news. "There's still heavy fighting in the Falaise Gap area." This is the first of two important news items heard. "General Patche's Seventh Army continues to make important gains up from the Southern France sector." It's all good news, as far as the over-all war news is concerned.

And today is a nice sunny day with no more rain in sight. The artillery however continues its serenade. It's going to be a warm day, by the way that it's starting out. I feel grimey from having to sleep with my clothes on for such a long time. Such a feeling calls for one of those quickie type baths. I have a helmet with hot water, some soap, a wash rag, and a towel. Also a change of underwear and some socks. I find some privacy in a clump of trees to our south, and start to work. About two blocks away in the pasture, the milk-maid is also going about her daily chores of milking her cows.

From out of the northwest comes the sound, and then the sight, of a low flying plane. It's following along the bed of the river and is approaching our bivouac area. There's machine-gun fire from our gunners, and as the plane comes closer there's unmistakable German markings visible. Our gunners continue their fire on the plane which is already starting to emit smoke. The muzzle of the gun turns white-



hot as it continues to fire at point blank range. The gunners reverse their direction of fire as the plane passes over them. The plane goes into a long gliding descent and crashes about a half mile beyond where the girl is continuing to milk the one cow in the pasture. I continue my bath, and wash out a few things - then return to camp. The serenade of the artillery continues. This is war - but still somewhere in between all of it there's just a little humor as life goes on.

All day long, and throughout most of the following night, the bombardment from the artillery continues. By morning however, things are relatively quiet. The gunners have evidently moved forward to new positions. I guess that is as good of a cue as any for us to move also. We have reports that our 5th Armored Division have been ordered back from their forward position, to an area southeast of Mantes Gaassicourt. They are making way for some British units that are advancing from the other direction. In consideration of these reports, it's most likely that we'll be retracing our path back south for a short distance. With such a maneuver there'll be the need to have time for regrouping. The next big push will continue to be east in the direction of Germany, it's our only way home.

We hear some news on the Armed Forces Radio Network concerning the front that we're on. It's news that most of us knew, but the confirmation by the radio makes it interesting. "The city of Mantes Gaassicourt was captured on August 18th, with the Allies establishing the first bridgehead over the Seine on the night of August 19th-20th."

Today is August 21st, and our convoy is circling back south on another road. We go past the little town of Longnes, for a distance of not



over eight miles. Our new site is one that resembles an old river bed. There's some gravel and lots of small trees. For identification the place is named Favrieux.

A break for regrouping doesn't mean that the war is over by any means. For as long as the war goes on, anyone in that war zone is subject of being a target by the enemy, and the enemy can be anywhere. Aside from that fact, the environment for us here at Favrieux seems pretty nice. Except for the noise of our generators, it's quiet enough for Cognac, and the rest of us to stop shaking a little. And here for the first time in nearly six weeks, we're afforded the luxury of a shower. Our thanks go to the quartermasters. It's a small portable field outfit heated by gas. Oh, there are the regulations regarding its use; you get wet, turn it off and soap up, and then turn it back on to rinse off.

It's big news and something to write home about. "Somewhere in France, I had my first shower! And it wasn't rain, either." I wrote the one letter and got two in return. The mail is catching up with us again. All of the news from home was, or seemed good, and I'm glad to receive the letters. The news in the letters represents the other side of the war on the home front, from the families of one hundred and fifty men. Such news can't always be good. But whatever the trouble; death, sickness, or broken homes; we know that life goes on there, too, and all that we can do from here is to pray for the best.

The two Jewish boys from New York seem to fare pretty well on their mail call. Besides their letters, they get another box of goodies from home to keep their little locker full. That represents a lot of



love, as does the mail that any of us receive. And how about the lad who's writing a letter a day? Well, he's still keeping up with his schedule, and he has a lot of back mail to read at this location.

During our stay here we continue to keep up with the war news besides that of our intercept. On August the 25th, there's news the German forces in Paris surrendered to the French Second Armored Division. This is the Division that was with us for awhile. This marks a big morale victory for the Allies.

And there's news of other victories also. After very heavy fighting in the Falaise Gap region, the Germans on August 27th, surrendered to our units. It's estimated that 15,000 prisoners were taken, or 12 to 14 of the German Divisions destroyed or captured. This represents a big victory, and it will be a determining factor in the next moves that we'll be making. General Eisenhower also issued a report on the total invasion effort to date. It lists five Panzer Divisions, and twenty German Infantry Divisions destroyed. It also lists their casualties as over 400,000 dead, wounded or captured. And the report tops it off by saying that 3,500 of their planes had been destroyed.

We've a little cause for celebration in our own outfit when Lt. Belou reads a letter of commendation praising one of our intercept operators for having identified a German operator from his fist on the key of his radio transmitter. Such identification from a previous encounter or copy from the operator, now established the fact that his unit has relocated and regrouped. We're all happy to learn of any good that our outfit is doing, and we give our operator an applause at this assembly.



Everyone has heard about the German's idea concerning their so-called super race. To fulfill this fanatic desire, they have carried out a war of total destruction of any race that doesn't meet a set standard that they've established. A big part of their education was spent toward the effort in identifying the profile and features of the 'true' German. All of the others - the Jews and such, were to be eliminated. We can hear about it, but it doesn't always sink in until someone has a personal encounter with such Germans. But even in our own outfit?

Our German interpreter speaks with a German type accent, but I didn't hold that against him. I was getting dressed one day after having a shower when I noticed that he was sizing me up. "Are you Jewish?" He inquires as if it were an everyday question.

"Not that I know of," I reply. "Not any more than you, and not that it matters. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I was just wondering," he replies.

He didn't have to give me his reason, for his question had already answered that. It was on his mind, and that is what he had been thinking. This was actual the first time that he had spoken to me, but that one question put some suspicion of loyalty on him that I would not soon forget.

On August 29th, after being here for eight days, we're once again on the move and retracing our way back past the cities of Houdan and Gambais. Our bivouac for the rest of the day and overnight is called Bourdone.



On Wednesday morning August 30th, we're moving in a southerly direction through the town of Rambouillet to the town of Ablis. From here we travel in an easterly direction through the villages of Estampes, and Milly to the town of Fontainebleau. From this town we change our direction of travel to north or northeast. We go past the towns of Machault, Breau, Mormant, and Ozouer Le Repos to the town of Rosoy En Brie. This is a very pretty name for a town, but most of the French towns seem to have very pretty or descriptive names. Our place of residence is called Courpalay.

And this is a very pretty little place, or maybe it should be called an estate. There's one larger Chalet-like structure, with others of the same design grouped around. The larger structure has only recently been damaged a little by what looks like the results of an incendiary bomb. There're many large trees including evergreens around the area. We've seen many places similar to this on our travels today. Our journey today has taken us on a half circle path of an average radius of 35 miles from the center of Paris. It's no doubt, that many of these Chateaus had formerly belonged to wealthy Parisians. Less than a week ago this region was in German control, and some of these fancy places were occupied by them.

"Well, Bud, we're a little closer to Paris than we were. We've traveled over a hundred miles today, but we're still not any closer than 30 miles to the city of Paris. I think they're just tempting us."

"I think you're right, George," he replies. "And to emphasize the point, Lt. Jones has issued an order stating that although this may be considered a rest period for awhile, there'll be no passes to Paris."



And although we joked about going to Paris, we knew that there was enough trouble there without us adding to it. Paris is a big city, and it's hungry. There's already an almost endless caravan of Army tractor-trailer rigs hauling food supplies to them. We've seen some of them in our travels today.

Brad seems to be the one to bring us any announcement of interest, as he does today on September the first. "We're going to have a chance to see the "Dinah Shore" show," he announces. "Most all of us will have a chance to see it."

"That sounds great," Bud agrees. "I guess maybe that we're close enough to Paris to say that we saw the show there - by stretching it just a little."

Most of us got to see the show, but a few had to stay back and tend shop, as there's still a war going on, and messages to be intercepted. The show itself was great as everyone agreed. The last show of this type that I saw, was the Irving Berlin show in Belfast, Ireland. But there're gals in this show, so in some ways maybe it's a bigger attraction for the soldiers who at this time would love nothing better than some female companionship. Maybe that accounts for the large crowd. The building was a large place, and it was a long ways up to the stage - of course we were at the back. But it was nice to see someone besides soldiers, and as for Dinah; she's well known and liked. Her picture must be with many a soldier.

Now that Paris is again a free city, and shows like this can fly in, there are sure to be more such shows in the near future. But Paris has been free for only a short time, and there's still the danger of air



attacks by the enemy to any such troupe of entertainers. It's really quite a risk for such nice volunteers. That they're appreciated, is evident. For us soldiers, we'll soon be on our way again with just nice memories. For most of us the show will just increase our desire to get on with the war so that we'll soon be home to a half way normal life again.

Our stay at Rosoy En Brie can be considered a rest period. We saw a nice show, there is mail from home, and we have a chance to clean up again with showers, and wash out some clothes. But really, our delay gives the other fighting units a chance to regroup. The French 2nd Armored Division is again joining up with our 79th Infantry Division ahead of us near the city of Troyes. It's southeast from here. Also at this time the Seventh Army is pushing up from the south. We'll join them in the new drive east and become a part of the Seventh rather than the Third Army.

The length of our stay at Rosoy En Brie resembles the length of our stay at St. Martin D' Aubigny just before the big push of the Third Army through Avranches. We've been here for nine days.

Today is September the ninth, as we head in a southeasterly direction away from the city of Paris. We pass the towns of Jouey Le Châtel, Chenoise, St. Hilliers, Provins, to Nogent Sur Seine. As the name of the town indicates, it's located on the Seine River. At this point the river is about sixty miles upstream from the Paris vicinity where we were at Rosoy En Brie. We continue to follow the road east on the same general course of the river, to the town of Mery Sur Seine. From this point the river goes on up in a southeast direction to the city of Troyes.



We leave the Seine River as our road takes us east to the town of Lusigny Sur Barse.

The towns we passed through today showed the signs of hit and miss war. You could tell where the fighting had taken place, and what had been missed. There wasn't the total destruction that we had seen earlier in Normandy, France.

"Just what does your little travel guide say about the big city of Troyes that we went through awhile back?" I ask Brad after we had set up our operations.

"That was a pretty nice city, or what we could see of it, anyway. I believe that this is the first place where there was a small crowd of people lining the streets to welcome us. I'm not counting the town that we went through before the Infantry, however.

"But back to your question and the book. It tells us that Troyes is located 104 miles southeast by east of Paris. It has a population of 40,000, and there are two principal buildings of historic note in the city. There's a Cathedral that was first built in the ninth century, and there's the Church of St. Urban. Cotton, linen, and woolen goods are manufactured here. Since this is the center of a large agricultural region, there's much trade in those commodities also. And that's it."

"Thank you Brad," I acknowledge.

"You're studying that man real hard, bud," I comment. "What lies ahead for us?"

"I was looking at the terrain up ahead, fellows," he replies. "No matter



which road we take, we're going to have to curve around a lot of hills or valleys. It looks like there could be a lot of hiding places for the Germans. The land seems to flatten out more as it reaches the higher plateau region that leads up to the Vosges Mountains. And Switzerland is only about 200 miles southeast of here. That sounds great for a trip!"

"So, it's going to be Switzerland now, instead of Paris?" I ask him. "Sure, the trip sounds good. But I believe that they've bought our tickets already for Germany. And that country, by some coincidence, is also only 200 miles away."

Now that we know where we are on the map, we have a limited idea as to where our next move will be. There's always a lot of 'ifs' involved in any of these war situations. The French Armored Division is patrolling the area to our south, and the 79th Infantry Division is moving east from our north. The French farmers or civilians in the region can be very helpful in locating pockets of Germans. But as a self-contained unit we must keep alert with a guard for our own protection.

This is hilly country with valleys, which means that we must pick hilltop locations for our reception of intercept. As far as security is concerned, being up high has its good points as well as bad. But one thing is certain, we sure get an overall picture of the war from this high perch. Our crew is working nights again, and this afternoon before getting some needed rest, we can see smoke rising from a spot where our artillery has zeroed in on an enemy target. And



later, a group of our fighter planes can be seen dive-bombing the same place. There has also two groups of larger bombers flying past our location to larger German targets.

On September 11th, we're on our way again, northeast about fifty miles to a place on our map named Wassy or Vallerest. The Marne River lies eight miles to the east. On our trip today we went through the towns of Vendeuvre, Brienne Le Chateau, and Montier En Der. Our bivouac is on the top of a hill again. It seems to be a pretty good indication that the terrain will be hilly when we see a town with the name 'Mont' connected with it.

Several of our group take one of the exploring trips around the perimeter of our new quarters. We can look down on the valleys that are on either side of our ridge. It's rich looking farm land that follow these river low lands. They form a checker board pattern, with the different crops.

"I think I hear an airplane!" Bill cautions as we near the east end of the ridge.

We search the sky for awhile, and then Ken sights it. "There it is below us on the north!" He exclaims.

It's a german plane traveling low in the valley to avoid detection and anti-aircraft fire. We stay partially hidden under some trees until after it had passed, and then we proceed back to camp.

On September 14, the 2nd French Armored Division establishes contact with units of the Seventh Army at Baigneux and Chatillon. Liaison was first established at Combernon on September 11th. These reports



were made known after their action against the enemy on 13 September 1944.

Our 3253rd Signal Service Company leaves Wassy on the morning of Wednesday, September 13th.

Today marks the period of two months since our arrival on the continent, but no one seems to notice the event. We are traveling south and east, crossing the Marne River at Joinville. The 79th Infantry Division had pushed through this town just three days before. From here we travel northeast to Houdelaincourt, then southeast past Condrecourt, Gruex, Dommeny to Coussey. We're near a little larger town by the name of Neufchateau. There're a lot of early Roman Catholic Churches located in this region.

From Coussey we curve back up around another valley, north past the towns Harchechamp, and Removille to another hill top location called Aouze. The name of the town sounds wet, and it is threatening rain.

The town of Neufchateau was captured just the day before, and we have traveled ten miles past there to this location. This confirms that we're keeping right up with the front. From our bivouac area on this hill our group does some more exploring and we come across the scene of a recent battle. There are bits of flesh still scattered around. "Some of the pieces are bits of brains," Ken comments. "I've seen them before."

We take his word for that fact, and we don't stay around any longer for any further investigation. Our bivouac area about two blocks away is a little nicer. This is the night that our shift changes hours, and we take over the graveyard shift - oh, don't say that, night shift sounds better.



We leave Auoze the next morning, September 14th, and wind or 'ooze' our way around some more hills and valleys, northeast to a small town. Then we travel southeast past the village of Aroffe, and then back northeast again through the towns of Tramont, Lassus, Pecocourt, to Vandeleville. The road swings just a little more east, past Eulmont, and Vaudemont to our bivouac area named Sion. The route sounds like a broken record with the winding road following around the many hills. While it would only be about 27 miles straight across in an easterly direction, we traveled close to fifty miles. It must have been someone around here that wrote the popular song of; "It's a long, long trail a winding into the land of my dreams."

This region is noted for the many early Roman Catholic Churches established here. There's one of them located near our camp named the Notre Dame De Sion. I haven't seen it, but from what the map shows, it's on a hill, a short distance to the north of us. Our operations are set up on a gentle south slope in a nice wooded area for camouflage. We're up high, but not on top. It's more open to our east, so we should have good radio reception.

This is the middle of September, and there's a fall chill in the air. We've had some rain in some of the other areas, and it's threatening rain again here at Sion. The approach of fall and winter weather generally means bad news for the soldier - especially the foot soldier of the Infantry. Sleeping cold, or having wet feet for long periods of time can spell lots of trouble. Many of the Infantry soldiers have been issued sleeping bags already for cold weather protection. With the issue of the bags, there has arisen some unforeseen trouble. During some night attacks by the enemy, many of the soldiers haven't been able



to get out of their bags in time, and they have been slaughtered. They're exchanging the bags again for blankets, so maybe we'll be the lucky recipients of the bags. Of course, they'll be warmer and we don't have the fears of any night attacks by the enemy - or do we? Of course we could leave them partially unzipped, just in case. We've always slept with our carbines by our sides for that possibility.

As it has been our practice again lately, we set out for an exploring trip around our area. There're some other groups that set out in different directions and for various reasons. For some it was a good excuse to hunt for some wine or cognac from some French farmer. It's starting to sprinkle and so our wandering is rather limited, and we return to camp. Another group has been gone a little longer, and their return causes a bit of excitement for awhile.

"Stalneker, Mahoney, and Gallo have just captured 37 prisoners," Andre informs us.

They are taken to an area down the road away from camp where they'll be guarded by some more men. Later they'll be transported to Infantry Headquarters for interrogation.

"How do you say 'surrender, throw down your arms, and raise your hands', in German, Andre?" I ask, and he answers:

"Ergen sie sich! Waffen niederlegen! Hande hoch!" Just as if he had been studying it, or was German.

Of course, we're all supposed to know those phrases, and if not, we always have the little phrase book that was issued to us.



We know from our reports that a Regiment from the 79th Infantry Division had cleared the area to our north by the 11th of September, but in the area to our south there has been more resistance. It was only with the aid of the northern Regiment, that it was cleared by September 15th.

As the rainy days continue , our troops continue their advance. On September 17th, I intercept a German cleartext message indicating that 'amerikanische soldaten' were advancing on their defences at Nancy, which is a town about twenty-five miles to our north. With such communications from them we're able to determine the location of our own troops, as well as learn some of their plans for defence.

Rain with dirt on the ground, combined with 150 soldiers in a confined area, can only result in extreme muddy conditions. It goes with the old saying that a griping soldier is a happy soldier, or something like that. One night after wading through the mud back to our tent following our shift, I find that Bud had already taken off his boots, and was already in his bag. We speak a few words as I enter the tent. I take off my rain coat, and then I lean out the front of the tent to take off my muddy boots. There's a lot of merit in at least trying to keep a clean tent and bed. Bud couldn't resist a temptation after seeing that I was bent over and having trouble taking them off. He coils up his feet behind me inside his bag, and then he uncoils. I land in the mud with one hand, but I'm able to wipe most of that off. I take my other boot off and get in bed. We laugh about it. Maybe it was time we both had a furlough, but the incident seems to fit right in with the crazy conditions we now find ourselves in.



Even after a few days of rain and mud, it begins to seem like a bad dream if we don't kid a little to relieve the pressure of such a life.

The rains continue as we leave our little mud wallow on September 19th. Maybe we'll get into something just as bad. We head east around some more hills and valleys. There're still Germans out there, and the war must go on. As I think about that, I reflect back to the capture of the Germans at our last camp. They gave up, but what would have happened if they had preferred to fight and strike at night? It's always comforting to feel the closeness of my carbine at all times. But it seems like a stronger comfort to have a God to whom I can give thanks and depend upon for protection under these present conditions. Yes, I still remember Avranches, and I go to sleep every night with a prayer.

The road on our travels today takes us through the towns of Forcelles, Housseville, Marainville to the city of Charmes on the Moselle River. The city and the surrounding area was cleared by our forces just four days ago, on September the 15th. It's a good size town, with some manufacturing buildings, and a good size area of residential district. The people are in a celebration mood with the liberation of their city, and line up on the side to wave to us. Our convoy has stopped for awhile - for some unknown reason, maybe our copilot had to recheck the map to find the next road. Some nice-looking French girls blow some kisses to us. The temptation is just too much for about a dozen fellows - some from our truck. They leave their guns and jump from the trucks. They rush over to where the girls are, and cash in on the blown kisses for some real ones with some strong hugs. The little



interlude of affection is broken up as our convoy starts to pull away. They run to jump on the trucks. "Merci, Mademoiselle!" They yell.

"Hey, we could write a song about that, Bill," I quip. "I met a Mademoiselle on the Moselle River. How about that?"

"I think we all need a rest, George," he answers curtly.

Our convoy turns north and we proceed about five miles north, parallel downstream with the Moselle River to a small town by the name of Socourt. The valley along this river is much wider than some of the smaller ones that we have just passed through in the last weeks. It resembles the Seine and Eure River valleys west of Paris. Our new bivouac grounds is also similar to our camp at Pavrieux in that region. There's more gravel around, which will be beneficial to us with the threatening rains.

The weather has cleared up for awhile with the sun trying to break through as we're starting to set up camp and operations. It's nice to put up the pup tents while it isn't raining. It'll also give us a chance to air out our bedding and clothes. They might even dry out if the sun stays out.

"Hurray!" Bud shouts. "Anyone who's not on shift can go on the trucks to a mobile field shower location."

It's good news - a chance to wash off some of the mud and maybe even wash out a few clothes. We climb into the trucks and take off for a location somewhere near the city of Charmes.

The days pass at Socourt, and raincoats seem to continue to be the



order for the day. But we're fortunate that we've a warm dry place to work, and a dry place to sleep in our tents.

There are promotions made in the field and our Commanding Officer is the recipient of one. He's now Captain Jones. The fellows are all happy about it and give him a big hand. He deserves the promotion, and it's nice now to have a Captain in charge of our Company. Like many of the officers in combat, he keeps a low profile, but he's always there looking out for the men. There's one thing that I had taken notice of before, and that is, he has been always the last one in the chow line to eat. It's a practice that helps to establish that all of the men will have equal rations or meals - even the last one in line. It's just a little thing maybe, but it shows a lot of consideration.

Maybe it's in honor of the event, or it's just by coincidence that we hear the news: "The trucks are leaving at one-thirty for the Bing Crosby Show. Anyone that's not on duty and wants to go, be on time."

We had heard for some time about the show - two days ago. I had always liked his singing, and had looked forward to going. Luck is with me today, as we have the evening shift, and I'm not on duty.

Our large group of Crosby fans arrive at Charmes, and find that the entertainment is being held in a very large building that had formerly been used for the manufacture of auto or machinery parts of some sort. Many of the parts can be seen lying around. The building is packed with GIs. The whole 15th Corps must be here, some are sitting, but most of us are standing. Unlike the Dinah Shore Show, this appears to be an all male cast of entertainers. But Bing is a big name in show business - he's well-liked, and well received, with a thunderous



applause. He has a nice orchestra and they play and sing some of the old favorite songs. Of course Bing makes several jokes about his pal, Bob Hope.

About half way through his show there's a slight interruption as we hear the "Ka-Boom" of the anti-aircraft guns nearby. Everyone stays put, and Bing relates several stories to us about some near-misses that their troupe has had during their trip. In one story he tell about a German fighter plane that took out after their transport.

It's still September but that doesn't stop Bing from closing his show with the old favorite that he has made famous: "White Christmas." He gets a standing ovation as he concludes his program - of course, many of the fellows were standing already.

The rains continue at Socourt, and our stay stretches into two weeks. It was wet, but fortunately not muddy.

It's on the morning of October 3rd that our convoy is again proceeding north, parallel with the Moselle River to the city of Bayon. Here we cross the river to the east, and then continue on past the village of Lamath to the larger city of Luneville. The city is on the west slope of a wide valley - the high side is on the west. There're two separate rivers that divide the city; one on the north flowing west, and the other on the west and flowing north. These two rivers join at a place located a couple miles northwest of the city.

In our travels today we have covered a distance of twenty-five miles from Socourt to this location. We wind our way through some of the city streets to the hill on the west. Some of the French people wave to us,



while a few others seem to hang their heads. They have bald heads also - they are women. "That's their punishment for having fraternized or helped the Nazi." Bill comments. "I've heard that they do that, but it's the first evidence I've seen of it."

We proceed west to the top of the hill and pull off into a parking area just short of the top, and still on the west slope with the city. We're king of the hill again, and we should get some good reception for our radios, as well as another ring-side seat for the war that's going on all around us.

Our operations are set up, but now where do we put our pup tents?

The question is answered by the announcement: "This'll be our first indoor quarters for the winter. Your sleeping places will be in these small buildings. Try and keep the same shifts together if you can."

What these buildings have previously been used for, I guess it really doesn't matter. We sweep them out a little, pick out a wooden bunk-bed and we have a place to reside. "Let it rain." But then I think about the poor Foot Soldier out there in his foxhole and I cancel out that thought. However, if it did rain, we would have a new supply of clean water. The roofs on all of the buildings form a collective system and all of the water drains into some rain barrels. We could then have nice soft rain water to wash with - quite a luxury.

Sleeping inside does have some benefits as well as some drawbacks for us. Sleeping in the rain, in our tents, no one had a cold, but now that we're inside of buildings, everyone has the sniffles.

The Seventh Army has a wide front to advance on, and clear. It seems



that our stay here may be for an extended period of time.

It's time to write another letter home. Our Captain had informed us earlier that we could have a camera and take some pictures of the country if we wanted to. So with that in mind, this letter is a good chance to ask Mom to send me a camera and some film. If she's able to send one right away, maybe it could catch up with me before we leave Luneville.

Our extended stay here gives us a chance to catch up on our social life. For a few, contacts for a fresh supply of wine or cognac are found. There's a limited chance for some of us to try out our limited French that we've been practicing lately. Of course, there're some men in our outfit who speak French fluently. Then there's the opportunity for some of our gang to takes walks into town and spend some of our French francs for the first time. Of course, we always go as a group for company, as well as a safety precaution.

I buy some maps of the surrounding country on one of my big spending sprees. At another time I purchase some picture postcards. It's no big deal to make the purchases with the invasion money. The shopkeepers are mostly honest and helpful. Some of these merchants even speak English. If our communications with the spoken language fails, we resort to the universal language of arm or hand signs. The maps that I purchased show in better detail, some of the twisting roads that we had recently traveled over.

The postcards of Luneville show "10 Vues choisies." There's a general view of the city, with the captions of course, all being written in French. There're three views of Le Chateau; one showing just the building, one is with a park or garden, and one shows the street and



park leading up to the Chateau. There's a picture of the statue of General Lasalle, a couple of other park scenes, and a picture of a church called: "Eglise Saint Jacques." Another picture shows an old building called: "Maison du XVIII- siecle." And there's an air view of the Chateau and the surrounding buildings. They're all beautiful pictures that were taken by photographers in the city, and printed here. So, they do some very artistic work in this little town.

I receive an invitation with a couple of other fellows to have coffee at a French home. The hospitality is wonderful, but I do have some reservations about the coffee. Quoting a German word, it's "ersatz" coffee in a thick paste form to which we add some cream and just a little water. But that doesn't spoil our good time - some of our gang speak French so there is communication.

We have another invitation for a complete meal. It's nice again to have some French speaking soldiers in our company. We enjoy a nice meal topped off with some cherry pie. While eating the pie I start to have some stomach cramps which reminds me for a while of my episode at Fort Douglas. But this time the cramps do go away, for which I'm very thankful. Our hosts have been wonderful. We leave early, and thinking that our hosts might feel hurt, we explain to them in French that I don't feel too well.

And of course there are some romances flourishing also, or at least some of the girls either thought or hoped so. Some of the guys are faithful to a wife and marriage back home. But for some of the fellows it's a case of love them and leave them in these new affairs. Most of the French girls have very rigid discipline in regards to dating. To most of



them, love goes with marriage and it's a one time affair. On a visit to town one day, I'm introduced to one of the fair ladies. She's already possessed with the fear that the soldier she's been dating will soon be leaving and she won't see him again. She makes a vow that if he does not return to her after the war then she would join a convent. All of us knew that the soldier was already married, and had no intentions of coming back after the war. The plot has all of the makings that one could hear on a soap opera. To add to the drama, maybe a little out of sympathetic reaction, and then maybe because she's a very pretty young French girl, I ask her if she would please give me her name and address so that I could write to her.

She consents, and starts saying what it is. After seeing the trouble that I was having in writing it -I was lost with the spelling - she decides to write it down for me; "Mademoiselle J. Troestler, 10 Place Des Carmes, Luneville, Mthe et Melle, France," she writes

"Merci, Mademoiselle," I tell her as we leave.

Yes, she's real pretty, and then - you never know. But I do know that the outcome between her and the soldier will turn out to be rather sad. There's liable to be a lot more broken hearts before the end of this war. But then again, some may flourish like the one between Brown and the English girl that he keeps writing to.

With all of the social activities we're writing home about, they won't believe that there's a war going on." I tell the gang back at camp.

"Have a cigar, George," Bud greets me for an answer. "Maybe you're right."

"Oh, no, Bud!" Don't tell me ... " I reply



"Don't get any wrong ideas," he interrupts. "But we do have our share of social life -it's Cognac. The Sergeant looking after her, left some cigars. If you don't smoke he said you could give it to someone that does. Cognac's the proud mother of nine pups. So the 3253rd Signal Service Company does get around socially - at least one member."

We hurry outside and approach the litter with caution, as we don't want to disturb the new mother. The pups are cute, and she's proud to show them off - at least to us.

But social life or not, the war goes on even for us. Intercept messages keep coming in as our fronts change positions. One of our missions is to search for one of General Patton's Third Army Armored unit. It's been missing for some time now. He didn't stop his advance where he was ordered to do so. How can an Army unit get lost? But it is lost, and we finally locate the units through some intercept messages from some German troops that have made contact with his forces. The High Command isn't going to like that episode. But maybe that's how wars are won. He was under orders just like the rest of us are, and we wonder if we could disobey his orders in the same way.

There's a German railroad gun that we've been trying to get a fix of location on - this is a priority. Then we have some other targets to locate and more information to gather.

On November the 15th, just in time to break up the routine, I receive a package from home. It's the camera and several rolls of film. "Thanks, Mom, and everyone on the home front!"

There's also guard duty in this war. There's one post around camp, and one along the road on top of the ridge. I'm generally assigned to walk



the road on the ridge. The time seems to be at night with a fog to cope with. At such a time faith in God and a prayer comes in handy. Cognac used to walk the post with me and I liked having her, but she is busy with her pups now. In the fog I can't see very far, and every noise seems to magnify itself with the moisture on everything. If there's trouble all that I can hope to do is get out a warning shot. And I do hear sounds out there in the bushes by the side of the road. I stop walking and listen for awhile -it's probably just a small animal. Once again all that I can hear is the sound of my own walking, and perhaps the slight pounding of my heart. Then at long last, my tour ends without incident, the dawn breaks with the sun, and the fog disappears.

There have been some warnings issued regarding an increase in German spy activity around our area. We've been told that we're to take special precautions. Some of their work includes the planting of booby traps on vehicles. Defense has already been taken for protection against wire that's strung at head height across the road at night. Some of the warnings are repeated in our Stars and Stripes Newspaper.

The newspaper is published once a week, and this edition has been printed in the cities of New York, Paris, and London. So our paper must come from Paris. There are the comics that everyone reads: Lil Abner, Terry and the Pirates, and Hubert. In addition there's the war news in case we don't hear it all on the radio. A map shows the war from just a little east of where we are, to a line north to Belgium and Holland, and south to Switzerland. Churchill says: "Big Allied Blows to Open Last Lap." A story tells of the British landings in Holland taking the foe by surprise. And there's news about the Pacific War also: "Toll Rises for Routed Jap Fleet."



In recent articles there has also been news regarding a new weapon of war created by the Germans called the "V2," a flying missile or bomb. It has been shown in comic form lately depicting its predicted failure. It shows Hitler shooting one off with a caption underneath saying: "I shot a V2 in the air, it fell to earth, I know not where - I lose more V2s that way." While it might have some short comings at this date, it could also prove to be a very dangerous weapon. It requires no pilots.

And to those who don't want to read any more war news, there's the sports section. There's also news about a new film depicting the life story of the war correspondent, Ernie Pyle. He's well liked, and noted for the help that he's given the soldiers through his articles. Then last but not least, our paper always has a pin-up girl. This time it's "Hedy La-Ma" - that's right, she's expecting a baby.

But the war does go on as our paper states. We can watch the daily bombings and shellings along the front. We can see our planes circle an area, and then watch the smoke rise from the hits. It'll grow quiet in one location, then on another day we can see the scene repeated farther to the east. It's a long front that we're on, and the gains that we make are taken, not given to us. Winter is approaching fast, and that'll mean more suffering for our soldiers. The war must keep rolling during the remaining days of better weather.

The war is moving east to Germany. The country is less than 70 miles away as compared with the distance of 200 miles that we now are from the city of Paris. The columns of distant smoke mark our advance. Today is Sunday, November the 19th, 1944, as our Company moves east to keep up with the front. There are now 150 men, Cornac, and her nine pups in our convoy.



We've been in Luneville a little over six weeks, and have made many friends here that we'll long remember. They've taken the time to be friendly with us. Maybe that's partly because they're a part of this war along with us. They've lost loved ones in the fighting as well as property. And there'll be some Mademoiselles hoping for the return of a new found love. And we know that most of the French people will be praying for our safety and an end to this war - they told us they would. It's ironic that there's a German song that has some application to our leaving Luneville, and it's making its rounds in my thoughts: "Underneath the lamp-post by the barracks gate, standing all alone by the moon you'll see her wait. She waits for her love who's gone away..."

We travel east by a little south through the villages of Marainviller, and Ogeviller to a place on the map called Petonville. It is - or was - a small village also. This is one of those total or partial destruction areas. The land looks like it was rather barren to begin with, but now what few trees that were here have been shot or blown off. Most of the buildings are but piles of brick. What few structures remain are badly damaged. There're shell holes through some, with partial walls remaining, and most doors and windows knocked out.

"Don't run down our new home, George," Brad informs me as he sees me surveying the damage. "At least we won't be bothered by any neighbors. The towns deserted except for us, maybe we could rename it 'Pupville, or Cognacville.' But enough talk - we'd better find us a house."

Our shift finds one that's in fairly good shape - just one shellhole through it for ventilation. It has a door - though the windows are all missing. I even find a bunk wooden bed with a feather mattress. I just



hope that there are no lice, but I dust on a little DDT just as a precaution. Our new home sweet home is quite a sight, in a real war setting. But as Brad stated, 'at least the neighbors won't bother us. And the name of our town is still Petonville. We are now fifteen miles southeast of Luneville.

We've been at this intercept location for three days on November the 22nd, and it's time to be moving on. We'll leave the skeleton town of Petonville for some other unit, or maybe just for the rats and the mice. Before too many days, perhaps the former town's residents will move back in and rebuild - providing some of those residents still exist.

We backtrack on the road, northwest to the village of Herbeviller, and then we turn northeast. Our travels for this morning takes us past the town of Blamont to the much larger town of Sarrebourg for a total distance of twenty-eight miles. There are some larger buildings in the main part of town, and a large residential area stretches to the top of the hill on the south.

For our stay in Sarrebourg, our Company is divided with our headquarters and eating facilities occupying a large two-story building in the main part of town. Our operations and billets for sleeping are located in the residential area on top of the south hill. The arrangement seems to be alright for security and operations. One drawback might be that extra guards will have to be posted, but we've plenty of men for that task.

It's sort of nice to have the larger building to eat and rest in. There are some large open rooms in the building, and one of them on the second floor could be classified as an auditorium furnished complete with a



piano. There are several fellows that I know who can play a piano, but a talented one called Leonard Tobias takes over the keyboard to entertain us with some favorite old melodies - he's very good.

I believe that we're very much in need of some diversion such as this type of entertainment. We've been working over five months of twenty-four hours a day since landing on the continent. All of the ingredients are present that would play on one's nerves. Some of the fellows have already displayed little outbursts to relieve their tensions. That's probably better than some of us who might keep things well in to burst out at a later date. There's always a supply of alcoholic drinks, for those who believe that is the remedy for their troubles. Many of us can and do seek God's help, but that doesn't alter the setup of our present environmental structure - the potential is still here.

As the name of the town indicates, we are entering a region that has had a strong German influence over the years. Someone has stated that the people have a set of two flags, French and German, that they can display depending upon who's in control of the city. We're about half way between Luneville and the German border, or thirty miles each way. So the fact that the people might have some reservations in their friendliness, has a part in reflecting some of our tensions that builds up.

"Our German translator almost got shot last night." Ken tells me one morning after we had been here in Sarrebourg for one week. "One of our guards in town asked him to approach and identify himself. Well he did in a way - but he answered with his German accent, and it was about too much for the guard. It ended alright, anyway."

"I guessthe incident could be the result of the realization of the



guard that we're getting close to the German border. It was dark out last night also, with the blackout and no moon. But why was he out wandering around at night?"

After I'd asked the question, my thoughts tie in with the time that he had asked me if I was Jewish. I'd nearly forgotten about that incident, but this affair makes me reflect back.

From our vantage point of our billets on the hill we continue to watch as well as hear the war go on all around us. Large flights of our bombers, day and night strike at the Germans in their own homeland. They are feeling how it is to be on the receiving end of what they've been doing to others. But our raids are not without incident or casualties. Numerous days I've watched and seen one or two of our planes return smoking and crash into the hills on our north. The crash will be followed by a large billow of smoke and flame. All I can do is pray that as many as possible could parachute safely in our own lines. Some of the planes are seen limping back to our airfields with one or two engines knocked out. The scene reminds me of our Airforce song: "Coming in on a wing and a prayer..."

"Fellows!" Brad calls into our billets one morning. "Come outside quick if you want to see one of them 'buz' bombs we've been hearing about."

Some of us make it outside in time to see a wobbly object disappear over the nearby hills. "It's a good thing that they didn't have those things a year ago," Bud comments. "And I hope that they don't have too many of them now. Airplanes flying over your head with bombs is



frightening enough, but these things are something beyond that. It's sort of like those Japanese suicide planes that we've been reading about."

It's thing like the use of such weapons that makes us keep hoping that we can keep on pushing like a team to soon end the war. It always has been Hitler's desire to divide the Allies and weaken our war effort.

On December the eighth we leave Sarrebourg and continue our push northeast past the towns of Lixheim, Bickenholtz, Sieweller, and Lohr to a little farming town of Peterbach. We're billeted in private homes and we set up operations nearby.

This is winter time, whether or not the calendar agrees. The weather is wet and cool, and the roads are muddy. We feel fortunate to be inside protected from the weather. We've seen people use wooden shoes before on our trek through France, and now we realize more than ever their practical use.

We have the regular chores to perform, but staying more confined inside takes some readjusting of our spare time. There are card games, reading, and letter writing to pass the time. We even have a bet on as to who's living in the richest home. There're some odd guide-lines for this judging. The house with the largest stack of manure piled in the front yard, belongs to the richest farmer. And in a way it makes sense, for it means that he has more cattle. Anyway, our house ties for first, or the richest farmer's house.

Our push to the northeast takes our units to the town of Bitche. But on December the 16th, our intercept reflects the news that's flashed over



our Armed Forces Radio Network. The Germans under the Command of General Von Rundstedt have launched a big counter attack in the Belgian portion of the Ardennes.

On December the 22nd we receive orders to move west and north to the town of Sarralbe. We reach there by traveling through the smaller towns of Ottweiler, Drulingen, and a larger village called Saar Union. We've supposedly taken up a defensive position and we're closing ranks on the front.

Our new quarters is a large two story building of some origin, and there are apartment buildings of the same type of design in the blocks surrounding us. Our sleeping quarters is in one of the many upstairs rooms, and on the floor. Our HOs and other equipment for operations are located in a large courtyard to the south rear of our building.

"George," Bud comments after we had settled down. "Someone said that we'd gone to the dogs after we got Cognac. I guess now they could say that we're for the birds. There's a pigeon Company that's just moved in with us - in the vacant space out front. Come on out and take a look."

We go over to their outfit and look around at the trucks with their cages of birds. "Pretty fancy birds, Bud," I tell him. If the Germans should ever cut off our lines of communications and entrap us, at least we'll always be able to get a message out. Maybe we're for the birds like you said, but I guess one might also say that we're really banded together."

The German 'break through,' really was serious and a threat to our lines.



This is the Christmas weekend, and Monday is Christmas. The newspapers in the United States have been making headlines out of the stories of the Nazi large scale offensive, or what's now referred to as the 'battle of the bulge.' Our Armed Forces Radio Network informs us about what some of these banner headlines consists of: "Nazi drive grows in fury; 45 mile gap torn in U.S. lines." "Nazi gaining in Luxembourg; U.S. loss worst since Baston." and: "Yanks hit back but Nazi put 600 tanks and 150,000 men in the battle." These are a few of the headlines mentioned according to our radio.

We've been cut off by the Germans before in their counter attack at Avranches. But is the first all-out, large scale counter attack by them since the invasion started. However, like the time at Avranches, I continue to have faith in the strength and striking power of our massive machine. And we hear about some of the results of this massive machine that strikes out over the weekend. It's again broadcast over our radio news: "The sun came out Saturday for the first time in a week, and 4,000 British and American planes slug rail lines feeding the drive. The planes swarmed over the ancient city of Trier facing the Luxembourg border at the southern end of the Rundstedt line and a chain of rail centers feeding the German offensive. The Germans lost 178 planes in large scale dogfights, and at least 50 more were damaged. The thunderbolts destroyed 47 trucks in one packed enemy convoy. Saturday night 100 Mosquitoes carrying 4,000 pounders, slug a German rail center on the Rhine near Colblenz."

There're heavy casualties on both sides, and the heavy fighting continues. One American correspondent has estimated that an unprecedented concentration of armor and 1,000,000 men face each other in what he



forecast as one of the greatest land battles of the war. The battlefield is an area of 30 miles wide by a little more than 30 miles deep. The fighting is in cold weather and the tracks on the tanks are freezing. Troops have to chop through frozen ground in digging foxholes and other fortifications. The frozen ground does however offer advantages, in that it affords easier and faster movement by the vehicles.

"Merry Christmas, George." Bud hands me an early edition of the Stars and Stripes Newspaper with the salutation of the season.

"Merry Christmas to you, also Bud," I reply. "Thanks for the paper. Let's hope our next Christmas will be at home."

So this is Christmas in Saaralben, France 1944. The copy of the newspaper that I now have was printed in Strasbourg, France. This is a city that really isn't too far from here. The paper is an early printed Christmas edition. There's the war news, the comics, the sports, and a pinup girl as usual. On the front page there's a picture of Lt. Gen.

A.M. Patch and his Christmas message to the officers and men of the Seventh Army. It's written in appreciation of our combined efforts in: "Speeding the day when, reunited with our families, we may once again say; peace, good will toward men!"

As the General states, maybe we don't have too much to be happy about this year, but the Christmas spirit can be a condition of the heart, whether here, in a foxhole, or back home. While we must keep up with our operations and other duties, we also try to make this day a little more special. We place a few decorations up, and our cooks do their part in adding to the festivities. Writing a letter home today seems to be the order for things to do also - everyone takes part. There's



the loneliness on the homefront also. We've much to thank God for on this day. And, compared with the foot-soldier and others in the cold foxholes on all of the fronts, we can't complain at all. One thing we must be certain of even on this day, is that we must not become complacent. We're still close to the Germans in this area as well as any other area - even in the main 'bulge.'

Most of our members seem to be quite content on this day. I Haven't noticed any excess drinking, but I know that there's plenty to be had, if one desires. And what could be better than to have some nice live music on this Christmas day? To fulfill this desire or dream, a half dozen musicians from the town of Sarralbe are engaged and render their talents in music fitting for such a day. They perform well, and we find that Christmas music is a universal language. It's a language that speaks of peace, and it adds the final touch that makes our day.

Thoughts of Christmas and peace are nice, but we're still surrounded by war, so it pays to be alert and keep our eyes and ears open. Some of our biggest victories of our revolutionary war came about by the enemy doing too much celebrating of Christmas. I'm thinking about this before our night shift while I'm glancing at some articles in our Stars and Stripes Newspaper. "Alert tightened as spies work in Allied area." For some reason I think back about about our civilian musicians. This marks the first time that civilians have been permitted this close to our operations. I continue to read more of the article. "The Provost Marshal and the French Radio warned that spies and saboteurs in Allied uniforms and civilian clothes were operating behind the lines. An AP article states that four German soldiers, wearing American uniforms and riding a jeep, were captured by six MPs in Belgium. They had three loaded machine guns, five hand grenades and enough dynamite to blow



up a bridge. The three would-be saboteurs were Lieutenants and the other was a Sergeant. The four had complete identification, knew the pass word for the day, and spoke good English. One of them was born in Brooklyn. But the MPs were suspicious when they didn't beef when we stopped them."

The article is something to think about, but not to let my imagination work overtime and worry about it. I read some other articles that I'd missed, and glance at the comics once more.

Our night shift passes without incidence, as does our shift on the next evening. On Wednesday, December the 27th, we change back to the day shift. The news on the radio confirms the heavy fighting that's still going on in the 'bulge' area, but that our forces continue to hold.

Thursday evening after dinner as darkness closes in, we prepare for an early good night's sleep. "What's that noise?" Ken asks in a startled voice.

There's no need to answer his question, for the loud swishing noise with the explosion and vibration that follows, speaks the answer for him and all of us. But others in the building did answer as if to confirm any doubts: "We're being shelled!" There's the sound of quick footsteps and excited voices.

More shells whistle in, followed by explosions. There's the thought of self survival. Quick decisions are made: "I think I'll go down in the basement. It should be safer there. Are you coming?" Some of the fellows go down in the basement.

Others decide to remain upstairs. "If they hit us it won't make much



difference where we are!" they exclaim. I decide to stay upstairs in the room where I've been. But I take another position away from the one large window. I position myself low on the floor, and pull the bag up to protect my face and most of my body from any small flying objects. All that's left to be done is to pray - and I do that fervently, while at the same time thanking God for the protection that He has already provided. And my prayers continue. I know that most of the others are doing the same thing. And this episode might make some believers out of any who professed otherwise

I think about the fellows who are on shift in the HOs, and wonder if they're still copying. One of them soon appears to confirm that they were, with the excited new: "A shell just landed just six feet away from our HO! It buried itself in the ground but it didn't explode."

If it had exploded it would have disintegrated the units as well as some of our building.

Later in the night, after a nearby hit and explosion, a woman comes in our building screaming. "They've hit our building! Some of my family have been hurt. Can anybody come and help me?"

Whether anybody went over, I don't know. But the shelling continues and a circle of buildings around us are hit, so there must be other injuries also. We have our own safety to realize at this time - we're the intended target. And in between the periods of shelling I find time to think about what has taken place, and the recent article we had read about spies. It seems evident that someone has informed the enemy of our exact location, and it's possible that someone from this town is still directing the fire of their guns. I momentarily wonder about



our Christmas musicians. The shells coming in were of a large size, so the artillery piece must also be large. Since the shelling didn't start until after dark, it seems obvious that the gun is one that remains hidden in the daytime, such as a mobile unit. If the firing should cease in the daylight to follow, it would confirm the possibilities that it's another railway gun that we've been trying to get a fix on.

With daylight the firing does cease. And also very soon after daybreak our trucks are loaded and our convoy is heading back south at full speed. We had no injuries or direct hits other than the one shell that landed next to our HOs. Every building around us had fallen victim to the shelling. Was it all just luck, or our continued protection by God. If anyone got any sleep last night for any length of time, they were lucky. I hear no complaints about heading back south. It isn't with the idea of escaping the war, for that'll still surround us. But it's mandatory that we seek another location away from the known sights of the enemy's artillery.

Our convoy travels eight kilometers south to the small town of Saar-Union, then west four kilometers to the village of Harskirchen. We continue on another four kilometers to a little place called Altweiler. Until further notice our housekeeping is set up in a Chateau called Bonne Fontane, or Neuweyer. In this seesaw game of war it's hard to ascertain just who had recently occupied this large two story structure. This whole area, until fairly recently, has been under German control. Some of the painting and other furnishings of the Chateau have been previously stored in a couple of rooms, like treasures in King Tut's tomb.

Most of the large rooms are downstairs within the center portion of



the 'U' shaped, inside design. There are stairways on the east and west ends of the building that rise to the north. There's an open walkway around the entire upstairs leading to the adjacent series of rooms. We have a roof to keep us dry! Now if the Krauts don't find out about our new location, we'll be alright.

Our intercept operations are set up on the east side of the building, under cover of some trees. And we're in a heavily forested area of evergreens. There's a forested ridge about a mile to our north, and on our south there's a fifteen acre open field. We have an access road on the west of the Chateau, running north and south connecting a main road on the north about one quarter of a mile away. The access road connects another main road on the south, one quarter of a mile away also.

We settle down in these new winter quarters, keeping up with our nets as well as the war news - especially the 'bulge' area where the heavy fighting continues. There's no more artillery for us to contend with at this location, but we do keep alert for that, or any other danger. Until the fighting in the 'bulge' is contained, anything is possible. Plans are reviewed for the destruction of our records and equipment in the event of imminent capture. These thoughts stay with us as we continue to do our work.

The New Year comes, but there's no celebration. No civilians are allowed near our operations, even though homes are not too far away. As if to enforce these undeclared regulations, Cognac does her part. She must have had guard duty training at some time with the Germans. Bill



brought it to my attention one time, and soon most of us had watched her proficiency. With the homes around our area, the field is an ideal spot for the people to take short-cuts - or it used to be. It's a long way to either corner of the field, but if a civilian should cut across the field for any reason, they now find that they have a very mean-looking police dog in their pursuit. Maybe she is just protecting her pups or our unit, or both. The civilians soon learn to stick to the tree area and take the long way around the field. While most all of these people are French and friendly, she has every right to associate any stranger to our outfit with the potentials of possible shellings or bombings, and so do we.

Snow falls with the winter weather and soldiers must have fun. "Hey, George. A bunch of the fellows are going sledding on a hill west of here. Come on along." Brad gives the invitation to me. We are working nights, and have the day for supposed rest.

We walk a mile southwest near to a small settlement, and there, as Brad had outlined, is a snow covered hill about 150 feet long and four real sleds. "The only catch to the deal," Brad confides to me. "Is that you have to share the ride going down the hill with the girl who owns the sled."

"Have to?" I question Brad. "Either way you state that, it sounds like we've been over here too long."

The only real trouble seems to be that there's not enough sleds and girls - or there are too many soldiers. And the French girls must have had a poor opinion of our steering the sleds. Every time that we get near the bottom of the hill, the sled turns over, and we have to help



the girls back up on their feet.

Back at the Chateau, to help fill in our spare time, we once again engage in the routine pastimes of reading, card games, and answering letters from home. Some of the reading I do, is from my Bible. I also find time to put some finishing touches on the sketches that I started back at Lymington, England.

The other work details, such as guard duty, is a part of the life here also. For some reason they associate me with the road west of our Chateau, and I'm generally given that post for walking at night. Our group have walked this same road during daylight on some of our exploration treks, and it's been fun. But walking this same road alone at night can be mighty scary. There are owls in these woods, and their screeching and hooting at night always sends chilling tingles over my spine. I learn to expect their noises, but they always catch me off-guard, and I never can quite relax - maybe that's good.

But I'm lucky in some ways on most of these night vigils. Cognac and I are good friends, and she thinks that taking these night time walks is great sport. She stays a little ways behind me and keeps alert. If there should be any enemy confrontation on one of these assignments, all I can do is pray that I can get off a warning shot to signal the other guard or someone working in the HOs. The lives of our Company is very much dependent on the guards who are on duty. And I depend a lot on prayer.

I always like the last day of January because it's my birthday. But another reason for liking it is the knowledge that it'll soon be spring and the snow will soon be gone. For my birthday I receive a nice card



and letter from Mom. This is my second birthday overseas, and I pray that before my next one I'll have my feet on good old United States soil.

The end of January this year does bring some good news from our fighting front, around the German break-through. On December the 23rd, we had been informed that the Third Army had launched an attack from the south. On January the 3rd, 1945, our radio gave details of an attack on the north by our First Army. And now, by the end of January, we've the news that the entire salient by the enemy has been eliminated. The Germans had a loss of over 220,000 men and a large quantity of equipment of war.

We had suffered heavily on the front as they had, and to compensate for that loss and to prepare for our certain spring offensive, a directive is issued to all units. The order directs all non- Infantry outfits to screen their men with physicals for their possible transfer to Infantry duty. Our unit could be no exception to this directive. But standing orders from higher authority also forbid such a transfer from our unit to Infantry, or to any other service where any possibility of capture existed. All of our members knew too much top secret information about the enemy, as well as our own set-up.

To keep up with these directives coming from two directions, and to keep the records clean for prying eyes, we're issued orders from our own officers. For these required Infantry physicals in mid-February we've been given special instructions. "Present any physical disability that has bothered you in the past, and outline it on your examination. If you don't have any, then we'll make up one to serve the purpose."

I noted my eye trouble during the examination, which was correct. The



others set forth their own disabilities as seen. The examinations are completed and the records are in order for any inspection that might occur. "You fellows are sure a sickly bunch of soldiers for even being overseas," an officer notes after reading the reports.

Later in February we receive the news that two of our officers, 2nd Lieutenants Belou, and Rozich, have been promoted to First Lieutenants. They're well liked in our close-knit organization, and congratulations are in order. They're still in the war with us, but at least they'll get more money.

Spring isn't officially here yet but the weather is getting nicer. The ground is even getting dry in spots. And with the good weather comes the news that the front is starting to move again in the direction of Germany. On March 13, 1945, we receive our orders bright and early. "Pack and load your equipment. We're moving out in an hour."

It's been quite awhile since our last hectic move from the shelling. Our gear stays mostly packed and ready most of the time, so there's no big problem in packing. We're alone on this move, as the Pigeon Company that had been with us earlier in the winter, had previously gone their way.

The last of our convoy are just starting to leave the area when a barrage of small shells start whizzing in over us and the Chateau. The steady firing continues and we put things into high gear to clear the area.

"How's that for a send-off?" I ask Bill.

"It's terrific, George," he replies. "It's almost as good as the one



we got when we left Saaralben after Christmas."

We escape from whatever was using us as a target, without any casualties, and continue eastward at a slower pace past the village of Harskirchen, to the larger town of Saar Union. Instead of proceeding north at this point to the city of Saaralben where we were shelled, we veer off on another road and travel in a northeasterly direction for 8 kilometers to a farm just before the village of Oermingen. This places us on the map 8 kilometers east of Saaralben, or Sarralbe as it is shown on some maps. And our first outdoor residence for this year is the Lutterbacherhof Farm, which sports the address of Poste Oermingen.

"Well Bud, I guess it's about time to air out our nuptents again."

"I don't mind too much," he replies. "At least it isn't muddy - not yet anyway, even though it's threatening a little. I think that we're really better off outside with more fresh air for sleeping.

"One thing that I could do without, though, is the noise from our nearby artillery units. I guess we need to have them, though. They sound like the same babies that serenaded us when we were on the Seine River west of Paris."

We finish setting up our tents and try to get a little rest before our night shift on intercept. The other crew is already in operation. The other men go about their respective jobs, such as cleaning and refueling the vehicles. The crew on the chuckwagon go about their never-ending job of trying to feed 150 men, one dog, and several pups.

After our evening meal, Captain Jones informs us of the details



surrounding our hostile farewell shelling from the Chateau this morning. Our communications with the Fifteenth Corps has again been established. "The shelling we went through this morning was from our own guns of a Tank Company. They were getting in some target practice firing at the hill to our north and over our heads, under the presumption that our unit had moved out the day before," he informs us.

Our copy at night is relatively quiet, but the artillery barrage is everything but quiet. It's a good night to read some from my Bible,

between copy. There's also a little thunder of God's creation that gets into the act. I pray like the others that most of this mail is going out. And from the booming echoes of the guns through the network of canyons leading away from us, we can tell as the sound fades, that it is. But sometimes there are cross echoes that cause me to wonder whether it's coming, or going out. Memories from terrifying nights, that are like these, I'm sure will long be with me. But I also know that the comfort experience that I receive from reading God's word will be a part of such memories.

Once back at the Chateau, we had a period of silence for two days from the German radio nets. It was cause to have us fear that they had learned about our complete knowledge of their radio operations. But they started in again with their regular call-signs and procedures. We're still haunted with those thoughts every time there's an extended period of silence.

I try doing some drawing during some of the quiet periods, but the results are not too satisfactory. Things are generally too tense. We're either trying to strain our ear for a distant weak signal, or searching



for another station. And concentrated listening is the important job.

The artillery barrage continues for four days before our gunners advance to new positions to resume their ceaseless pounding of the enemy. They've softened up the front for our attack on Germany. We've seen new waves of our fighter planes dive-bombing targets again in this all-out effort. There're the flights of the larger bombers also.

The squeeze play on Germany is now on , from all fronts. The Red Army started their mighty offensive aimed at the final destruction of the Nazi Armies on the Eastern Front in mid-January. An equally powerful assault was launched on February the 23rd, by the Western Allied Armies who were poised on the western border of Germany. On March the 7th, a fast moving Armored Division of the U.S. First Army captured a railroad bridge over the Rhine River at Remagen that was partially intact. The advance sounds easy on paper, but there are still lots of casualties and suffering for every advance. For the soldier, sometimes the risk of death beats sweating out an uncertain fate in a wet foxhole during winter.

On March the 19th, it's time once more for us to move ahead. It's just a couple of days before Spring and the weather seems just a little nicer. Our resumed outdoor life has the prospects of being better, if such a condition could ever be that way in time of war. We're still in France, but the names of the towns that we pass through have the new German sound. We were 30 kilometers from the German border when our convoy started out this morning. The towns we pass through are Gerdingen, Kalhausen, Achen, and Gross Rederching. Bill said that the name of that last town sounded like a mixture of Chinese, and so it does. And Rimling



is the name of our new bivouac area. We're in a wooded place on a northeast slope above the town of Obergailbach.

There's something about this new place that seems to demand that we don't do any wandering around. We've been warned by our officers, and if that isn't enough there are those familiar warning signs: "Gefahr, Mines. or Danger Mines!" Anyway, it isn't for us to question their warnings, and we remain good little fellows by doing our jobs and staying close to home-base for the next two days. Even Cognac stays around close - that is with the aid of a leash. Of course there's one advantage that is if we can't walk around and explore, it's certain that except from air, the enemy can't get too close to us either.

We've a late start from our mine fields at Rimling on March 21, 1945, leaving in the afternoon. It's the first day of Spring so maybe we have an excuse, besides not having orders to move until now.

There've been some warning signs put up ahead concerning the road conditions. One of them reads: "Drive Carefully, Death Is So Permanent."

"That would be a good one to put up back home," Bud comments. And he reads another one that our Army has erected, as we approach it: "Warning! This section of the road is under observation of the enemy and artillery fire. Drive with care!"

Our convoy spaces out as we increase speed.

We pass through the towns of Guiderkirch, Epping, Volmunster which is in France, and then to Hornbach, which is our first town in Germany.



"It's now 1800 hours!" Bill announces, marking the occasion.

We continue past Hornbach in a more northerly direction to the key defense town on the Siegfried Line, Zweibruecken. The small city shows the tell-tale signs of all-out warfare. It has had a severe taste of the bombings, strafings, and military fire, with the mopping up operations by our Infantry. The fighting has been recent, within a day for some of it. There are but a few people on the streets, and those we see aren't very anxious to show their faces. We don't have the desire to linger there very long either.

At an intersection, our convoy breaks off the main road to another road that leads to the base of a hill or ridge - and the start of the Siegfried Line. As we start up the hill on the road running parallel with the fortifications, Ken has been looking out over the side of the truck at the road up ahead. "There's a dead German laying in the road that the trucks are running over!" he announces.

We had noticed several dead soldiers along the road before. Whether we actually ran over this one, I'm not sure, but I take his word for it. Of course as Brad comments: "I guess he wouldn't know the difference - it's just the idea. We're in no position to get out and move him, even if we wanted to."

We proceed up the hill along side the fortifications for about two miles. For our work we seem to love to be on the highest point around, and we seem to find it along side of some bunkers and tank traps.

It's getting late, so it comes as no suprise when the good old 'K'



rations are distributed - at least we'll eat. And for a few minutes we enjoy a meal, while the rest of the crew sets up operations. "So this is the famous Siegfried Line," Bud comments. "Up close, where we are, it doesn't seem very fierce, but I wouldn't want to approach it when it was fully operating by the enemy. With the mine fields on each side of the tiger-teeth for the tank traps, and then with all of the light and heavy gun turrets, it could present quite an obstacle for any trespasser."

"I guess that what we see is only a very small portion of the fortifications," Andre adds. They're like icebergs, and they have more underground than they do on top. If they're like the diagrams I've seen of the ones on the Maginot Line, they go down for as many as five stories. There're rooms for munitions on the lower floor, with other floors available for sleeping, eating and recreation. Machinery fills up other levels. There's a connecting elevator to the different levels. Enough steel and concrete is on top to withstand quite heavy bombs."

"Well thanks, fellows," I conclude after we had finished eating. That was real interesting."

We hurry to set up our pup tents before it gets too dark. "I've seen pictures of some of these fortifications, Bud," I relate. "But I never dreamed that I'd be sleeping on top of it. Some of the rooms might be under our camp area. That gives me an odd feeling."

"I don't believe that I'd like to camp here very long, or for the fun of it," he adds. "You like to write songs - maybe you could write a song about it. You know, like; 'We're tenting tonight on the old



Siegfried Line, Give it a try sometime, George."

"Let us hurry and get this puppet up, Bud," I inject. "I think we both need some rest or sleep."

And we get a little rest before starting our night shift. About day-break we're told by a guard that he has noticed some smoke coming from an air vent at one of the bunkers or pillbox. "I alerted the officers and some men. They're on their way over there now to investigate."

The warning alerts us also, and we check our firearms - just in case. A short while later we see a group returning from the pillbox. There are two German soldiers walking in front of them, with their hands in back of their heads. They'll be transported back to Corps.

Later we learn their story for being there from our German interpreter, who questioned them. They had been sick, and when they had returned to rejoin their outfit, it had left. That was their story anyway.

I've often wondered about the business of surrendering on either side. There're certain times when it would be impossible to surrender even if desired. Those flying a plane or driving a tank don't always have an opportunity, nor do those on the receiving end of such an assault. The Infantry in battle doesn't always have the time to take prisoners, and so they are just shot. Then the revenge for a dead buddy also plays in the picture. So the enemy has a little better chance for survival if they surrender to troops not engaged in the actual front line killing. But then in war circumstances do not always turn out as they may be planned.



On March 24th, 1945, we leave the 'Great Wall of Germany' early in the morning on a road in the familiar northeast direction. We pass cities that we can locate later on the map: Kashofen, Martinshoehe, Landstuhl, and Kaiserlautern. According to another travel book of Bill's, Kaiserlautern is a city of about 50,000, and is located 40 miles west of Mannheim, which is a much larger city on the Rhine River. It existed as early as 800, and it is quite a manufacturing center. Frederick I, built a castle here in the year of 1152, but it was later destroyed by the French in 1700. So, this place has been the scene of many military engagements - and we're adding another one to the 'list.

From here we proceed past the towns of Enkenbach, Ramsen, Eisenberg, and Ebertsheim, to a place near the village of Quirheim. At this location we set up for a two-day period of operations.

On March the 26th, we're again going on our way northeast toward the Rhine River. The towns we pass, for some reason their names all seem to end with the letters of 'eim.' Kindenheim, Kleim, Monsheim, Pfeddersheim, Pfifflligheim, and Leiselreim. If we were to proceed over the ridge that we're now on, and go south for several miles we would come to the city of Worms. And Worms, according to our little book, has a history that dates back to the years before Christ. It's located 10 miles north, or down river from Mannheim, and has a population of nearly 40,000. Worms has been the scene of many battles by the early Romans, invading Huns led by Attila, and the Napoleonic Wars. As a protestant stronghold with a history surrounding the Holy Roman Empire, it was subjected to severe reprisals.

So, the city has a very interesting history, and has been rebuilt several times. Another rebuilding will be due, if the city has been



besieged like some of the other towns that we went through today. It's remarkable that through all of these turmoils, the vineyards thrive, and the wine is produced like it has since the city was founded.

Instead of traveling south to Worms, we proceed north on the east slope of the ridge that overlooks the Rhine River and Valley. We go north for only one mile to set up our operations in an open area overlooking the Rhine. There's no camouflage, or cover of trees around, so we'll have to get through this one on faith. We should be in the habit of doing it that way by now, anyway. But there are some recently dug ditches below us - several lines of them. They resemble the start of some water or sewer project for a city that isn't here. We are told, as maybe we could have guessed, that they are Volksturm trenches. Or trenches made by and for the German's Peoples Army. They could be used by us in an emergency, but there's always the danger of booby-traps in such a place.

We pitch our tents in scattered fashion around the site, and then start up operations. This is one of our top of the world locations where we get good radio reception from a lot of the battle fronts. Traffic is heavy and I receive one clear-text message from a German Artillery unit stating that they have sighted an American column advancing along a certain sector. Of course the message is in German, but many of their words are easily translated with just a little study. I wonder just how the situation will turn out - if they will fire on the column, or if the column can be warned, or if their artillery can be destroyed by our aircraft. Their lives are of concern, but I'll never know the outcome of this human drama. Meanwhile I continue to copy.



We finish our day shift of operations and enjoy a nice hot meal that our cooks have prepared. After cleaning up, we walk down to look closer at the trenches. Then we sit down and talk, while we watch the war being fought below and in front of us. From up here the river doesn't look too big. We have a pontoon bridge across the Rhine at a position below and slightly south of where we are. At least we can guess that there's a bridge there. A dense smoke screen has been set up to hide most of the activities taking place there. We do have artillery gunners in operation on either side of the bridge. They are at least four miles away from us, and while we hear very little of the firing, we can see the belching of their guns, and see the smoke from the targets they hit on ahead. It's always the softening-up process for another advance.

It's getting late when I return to our tent area. I had stayed outside at this observation point longer than I should have remained. Most of the gang are in their tents; some are asleep, and some are talking. My late return to our tent brings a near hostile remark from the occupant of another tent. "'Who's walking around out there?" comes the challenge.

"It's just me," I reply, as I identify myself. "I'm on my way to bed."

"You'd better watch out where you are after dark," comes their warning.

"You could get shot easily around here."

I respect their concern - and my own neck also. I hurry a little faster back to our tent which isn't too far away. Such are the fears of war - of hunting, and being hunted. These fears have been with us from the start and they're natural. They are natural, anyway, for men who believes



in peaceful coexistence. Our fears have increased more since our entry into the German fatherland. In France we were the liberators, but in this region we're the occupiers.

The smoke-screen still surrounds the bridge section of the river the next morning, and the gunners keep clearing the path ahead. Our position may seem secret and isolated to us, but someone must know where we are, for today we receive some mail and a copy of the Stars and Stripes Newspaper.

This edition of the paper was printed in Nancy, France, on Friday, March 23, 1945. That was four days ago. So that's pretty good delivery service. The previous editions of the paper were printed in Strasbourg. There are a few more comics in this edition. They must feel that we need more laughs. Besides "Up Front," by Mauldin, there are "Lil Abner, Blondie, Dick Tracy, Abbie an Slats, and Terry and the Pirates." They are all good for a few laughs, and they take our memories back to more peaceful times.

Besides the sports news, most of the stories are devoted to the war. There're items about the Jap War, and the Eastern, or Russian Front. Most of this war news is devoted to our sector. "Germans' Escape Gap cut to 30 Miles; Airforce Rake Retreat Sector; PW Cages Bulge; and Allies Strike Poe From Dawn To Twilight With 8,000 Planes - this is the biggest beating since 'D' day." These are a few of the headlines, but there are many more follow-up stories, and other items that relate to our own encounters. There's a story about our fellows returning to the town of Bitche - this time to stay. A Chaplain has submitted a



poem which is in tribute to the men who fought and died to hold the line of the German breakthrough last winter. The article recalls memories to me of the General of the Paratroop Division who was asked last winter by the Germans to surrender. His answer came back with the publicized slang word of, "Nuts." This was a tribute to the defenders of Bastogne.

"There are no pin-up girls in this edition," Ken comments to me.

"I've noticed that something was missing, Ken," I reply. "That's hard on our morale too. There's an article written about pinup girls, however. Some of our colored soldiers are asking for equal coverage for colored pinup girls. Or should that be uncoverage? They say that while white girls are attractive, there are some very nice-looking colored girls that appeal more to them. Do you have any comment?"

"None what so ever, George," he answers. "I guess that problem is just between them and the newspaper."

By the evening of the 29th, it's quiet in the direction of our bridge-head across the Rhine, and observation confirms that our artillery has moved on ahead. The following morning, Thursday, March 29th, we are anxious to join them in travel. We circle back south on the ridge to the main road that takes us down to and across the Rhine River on the pontoon bridge. Crossing this natural barrier gives us the feeling that we're really in Germany. Many of our other Army Units have already, or are now crossing the Rhine. We're closing in on the heart of the German homeland.

Again we pass through several villages whose names end with the letters 'Heim' - Nordheim, and Wattenheim. We then continue on past the towns of



Biblis, Gross Hausen, Lorsch, and Bensheim. Along the way, we see as always, the destruction that the path of war has made. None of it seems to be as total as what was seen in Normandy, but it's still here. Enemy strongholds have been hit with artillery and bombs. Rail centers and many bridges have been destroyed, but some have been left intact for our own advantage in our swift advance. We come across burned-out convoys by the side of the road, and other overturned vehicles of war. Their gas shortage has made it mandatory that many of their vehicles be converted, so that they can be pulled by horses. So there are dead horses, as well as soldiers, to be seen. For whatever reason, we have already noted that the people in Germany clean up the dead, or bury them faster than it was observed in France.

We set up operations outside the town of Bensheim and by the Castle Schoenberg - it's an overnight affair. There's time to keep up with our copy, and get in two nice warm meals. Some fellows don't care much for the reconstituted powdered eggs for breakfast. But the cooks do their best to make them appetizing and I think they do a pretty good job. I bring up the subject of our eats, including the eggs, to Andre.

"I don't mind them, George," he replies. "At least and most of our other food are a lot better the best of the German food that we got back in France near Petersbach. That was the time, at the start of the German break through, and our lines were a little extended. We were short of our own rations of food, but we had some captured German supplies that we were using. You remember that, don't you?"

"I keep trying to forget about it, Andre. I believe that they canned the worms with the apples and other fruit to add more protein. And as



for the meat, I don't know what kind of animal it was from, as there wasn't any label, but they sure didn't waste anything in that either. So, even without that in mind, I believe that our quartermaster and cooks deserve a big bouquet."

Today is Friday, March 30, 1945, as we return to the town of Bensheim and head north through a light to heavily forested region. The landscape looks deceptively peaceful in spots. This must be the northern portion of the Black Forest range, or whatever the name for it may be in German. The ground under the trees in most places is free from any fallen brush. It resembles a park in many ways to see the smooth needle-strewn ground underneath the evergreens. One can imagine that everything burnable has been salvaged for fuel in their homes. This is a part of the scene.

Our route takes us past Zwingenberg, Bickenbach, Ramstadt, and then turning more eastward, we go past Rossdorf, Dieburg, Richen, and Klein Umstadt. Our bivouac area is at a place called Radheim, which is just outside of Gross Umstadt.

In this hilly region with its many canyons twisting in every direction, we are once again on top of a hill, to hear and see the war continue to take its toll, before us. As some of the fellows stated before, we've seen and heard as much about the war as anyone else taking part. Maybe our observations have been more from a distance, but it's always there around us. And the war isn't over with yet, as Bill just informed me.

About twenty-five ~~miles~~ to our northeast lies the city of Aschaffenburg.



The city is situated on the Main River. This is a large river which has its source east of here in the Bohemian Forest, near the Czechoslovakian border. It flows like a giant snake, winding its way in large loops from east to west, eating its path by cities like Bamberg, and Aschaffenburg until it joins forces with the Rhine River farther to the west.

But there's something besides water that's flowing into the city today. We've finally caught up with our Artillery Companies. They've formed a semi-circle around the stubbornly defended city of Aschaffenburg. For five days we watch as the artillery, aided by our Airforce bombers, give the city a relentless pounding. Smoke rolls from the ruins.

This is the scene that is constantly before our eyes when we're not performing our operational duties, or sleeping. But there are a few other activities going on. Besides the possibilities of having rounded up a few bottles of cognac, our presence has resulted in the capture of five prisoners. That would amount to the average of one per day. And speaking of Cognac, our faithful Cognac is once more the proud mother of nine pups. "Hey, fellows, you forgot the cigars this time," someone complains. But they inform us that it's only for the first event that such a ceremony is observed. Besides, they're fresh out of cigars.

Our travels on April the 5th, takes us northeast past the town of Gross Ostheim, and through what is left of the city of Aschaffenburg. The sight of the ruins bring out many comments. "What a mess, and I'm glad we were not on the receiving end here in this place."

We now travel in a more easterly direction past Hoesbach, and across



the Main River. While at this point, the Main River is making a loop up from the south, we continue east to the city of Lohr and once again we are near the banks of the Main River. We set up operations near the outskirts of the city. I'm with the day shift, and we go right to work.

"It sounds like we're trying to keep up with our ganners," Bud comments as we listen to the background noise of our artillery.

Later in the afternoon we receive what Bill termed "The welcoming committee." There's the roar of the planes and the staccato of the machine-gun fire as the Jerries spray an area near our HQ. Maybe it's against regulations, but all of our crew heads out the door to seek additional protection besides our vehicle. This seems to be the time when the rule of self preservation takes over.

That was the last of their unwelcome visit during our two-day stay at Lohr. But we are reprimanded for leaving our listening posts. "You men will not leave your listening posts until you're given the orders to do so!" comes the reminder.

We are moving fast, and our move on Saturday, April 7th, takes us in a northerly direction. We pass the towns of Marjoss, Jossa, and Brueckenau. We set up our bivouac and operations just outside of the town of Brueckenau, at a place called Volkers.

"I think I've heard of the city of Brueckenau," Ken comments while we are setting up.

"I know that I've heard about Volkers on the news," Bill adds. "There's an old Monastery up there on the hill. This is a site of a Russian prisoner-of-war camp - or what ever else they cared to put in here."



And that wasn't very long ago, either, from the looks of things."

"So, this is one of those camps," I add. "The country around here is fairly open except farther away from camp. I guess they preferred such an open place to keep track of the many prisoners."

We start up our operations soon after our arrival. And as if it were a part of the script, early in the afternoon we're again greeted by our welcoming committee. With or without orders, there is a hurried exit from the units by the time the firing of their guns are first barely recognized. Sort of a 'bottle-neck' is created by the men at the rear of the units, but by some means of fate everyone, including our Lieutenant, makes it safely over the side. Someone must have given the order to leave our posts and abandon our units for a few minutes, because there was no further comment about our concern for survival that we expressed.

On April the 7th, we leave the environment of Volkers and continue northeast past the village of Oberweissenbrunn, to the town of Bischofsheim. From here we change our direction of travel to southeast to the village of Neustadt An Der Saale. And Bad Neustadt is the site of our new operations. We've traveled from forty to fifty miles today which is nearly as much as our last move. We spotted several planes on our travels this morning, but for some reason they left us alone. We hope they don't feel obligated to give us another welcome on our arrival.

The weather seems typical for the month of April. We've had a few showers of rain already this month, but so far today it has just been threatening. But it does seem rather nice to find out that we will have



billets in the east wing of the castle-like structure. It's called "Haus," or Castle "Salzburg." It seems rather fancy, or novel, to be staying at a castle. There are several wings to the castle, and we're in the east wing. There are some Germans living in part of the west wing who maybe are the owners. "Find yourself a room," comes the invitation from our Captain. Three of us find a room on the second floor of a corner of the wing. We've a large bay window that overlooks the courtyard. I look twice at the large window, while recalling that the last time we lived in a place with a window this size was in Saaralben, France. They gave us a shelling on that encounter - but it couldn't happen again. There are nice thick walls here anyway.

There's just time to pack in our belongings, eat a 'K' ration, and look around a little, before we resume the rest of our day shift of operations on intercept. We lost some time of duty due to the traveling.

The other duties seem to go on also. After my shift on intercept and a warm meal, I take up guard duties. Our HQs and motorpool are located in an area to the north of the castle and our sleeping quarters. My post is to keep watch over this section of operations. It seems like an easy assignment tonight, and the time passes quickly. It's soon dark, but I gradually become used to seeing the shapes and outlines of objects. There has been a German plane flying over the district, but there's no need to worry as long as we keep our blackout secure. It's ten o'clock and a Jerry has just made another pass over the castle. I hear the sound of voices as a door from one of our HQs opens briefly. A lone figure starts to walk away from the vehicle, and there's the bright glare of a flashlight as he tries to find his way in the dark. "Turn out that light!" I order.



"Call me 'Sir' when you address me soldier!" His reply astonishes me.

As he keeps the light on, I order again: "Turn out your light! I can't see who you are. Step forward and be recognized." Oh boy, I think, what have we here? None of our officers would be foolish enough to turn on such a beacon light, and none would insist on the 'Sir' business from a guard.

He comes forward, and I recognize him as a new lieutenant that had just been assigned to our unit. His use of the flashlight had not seemed to bother him. He seemed more offended that he had not been addressed by the respect of his rank or 'Sir.'

"Thank you Lieutenant," I reply. "I could not see who you were in the darkness. But the main point is that a German plane just flew over head and we're supposed to be having black-out regulations. As long as I'm on guard, those regulations will be enforced and there'll be no more use of the flashlight outside. That is all, Sir." I conclude.

I told Brad about the incident the next morning, in case something more should develop out of the confrontation. I didn't report the incident, and I was sure that the Lieutenant wouldn't bring up the matter either.

"He graduated from Officers' School about one month ago," Brad informs me, as if to excuse his behavior.

Operations seem to proceed quite smoothly as the Jerries leave us alone. After another day's shift and evening meal, a group of us decide to do a little exploring around by the older part of the Castle on the



south. I take along my camera, and I have Bill take my picture while I'm standing on the ruins of one corner and looking at a watch tower to the east. The picture, if it turns out alright, should show several deciduous trees and shrubs. Some of these old castles have quite a history dating back many hundred years. Near some of these old castles, caves have been found going back to the early history of man.

The village near our location is Neustadt An Der Saale, which describes its location by saying that it's on the Saale River. Although we can't see the river, we can see the canyon of the river-bed. It winds in from the south to the north and curving gradually to the west. There isn't time to do any exploring down there - but it might be fun. The name Bad Neustadt implies that there are facilities for baths here also, but we'll have to get by with using just a helmet bath. "Think about all of the water that we save with this routine," Bud comments when the issue comes up.

We get in one more full day of operation before it's time to do some more traveling. Today is Friday, April 13th, when we receive the orders. We also receive some other orders from our CO. The Captain wants to have everyone report outside to the north of the Castle. Bring all of your belongings with you, and don't load any of them on the trucks."

No one seems to know the reason for the orders for this unusual command of what appears to be an impending inspection. "Ours is not to wonder why," Bud quotes the old saying. "But this is the first time that we've had an inspection overseas."

But we soon find out the reason from our Captain, when we line up. "The Germans who live in the west wing of the Castle, report that some



valuable jewelry has been stolen. "I'll not stand for looting like that in my outfit. If you've taken the possessions, or know of the person that did, please step forward at this time."

As no one steps forward, a half-hearted effort is made to frisk the men and search their belongings. Nothing is reported found. There was some comment about the incident later when the men were by themselves. While no one approved of any looting, they didn't like to be accused of it by the Germans, or that their word could be used over our word. But there was really no suffering on our part, so maybe the affair served as a pacifying act of diplomacy for the future use of the building by other troops in this war. "But ours is not to wonder why," Bud again repeats.

It's been a different departure anyway, everyone agrees. We're soon loaded and on our way somewhere. "Where's it going to be this time?" I ask Brad.

"Your guess is as good as mine," he answers. "But we're coming up to higher mountains on all sides of us. They're just north of us now, and if we proceed east anymore than fifty miles, we'll either have to cross the mountains or go south. What's your opinion, Ken?"

"We're about 200 miles southwest of Berlin at this location. If we were going there, we could go back a little west and go up around that way. But from the news reports, the First Army is advancing towards Berlin from about this same distance, and the Russians are starting to swing up to the city from the opposite direction," Ken adds in the make-believe fashion of a Commander. "As I don't want our troops to get caught in the cross-fire, I think I'll guide our convoy south before too long."



Our direction of travel is east, past the towns Roedelmeir, and Saal, to the town of Koenigshofen. Ken's speculation is right because from here we turn more southeast to Maraldsweisach, and then curving a little more northerly we go through the towns of Pfarrweisach, and Duermhof. We had observed some German planes earlier in this morning's travels, and now before we can reach our destination, a group of FW 190s fly over us on some strafing missions. They make several passes, and we have to take some evasive tactics. Nothing is hit, but it gives us a scare. They seem determined to escort us nearly in to our new bivouac area - a place called Lightenstein.

We are at another Castle, and it adds to the growing list of Castles that we've either stayed in, or nearby. This Castle is over 800 years old, according to our source of information. We're also shown the location across the valley of some caves that contain evidence of early man.

As if these grounds were off-limits, the Jerries leave us alone. We get in two days of good copy during our stay. I find time to get another picture of me posed in front of the Castle before we leave. "A couple of war-relics," Bud kids as he snaps the shutter. While I might be getting to look like a war-relic, the battle of time is sure also showing on these ruins. There's been a battle of wars fought here, and the 800 year battle with the elements of the weather. The width of these walls is huge, with most of them being two or three feet.

The direction of our travel, predicted by Ken, continues to hold true. We're on our way south, this Sunday morning, April the 15th, 1945. We pass through the towns of Kaltenbourn, Rattelsdorf, and Hallstadt to the outskirts of the city of Bamberg. Here again on our travels, we



meet another twist of the Main River that we first encountered near the city of Aschaffenburg. We're closer to the source of the river at this point. The higher mountains are only about forty miles east from this town, and we're near to 75 miles from the Czechoslovakia border. There's another river called the Regnitz that joins the Main River at this location.

Bamberg is a city of 45,000 people, and boasts of a magnificent Byzantine Cathedral, according to our escort of the travel guide. It was built in the year of 1100. The lists of things manufactured here is long, including nearly everything from musical instruments to tobacco. The top of the list, however, seems to be beer. And while we're on the subject of beer, Bill informs me of some of the activities that beer, directly or indirectly played a part in, around Bamberg and some of the larger cities to our south, such as Munich. "The Nazi party had its beginning in Munich, and the Beer Hall Putsch took place there in 1923. So you can say that this city and the ones to the south were some of Hitler's favorite stomping grounds, and Nazi stronghold. Hitler's rise to power must be largely credited to the large number of fanatical youth who worshiped him - it can be just a reminder to us of what's in this now more 'peaceful' region."

Soon after our arrival in our bivouac area in the woods near Bamberg,

some of the fellows round up another six prisoners of this not so fanatical youth. Some members of our shift take another one of our customary walks, and come across the bodies of six more Nazi that had been shot as they sat around a campfire in the woods. We leave them where they lay - a burial squad would take care of them later. The scene brings up the gruesome subject concerning the stripping of the valuable



possessions of the enemy dead, such as cutting their fingers to remove rings. I don't believe that I could develop a "stomach" to do that.

It has been the desire of the Nazi to dominate the world with a so-called super-race of individuals identified with certain anatomic features of their specifications. I've earlier seen this same fanatical idea express by our own German translator. But the Germans are not alone in this field of racism. Several of our colored troops from an artillery unit had reportedly been murdered down by a river. There was no stated motive for the crime. Two of our Jewish boys commented about the incident in a non-sympathetic fashion. I liked the fellows, but since they had made the remarks in front of me, I couldn't but tactfully ask them a question about their remarks. "Why is it that you fellows of a race that has really been stepped on, don't hesitate to step on another equally troddened race?"

"Oh, that's a different situation," was their only reply.

Some of our intercept crew have picked up some German clear-text messages that's causing some head scratching at the High Command. No one can decipher the message that's presented. After running the mill of translators, it reaches the right one of our translators. "Those are just German cuss words," he announces calmly.

But the words had some overall meaning other than just being swear words. This was against their operating procedure. It means that there's a dangerous breakdown in their radio discipline - at least in this unit of theirs.

The war's still going on, but it's with information like this, added with the fact that we've been moving thirty to forty miles on a near



schedule of every two or three days, that gives us much encouragement.

On Wednesday, April 18th, we keep up our fast previous pace by continuing on past the towns of Kirchaid, and Vorchheim, to a place near Rathsberg. We traveled close to 35 miles south today. Our set-up for operations and sleeping is in an apple orchard. It brings back memories of our start in France, even though the trees in this orchard seem to be in better shape - they're not shot off.

"Oh no!" Bud comments as some German planes start strafing the highway near our area after dark. "I was hoping that we'd finished off all of their planes by now. This is going to be another one of those nights."

"Just hang in there, Bud," I reply. They've still got a sting left, but one of these days there won't be any room remaining to land their Luftwaffe."

As if it was a conservation measure, their planes hide out in the daytime. But there's another activity taking place in the day - and at night. A duel of shells from nearby artillery units presents a weird phenomenon as they travel to one side, but high over our area. Either from a coating on the shells, or from an atmospheric disturbance, they leave a ghost-like tracing of their paths.

These surroundings of war are with us for three of our four days at Rathsberg. The Jerries keep up their nightly flights in a harrassing manner to disturb any attempt for solid sleep. And there has been the artillery. But as it has been previously, when it becomes too quiet, then it's time to move on.

And we're again rolling, south through Erlangen, to the larger city of Nuernberg. As our convoy passes along the streets we can



observe the effects of our bombings really have inflicted on the larger buildings. The walls of many of them have either been chopped off, or left with large gaping holes. Some of the corners of the bombed buildings have been propped up with timbers, and families can be seen living in these exposed rooms. The people have already cleaned up large piles of rubble and they're working on other piles.

We finally pass through Nuernberg, and continue past the towns of Stein Bei Nuernberg, Krottenbach, Dietersdorf, and Schabach to a place named Kammerstein. We've traveled fifty miles south through the birthplace of the Nazi war machine. We set up operations in this higher plateau region under threatening April skies. As a precaution against possible rain, we put our tent on a little knoll and make a ditch around it.

The Jerries seem to leave us alone, at least the first night. We did get a few showers, and it's still quite overcast. Maybe that's why their planes were grounded.

Some mail reaches us today, and my prize is a letter from Mom. It's given to me while I'm still on shift, and I take the time to read it between copy of a slow net. Most of the nets have been going slower lately. At home, everything is going good - or so she informs me. There's a lot of news concerning the reaction of the people over the death of President Roosevelt, and the plans for his funeral - the nation is still quite saddened. This is her first letter to reach me since his death on April 12, 1945.

The President had died the day before we left Bad Neustadt, but we heard about it on the day that we were leaving for Lightenstein. We were saddened by the news then also, but we'd been too busy to dwell too much on it. Her news in the letter brings the matter to light again .



The President was our Commander-in-Chief, and it's beginning to sink in that we've lost our leader. Although we continue our drive, we're noticing and thinking, at least to ourselves, that we'd be needing some good leadership fast. I feel good knowing that at this point of the war we're close to crushing the Nazi war machine.

It seems that we're never satisfied. We didn't like the enemy strafing at our other bivouac areas, and here at Kammerstein we continue to complain about the equally continuous rains. Really though for myself, I sort of like the moisture, and prefer it to the attacks by their planes. There's also an encouraging thought I have, that if we're getting wet, then the enemy is getting a dose of it to dampen his spirits even more. The enemy is really tasting defeat at this time. Even before now, there has been attempts within the Nazi circle to call it quits, but Hitler eliminated this opposition and vowed to fight on to victory - or the end.

The rains increase their torrential volume, and on April the 25th, during the night, several of the fellows take shelter in the trucks after their pup tents are flooded out. We're in luck with ours, as it stays relatively dry inside. But there's always a little spray as the large raindrops hit the outside of the canvas.

The morning of April the 26th, finds us packing some soggy gear such as tents, as we prepare for another push south. We travel back to the town of Schwabach, and then proceed south through Rednitzheimbach, Pfaffenhofen, Roth, and Dietfurt, to an area outside of the city of Mowheim. As we travel south we'll gradually be getting at a higher elevation. The Alps are now less than 200 miles further south. We've traveled 75 miles today, and that puts us in a position on the map of about halfway between



Muernberg and the larger city of Munchen or Munich.

The weather has improved at our new location, with some sunshine replacing the rain for awhile. Everyone has a chance to air out some of their wet gear, and it won't be too long before it dries out. Of course this is still April and the month of showers, so we can expect more. But when the sun comes out like this, so do the enemy planes on their strafing missions. They've been bothering us lately like flies during harvest season. Things are fairly quiet, and then two of them come roaring in real low to avoid anti-aircraft fire. But they're not high enough to avoid ground fire, and our previously quiet guns return their strafing machine-gun fire. There's smoke pouring from both planes as they dive and crash in a crumpled-up mess somewhere south of a small hill ahead of us. The flies had gotten a little too pesky and we'd taken a swat at them.

"How come I always miss most of the excitement?" Bill complains jokingly later when he'd heard the news.

"You'll learn to stick around camp after this," I tell him. "There did you go anyway?"

"Well," he confides. "We had some excitement all of our own. We went for what was supposed to be a short exploring walk, and we ended up bringing back three German prisoners who just wanted to surrender to us. Of course, we had a little persuasion of fire power to back us up."

There's copy on some of the nets, but it's all much slower. Our other activities seem to make up for it, however. I receive another German clear-text messages indicating a breakdown of their discipline, or that someone had captured one of their transmitters intact. "Der vaterland



haben sie kaput - dot ist gut - Heil Hitler." That's the way I received and turn it in along with the call sign of the station.

We again have our orders to move on the morning of April the 28th. Our stay here has been two days, and it's getting too quiet for us who have become a part of the action. "Has anyone seen King?" Comes a plea from the dog's owner. King is one of Cognac's pups, and a favorite one with all of us. There's a frantic last minute search, but he's not located, and it's time to roll.

Our convoy proceeds southerly again and through the towns of Donauwcerth, Zirgesheim, and Genderkingen. A little beyond this town we cross the famous Danube River. "It doesn't look very blue to me," I comment as we rattle across the pontoon-made bridge.

"It sure doesn't," Bud answers. "It looks more grey or muddy-brown. They could bring a good size boat up this river. It sure is large."

After crossing the Danube, we travel a little east and soon cross another river called the Lech. "These rivers must get muddy from all of the glacier silt," I tell Bud. "The Danube is flowing east from the Austrian alpine country, and this one is flowing more from the south. They must join together not too far east of here."

We continue east past a town named Rain, to a place called Bayerdilling. This is our camping spot for today. When we crossed the Danube earlier, I became anxious to find out more about the river. After we'd set-up operations, I got out our small travel guide. The Danube is the second longest river, and one of the main traffic arteries of Europe. The river is 1725 miles long, and after traveling east through eight countries, it empties into the Black sea on the Rumanian coast. There are 300 tributaries of the Danube, and one of these is the Lech River that we crossed



today. Out of the 300 tributaries of the Danube, 60 of them are navigable by river craft. The Danube itself is navigable 1600 miles by rivercraft, and this mileage takes it to a point of 100 miles farther west from where we crossed it today. The terminal point of the river is at a town called Ulm. The control of the Danube and its delta has been the cause of many wars. One can imagine that it was Hitler's desire to gain control of this river, that influenced the decision of his fast invasion of that country.

"Thank you for your book, Bill." I tell him as I hand him back the travel guide. "That Danube is quite a river."

The weather is fairly good, with high thin cloudiness. We don't have any strafing attacks on our arrival, and it's an appreciated feeling. But there is some sporadic anti-aircraft fire from around the valley surrounding us. After we set up operations and camp near some low trees, several of us walk north to an open spot to observe just what is taking place. We see the exploding shells as they are fired into the sky, but there are no planes visible. We search in back of the shell fire, and then look way ahead where we spot them. The enemy planes are fast, and they manage to keep a lot of distance ahead of the firing.

"Those must be some of the new German fighter planes we've been hearing about lately." Andre tells us. "They don't use a propeller, but rely on what is called jet propulsion. They appear to have a strong potential as a weapon. I believe that we can be thankful that they didn't develop some of these little gadgets before this time."

The firing continues - and so do the misses. In some ways it's a little comical sidelight of a very serious war. "Just wait, they'll get their range yet." I encourage.



"Happy Birthday!" That's the merry sound that greet us soon after our return to the bivouac area. Our cook is all ready for some type of very special occasion. He has prepared a small cake decorated with one single candle placed on the top of it.

"Who has the birthday?" I inquire from him.

"We all do," he replies with a big grin. "Our 3253rd Signal Service Company is just one year old today. There are some small cupcakes for everyone, and a few other small items that we've been saving just for this birthday."

There are many thanks expressed to our cooks, and to everyone else connected with this get together. There's plenty for everyone, and for those who are on shift, who are personally delivered some of these goodies

"From London to nearly across Germany. It has been quite a trip, and one that's not quite over with yet." I comment to Andre.

"Not as long as there's a war going on, and the Germans want to keep shooting, it's not over," he replies. Our intercept traffic is slowing down, which is a good thing, and encouraging. This twenty four hour around the clock vigil has been quite a strain, and it's beginning to show."

We keep up the fast pace of travel by again moving on April the 29th. Our convoy goes southeast in the direction of Munich. We must have a liking to travel on Sunday, as this is the third Sunday in a row that we've been so inclined. Our destination that we reach today is near the town of Aichach, at a place called Ober Mittelbach. On our travels to here today, we passed through the towns of Holzheim, Beier, and



Ober Bernbach. We will have billets in some private buildings, and we set up operations outside, and nearby.

Many of the German people have for some time now lived with the illusion that they are the superior race. Their idol has been the leader, Hitler, whom many of them worshipped nearly as a God. This is especially true of the German youth, whose devotion to him was fanatic. Their total devotion is regarded as being Hitler's secret weapon in the success of fulfilling his ambition for total domination of others. There may have been some Germans who had reservations about many of his methods used for any such achievements, but they knew enough to be quiet or leave the country.

It's a hard pill for many of them to swallow, to see the armies of other governments put an end to their domination by conquering, and move in as the conquerors and the ones in charge. There are some Germans near our billets who own some nice dogs. One of these men has some dachshunds. If the Germans were striving for a master race of dogs, this breed might be one of the top contenders. They are German originals, with long bodies and ears to match. The owner of these dogs has expressed the fear that the Americans would either take or harm his prized dogs. To offset his fears for such a possible future, he takes the drastic steps during the night of killing them - putting them to sleep in a 'humane way.'

Our stay at Ober Wittelsbach is brief for the period of just overnight. And our direction of travel is again southeast in the direction of the very large city of Munich. We are also getting close to an area where the Germans have been accustomed to putting other creatures to sleep in a 'humane way.' The creatures are human beings who don't quite measure up to the criteria established by the so called master race.



For our travels on this last day of April, we go back to Aichach, and then proceed on through Klingen, Woolomoos, Zeitlbach, and Unter Bachern to a place called Guending. We've traveled about forty miles today, which is the same distance of travel of the proceeding day.

Our billets at Guending are very near the very infamous Dachau concentration camp. Its reputation as a death camp is widely known. It's the so-called Jews that have mainly been exterminated here, and the huge total is not really known at this time. From the fairly cozy rooms of our billets, or from the working quarters of our HOs, it's hard to realize that we're near such a place. Yet some of their staff that ran the death house may have been stationed in these very rooms. There's some physical evidence of their expressed feelings, shown by some of their personal articles left behind in their hasty exit. One such item that I find on a shelf is a picture book showing some of the early Nazi conquests. It shows many of the leaders and men of their war machine, in the countries that they had invaded at that time. There isn't time for me to fully study or look at the book, but I put it in with some of my belongings to look at later.

Some of our fellows desire a closer look at the concentration camp. They arrive back later in the evening with their first hand grizzly observations. There are findings of lampshades made from human skins. This is the workings of the master race.

Our stay at Guending is a short two days, and I'm glad to move from such surroundings. Today is May 2nd, as we again take up our travel in the southeast direction toward Munich. We have many reasons to feel rather optimistic at this time. A true indication as to the outcome



of this terrible holocaust we've been a part of, has been reflected in the lack of traffic on our nets. The war is still going on and there are still people dying, but our intercept traffic has diminished to nearly zero. We've been working at a continuous busy pace since we landed on the continent ten months ago. The tempo of this pace has slowed to a near halt during the last week, and that is what we've been wanting. Before this week we've been too busy to indulge in the luxury of thinking. Now that we have the time to talk and think more, it seems as if we're trying to wake up from a nightmare. We're trying to readjust our nervous systems that have kept us going up till now.

We talk a lot about what is happening, reflecting back and looking ahead at this end of the cattle chute that we are approaching. Our reflected thoughts could fill several books. There are thoughts about back home and our loved ones; thoughts about Ireland, England, the Marys, and the pretty rhododendrons. Then we blend these thoughts with the thoughts of the destruction and the suffering that we've witnessed, and some that is still left to witness. Thoughts can become confusing enough to make us wish that we could keep busier.

The large city of Munich is less than twenty-five miles from where we were staying at Guending. We go through the town of Geiselbullach, and then turn onto the famous Reich Autobahn. This is a pretty good highway, Bill and some of the others are commenting. "Maybe one of these years we'll get something that's like this back in the good old United States. We could use it now with all of the traffic that we have there. This is really something - the world's first super highway."

But this highway wasn't built for the convenience of the motoring



public. This endless appearing stretch of double wide concrete was built to expedite the movement of their enormous war machine. The scene as we see it today is in remarkable contrast. The skies on this second day of May are stormy looking and threatening rain, but to our south we can still make out the outline of the Austrian Alps as they rise in the distance. On the north of the highway the land is more flat and suitable for agricultural pursuits. Women dressed in plain dress, that shows plenty of wear, can be seen in the fields cutting hay with wooden- handled scythes, as they have done for centuries. But today, their work with primitive tools, is done along side of these multi-million dollar highways. Their sweat and toil, has paid for its construction.

Following the highway we come to several places where bridges have been blown up and we have to detour around them. "They must have blown up some of these bridges themselves." Bud comments. "We wouldn't have too much need to destroy them at this stage of the game, Unless it was done earlier in the war, it impedes us more than it helps us."

"They've also been using strips of this highway for aircraft runways." Ken adds. "That's probably where some of those German jets that we saw the other day took off from."

"And here is another use for the famous highway." Bud again continues, as we observe several thousand Nazi troops in the west bound lane. Several of our machine-gun equipped jeeps are guarding them as they are marched to an area of detainment. Dirty and dejected looking, they plod along. Their grey uniforms are mixed and stripped of most insignia. "Maybe they'll get some use out of their own Dachau concentration camp." He adds.



the Main River. While at this point, the Main River is making a loop up from the south, we continue east to the city of Lohr and once again we are near the banks of the Main River. We set up operations near the outskirts of the city. I'm with the day shift, and we go right to work.

"It sounds like we're trying to keep up with our gunners," Bud comments as we listen to the background noise of our artillery.

Later in the afternoon we receive what Bill termed "The welcoming committee." There's the roar of the planes and the staccato of the machine-gun fire as the Jerries spray an area near our HQ. Maybe it's against regulations, but all of our crew heads out the door to seek additional protection besides our vehicle. This seems to be the time when the rule of self preservation takes over.

That was the last of their unwelcome visit during our two-day stay at Lohr. But we are reprimanded for leaving our listening posts. "You men will not leave your listening posts until you're given the orders to do so!" comes the reminder.

We are moving fast, and our move on Saturday, April 7th, takes us in a northerly direction. We pass the towns of Marjoss, Jossa, and Brueckenau. We set up our bivouac and operations just outside of the town of Brueckenau, at a place called Volkers.

"I think I've heard of the city of Brueckenau," Ken comments while we are setting up.

"I know that I've heard about Volkers on the news," Bill adds. "There's an old Monastery up there on the hill. This is a site of a Russian prisoner-of-war camp - or what ever else they cared to put in here."



And that wasn't very long ago, either, from the looks of things."

"So, this is one of those camps," I add. "The country around here is fairly open except farther away from camp. I guess they preferred such an open place to keep track of the many prisoners."

We start up our operations soon after our arrival. And as if it were a part of the script, early in the afternoon we're again greeted by our welcoming committee. With or without orders, there is a hurried exit from the units by the time the firing of their guns are first barely recognized. Sort of a 'bottle-neck' is created by the men at the rear of the units, but by some means of fate everyone, including our Lieutenant, makes it safely over the side. Someone must have given the order to leave our posts and abandon our units for a few minutes, because there was no further comment about our concern for survival that we expressed.

On April the 7th, we leave the environment of Volkers and continue northeast past the village of Oberweissenbrunn, to the town of Bischofsheim. From here we change our direction of travel to southeast to the village of Neustadt An Der Saale. And Bad Neustadt is the site of our new operations. We've traveled from forty to fifty miles today which is nearly as much as our last move. We spotted several planes on our travels this morning, but for some reason they left us alone. We hope they don't feel obligated to give us another welcome on our arrival.

The weather seems typical for the month of April. We've had a few showers of rain already this month, but so far today it has just been threatening. But it does seem rather nice to find out that we will have



billets in the east wing of the castle-like structure. It's called "Haus," or Castle "Salzburg." It seems rather fancy, or novel, to be staying at a castle. There are several wings to the castle, and we're in the east wing. There are some Germans living in part of the west wing who maybe are the owners. "Find yourself a room," comes the invitation from our Captain. Three of us find a room on the second floor of a corner of the wing. We've a large bay window that overlooks the courtyard. I look twice at the large window, while recalling that the last time we lived in a place with a window this size was in Saaralben, France. They gave us a shelling on that encounter - but it couldn't happen again. There are nice thick walls here anyway.

There's just time to pack in our belongings, eat a 'K' ration, and look around a little, before we resume the rest of our day shift of operations on intercept. We lost some time of duty due to the traveling.

The other duties seem to go on also. After my shift on intercept and a warm meal, I take up guard duties. Our HQs and motorpool are located in an area to the north of the castle and our sleeping quarters. My post is to keep watch over this section of operations. It seems like an easy assignment tonight, and the time passes quickly. It's soon dark, but I gradually become used to seeing the shapes and outlines of objects. There has been a German plane flying over the district, but there's no need to worry as long as we keep our blackout secure. It's ten o'clock and a Jerry has just made another pass over the castle. I hear the sound of voices as a door from one of our HQs opens briefly. A lone figure starts to walk away from the vehicle, and there's the bright glare of a flashlight as he tries to find his way in the dark. "Turn out that light!" I order.



"Call me 'Sir' when you address me soldier!" His reply astonishes me.

As he keeps the light on, I order again: "Turn out your light! I can't see who you are. Step forward and be recognized." Oh boy, I think, what have we here? None of our officers would be foolish enough to turn on such a beacon light, and none would insist on the 'Sir' business from a guard.

He comes forward, and I recognize him as a new lieutenant that had just been assigned to our unit. His use of the flashlight had not seemed to bother him. He seemed more offended that he had not been addressed by the respect of his rank or 'Sir.'

"Thank you Lieutenant," I reply. "I could not see who you were in the darkness. But the main point is that a German plane just flew over head and we're supposed to be having black-out regulations. As long as I'm on guard, those regulations will be enforced and there'll be no more use of the flashlight outside. That is all, Sir." I conclude.

I told Brad about the incident the next morning, in case something more should develop out of the confrontation. I didn't report the incident, and I was sure that the Lieutenant wouldn't bring up the matter either.

"He graduated from Officers' School about one month ago," Brad informs me, as if to excuse his behavior.

Operations seem to proceed quite smoothly as the Jerries leave us alone. After another day's shift and evening meal, a group of us decide to do a little exploring around by the older part of the Castle on the



south. I take along my camera, and I have Bill take my picture while I'm standing on the ruins of one corner and looking at a watch tower to the east. The picture, if it turns out alright, should show several deciduous trees and shrubs. Some of these old castles have quite a history dating back many hundred years. Near some of these old castles, caves have been found going back to the early history of man.

The village near our location is Neustadt An Der Saale, which describes its location by saying that it's on the Saale River. Although we can't see the river, we can see the canyon of the river-bed. It winds in from the south to the north and curving gradually to the west. There isn't time to do any exploring down there - but it might be fun. The name Bad Neustadt implies that there are facilities for baths here also, but we'll have to get by with using just a helmet bath. "Think about all of the water that we save with this routine," Bud comments when the issue comes up.

We get in one more full day of operation before it's time to do some more traveling. Today is Friday, April 13th, when we receive the orders. We also receive some other orders from our CO. The Captain wants to have everyone report outside to the north of the Castle. Bring all of your belongings with you, and don't load any of them on the trucks."

No one seems to know the reason for the orders for this unusual command of what appears to be an impending inspection. "Ours is not to wonder why," Bud quotes the old saying. "But this is the first time that we've had an inspection overseas."

But we soon find out the reason from our Captain, when we line up. "The Germans who live in the west wing of the Castle, report that some



valuable jewelry has been stolen. "I'll not stand for looting like that in my outfit. If you've taken the possessions, or know of the person that did, please step forward at this time."

As no one steps forward, a half-hearted effort is made to frisk the men and search their belongings. Nothing is reported found. There was some comment about the incident later when the men were by themselves. While no one approved of any looting, they didn't like to be accused of it by the Germans, or that their word could be used over our word. But there was really no suffering on our part, so maybe the affair served as a pacifying act of diplomacy for the future use of the building by other troops in this war. "But ours is not to wonder why." Bud again repeats.

It's been a different departure anyway, everyone agrees. We're soon loaded and on our way somewhere. "Where's it going to be this time?" I ask Brad.

"Your guess is as good as mine," he answers. "But we're coming up to higher mountains on all sides of us. They're just north of us now, and if we proceed east anymore than fifty miles, we'll either have to cross the mountains or go south. What's your opinion, Ken?"

"We're about 200 miles southwest of Berlin at this location. If we were going there, we could go back a little west and go up around that way. But from the news reports, the First Army is advancing towards Berlin from about this same distance, and the Russians are starting to swing up to the city from the opposite direction," Ken adds in the make-believe fashion of a Commander. "As I don't want our troops to get caught in the cross-fire, I think I'll guide our convoy south before too long."



Our direction of travel is east, past the towns Roedelmeir, and Saal, to the town of Koenigshofen. Ken's speculation is right because from here we turn more southeast to Maraldsweisach, and then curving a little more northerly we go through the towns of Pfarrweisach, and Duernhof. We had observed some German planes earlier in this morning's travels, and now before we can reach our destination, a group of FW 190s fly over us on some strafing missions. They make several passes, and we have to take some evasive tactics. Nothing is hit, but it gives us a scare. They seem determined to escort us nearly in to our new bivouac area - a place called Lightenstein.

We are at another Castle, and it adds to the growing list of Castles that we've either stayed in, or nearby. This Castle is over 800 years old, according to our source of information. We're also shown the location across the valley of some caves that contain evidence of early man.

As if these grounds were off-limits, the Jerries leave us alone. We get in two days of good copy during our stay. I find time to get another picture of me posed in front of the Castle before we leave. "A couple of war-relics," Bud kids as he snaps the shutter. While I might be getting to look like a war-relic, the battle of time is sure also showing on these ruins. There's been a battle of wars fought here, and the 800 year battle with the elements of the weather. The width of these walls is huge, with most of them being two or three feet.

The direction of our travel, predicted by Ken, continues to hold true. We're on our way south, this Sunday morning, April the 15th, 1945. We pass through the towns of Kaltenbourn, Rattelsdorf, and Hallstadt to the outskirts of the city of Bamberg. Here again on our travels, we



meet another twist of the Main River that we first encountered near the city of Aschaffenburg. We're closer to the source of the river at this point. The higher mountains are only about forty miles east from this town, and we're near to 75 miles from the Czechoslovakia border. There's another river called the Regnitz that joins the Main River at this location.

Bamberg is a city of 45,000 people, and boasts of a magnificent Byzantine Cathedral, according to our escort of the travel guide. It was built in the year of 1100. The lists of things manufactured here is long, including nearly everything from musical instruments to tobacco. The top of the list, however, seems to be beer. And while we're on the subject of beer, Bill informs me of some of the activities that beer, directly or indirectly played a part in, around Bamberg and some of the larger cities to our south, such as Munich. "The Nazi party had its beginning in Munich, and the Beer Hall Putsch took place there in 1923. So you can say that this city and the ones to the south were some of Hitler's favorite stomping grounds, and Nazi stronghold. Hitler's rise to power must be largely credited to the large number of fanatical youth who worshiped him - it can be just a reminder to us of what's in this now more 'peaceful' region."

Soon after our arrival in our bivouac area in the woods near Bamberg, some of the fellows round up another six prisoners of this not so fanatical youth. Some members of our shift take another one of our customary walks, and come across the bodies of six more Nazi that had been shot as they sat around a campfire in the woods. We leave them where they lay - a burial squad would take care of them later. The scene brings up the gruesome subject concerning the stripping of the valuable



possessions of the enemy dead, such as cutting their fingers to remove rings. I don't believe that I could develop a "stomach" to do that.

It has been the desire of the Nazi to dominate the world with a so-called super-race of individuals identified with certain anatomic features of their specifications. I've earlier seen this same fanatical idea express by our own German translator. But the Germans are not alone in this field of racism. Several of our colored troops from an artillery unit had reportedly been murdered down by a river. There was no stated motive for the crime. Two of our Jewish boys commented about the incident in a non-sympathetic fashion. I liked the fellows, but since they had made the remarks in front of me, I couldn't but tactfully ask them a question about their remarks. "Why is it that you fellows of a race that has really been stepped on, don't hesitate to step on another equally troddened race?"

"Oh, that's a different situation," was their only reply.

Some of our intercept crew have picked up some German clear-text messages that's causing some head scratching at the High Command. No one can decipher the message that's presented. After running the mill of translators, it reaches the right one of our translators. "Those are just German cuss words," he announces calmly.

But the words had some overall meaning other than just being swear words. This was against their operating procedure. It means that there's a dangerous breakdown in their radio discipline - at least in this unit of theirs.

The war's still going on, but it's with information like this, added with the fact that we've been moving thirty to forty miles on a near



schedule of every two or three days, that gives us much encouragement.

On Wednesday, April 18th, we keep up our fast previous pace by continuing on past the towns of Hirschaid, and Vorchheim, to a place near Rathsberg. We traveled close to 35 miles south today. Our set-up for operations and sleeping is in an apple orchard. It brings back memories of our start in France, even though the trees in this orchard seem to be in better shape - they're not shot off.

"Oh no!" Bud comments as some German planes start strafing the highway near our area after dark. "I was hoping that we'd finished off all of their planes by now. This is going to be another one of those nights."

"Just hang in there, Bud," I reply. They've still got a sting left, but one of these days there won't be any room remaining to land their Luftwaffe."

As if it was a conservation measure, their planes hide out in the daytime. But there's another activity taking place in the day - and at night. A duel of shells from nearby artillery units presents a weird phenomenon as they travel to one side, but high over our area. Either from a coating on the shells, or from an atmospheric disturbance, they leave a ghost-like tracing of their paths.

These surroundings of war are with us for three of our four days at Rathsberg. The Jerries keep up their nightly flights in a harrassing manner to disturb any attempt for solid sleep. And there has been the artillery. But as it has been previously, when it becomes too quiet, then it's time to move on.

And we're again rolling, south through Erlangen, to the larger city of Nuernberg. As our convoy passes along the streets we can



observe the effects of our bombings really have inflicted on the larger buildings. The walls of many of them have either been chopped off, or left with large gaping holes. Some of the corners of the bombed buildings have been propped up with timbers, and families can be seen living in these exposed rooms. The people have already cleaned up large piles of rubble and they're working on other piles.

We finally pass through Nuernberg, and continue past the towns of Stein Bei Nuernberg, Krottenbach, Dietersdorf, and Schabach to a place named Kammerstein. We've traveled fifty miles south through the birthplace of the Nazi war machine. We set up operations in this higher plateau region under threatening April skies. As a precaution against possible rain, we put our tent on a little knoll and make a ditch around it.

The Jerries seem to leave us alone, at least the first night. We did get a few showers, and it's still quite overcast. Maybe that's why their planes were grounded.

Some mail reaches us today, and my prize is a letter from Mom. It's given to me while I'm still on shift, and I take the time to read it between copy of a slow net. Most of the nets have been going slower lately. At home, everything is going good - or so she informs me. There's a lot of news concerning the reaction of the people over the death of President Roosevelt, and the plans for his funeral - the nation is still quite saddened. This is her first letter to reach me since his death on April 12, 1945.

The President had died the day before we left Bad Neustadt, but we heard about it on the day that we were leaving for Lightenstein. We were saddened by the news then also, but we'd been too busy to dwell too much on it. Her news in the letter brings the matter to light again .



The President was our Commander-in-Chief, and it's beginning to sink in that we've lost our leader. Although we continue our drive, we're noticing and thinking, at least to ourselves, that we'd be needing some good leadership fast. I feel good knowing that at this point of the war we're close to crushing the Nazi war machine.

It seems that we're never satisfied. We didn't like the enemy strafing at our other bivouac areas, and here at Kammerstein we continue to complain about the equally continuous rains. Really though for myself, I sort of like the moisture, and prefer it to the attacks by their planes. There's also an encouraging thought I have, that if we're getting wet, then the enemy is getting a dose of it to dampen his spirits even more. The enemy is really tasting defeat at this time. Even before now, there has been attempts within the Nazi circle to call it quits, but Hitler eliminated this opposition and vowed to fight on to victory - or the end.

The rains increase their torrential volume, and on April the 25th, during the night, several of the fellows take shelter in the trucks after their pup tents are flooded out. We're in luck with ours, as it stays relatively dry inside. But there's always a little spray as the large raindrops hit the outside of the canvas.

The morning of April the 26th, finds us packing some soggy gear such as tents, as we prepare for another push south. We travel back to the town of Schwabach, and then proceed south through Rednitzheimbach, Pfaffenhofen, Roth, and Dietfurt, to an area outside of the city of Mowheim. As we travel south we'll gradually be getting at a higher elevation. The Alps are now less than 200 miles further south. We've traveled 75 miles today, and that puts us in a position on the map of about halfway between



Nuernberg and the larger city of Munchen or Munich.

The weather has improved at our new location, with some sunshine replacing the rain for awhile. Everyone has a chance to air out some of their wet gear, and it won't be too long before it dries out. Of course this is still April and the month of showers, so we can expect more. But when the sun comes out like this, so do the enemy planes on their strafing missions. They've been bothering us lately like flies during harvest season. Things are fairly quiet, and then two of them come roaring in real low to avoid anti-aircraft fire. But they're not high enough to avoid ground fire, and our previously quiet guns return their strafing machine-gun fire. There's smoke pouring from both planes as they dive and crash in a crumpled-up mess somewhere south of a small hill ahead of us. The flies had gotten a little too pesky and we'd taken a swat at them.

"How come I always miss most of the excitement?" Bill complains jokingly later when he'd heard the news.

"You'll learn to stick around camp after this," I tell him. "Where did you go anyway?"

"Well," he confides. "We had some excitement all of our own. We went for what was supposed to be a short exploring walk, and we ended up bringing back three German prisoners who just wanted to surrender to us. Of course, we had a little persuasion of fire power to back us up."

There's copy on some of the nets, but it's all much slower. Our other activities seem to make up for it, however. I receive another German clear-text messages indicating a breakdown of their discipline, or that someone had captured one of their transmitters intact. "Der vaterland



haben sie kaput - dot ist gut - Heil Hitler." That's the way I received and turn it in along with the call sign of the station.

We again have our orders to move on the morning of April the 28th. Our stay here has been two days, and it's getting too quiet for us who have become a part of the action. "Has anyone seen King?" Comes a plea from the dog's owner. King is one of Cognac's pups, and a favorite one with all of us. There's a frantic last minute search, but he's not located, and it's time to roll.

Our convoy proceeds southerly again and through the towns of Donauwcerth, Zirgesheim, and Genderkingen. A little beyond this town we cross the famous Danube River. "It doesn't look very blue to me," I comment as we rattle across the pontoon-made bridge.

"It sure doesn't," Bud answers. "It looks more grey or muddy-brown. They could bring a good size boat up this river. It sure is large."

After crossing the Danube, we travel a little east and soon cross another river called the Lech. "These rivers must get muddy from all of the glacier silt," I tell Bud. "The danube is flowing east from the Austrian alpine country, and this one is flowing more from the south. They must join together not too far east of here."

We continue east past a town named Rain, to a place called Bayerdilling. This is our camping spot for today. When we crossed the Danube earlier, I became anxious to find out more about the river. After we'd set-up operations, I got out our small travel guide. The danube is the second longest river, and one of the main traffic arteries of Europe. The river is 1725 miles long, and after traveling east through eight countries, it empties into the Black sea on the Rumanian coast. There are 300 tributaries of the Danube, and one of these is the Lech River that we crossed



today. Out of the 200 tributaries of the Danube, 60 of them are navigable by river craft. The Danube itself is navigable 1600 miles by rivercraft, and this mileage takes it to a point of 100 miles farther west from where we crossed it today. The terminal point of the river is at a town called Ulm. The control of the Danube and its delta has been the cause of many wars. One can imagine that it was Hitler's desire to gain control of this river, that influenced the decision of his fast invasion of that country.

"Thank you for your book, Bill." I tell him as I hand him back the travel guide. "That Danube is quite a river."

The weather is fairly good, with high thin cloudiness. We don't have any strafing attacks on our arrival, and it's an appreciated feeling. But there is some sporadic anti-aircraft fire from around the valley surrounding us. After we set up operations and camp near some low trees, several of us walk north to an open spot to observe just what is taking place. We see the exploding shells as they are fired into the sky, but there are no planes visible. We search in back of the shell fire, and then look way ahead where we spot them. The enemy planes are fast, and they manage to keep a lot of distance ahead of the firing.

"Those must be some of the new German fighter planes we've been hearing about lately." Andre tells us. "They don't use a propeller, but rely on what is called jet propulsion. They appear to have a strong potential as a weapon. I believe that we can be thankful that they didn't develop some of these little gadgets before this time."

The firing continues - and so do the misses. In some ways it's a little comical sidelight of a very serious war. "Just wait, they'll get their range yet." I encourage.



"Happy Birthday!" That's the merry sound that greet us soon after our return to the bivouac area. Our cook is all ready for some type of very special occasion. He has prepared a small cake decorated with one single candle placed on the top of it.

"Who has the birthday?" I inquire from him.

"We all do," he replies with a big grin. "Our 3253rd Signal Service Company is just one year old today. There are some small cupcakes for everyone, and a few other small items that we've been saving just for this birthday."

There are many thanks expressed to our cooks, and to everyone else connected with this get together. There's plenty for everyone, and for those who are on shift, who are personally delivered some of these goodies

"From London to nearly across Germany. It has been quite a trip, and one that's not quite over with yet." I comment to Andre.

"Not as long as there's a war going on, and the Germans want to keep shooting, it's not over," he replies. Our intercept traffic is slowing down, which is a good thing, and encouraging. This twenty four hour around the clock vigil has been quite a strain, and it's beginning to show."

We keep up the fast pace of travel by again moving on April the 29th. Our convoy goes southeast in the direction of Munich. We must have a liking to travel on Sunday, as this is the third Sunday in a row that we've been so inclined. Our destination that we reach today is near the town of Aichach, at a place called Ober Mittelbach. On our travels to here today, we passed through the towns of Holzheim, Meer, and



Ober Bernbach. We will have billets in some private buildings, and we set up operations outside, and nearby.

Many of the German people have for some time now lived with the illusion that they are the superior race. Their idol has been the leader, Hitler, whom many of them worshipped nearly as a God. This is especially true of the German youth, whose devotion to him was fanatic. Their total devotion is regarded as being Hitler's secret weapon in the success of fulfilling his ambition for total domination of others. There may have been some Germans who had reservations about many of his methods used for any such achievements, but they knew enough to be quiet or leave the country.

It's a hard pill for many of them to swallow, to see the armies of other governments put an end to their domination by conquering, and move in as the conquerors and the ones in charge. There are some Germans near our billets who own some nice dogs. One of these men has some dachshunds. If the Germans were striving for a master race of dogs, this breed might be one of the top contenders. They are German originals, with long bodies and ears to match. The owner of these dogs has expressed the fear that the Americans would either take or harm his prized dogs. To offset his fears for such a possible future, he takes the drastic steps during the night of killing them - putting them to sleep in a 'humane way.'

Our stay at Ober Wittelsbach is brief for the period of just overnight. And our direction of travel is again southeast in the direction of the very large city of Munich. We are also getting close to an area where the Germans have been accustomed to putting other creatures to sleep in a 'humane way.' The creatures are human beings who don't quite measure up to the criteria established by the so called master race.



For our travels on this last day of April, we go back to Aichach, and then proceed on through Klingen, Woolomoos, Zeitlbach, and Unter Bachern to a place called Guending. We've traveled about forty miles today, which is the same distance of travel of the proceeding day.

Our billets at Guending are very near the very infamous Dachau concentration camp. Its reputation as a death camp is widely known. It's the so-called Jews that have mainly been exterminated here, and the huge total is not really known at this time. From the fairly cozy rooms of our billets, or from the working quarters of our HOs, it's hard to realize that we're near such a place. Yet some of their staff that ran the death house may have been stationed in these very rooms. There's some physical evidence of their expressed feelings, shown by some of their personal articles left behind in their hasty exit. One such item that I find on a shelf is a picture book showing some of the early Nazi conquests. It shows many of the leaders and men of their war machine, in the countries that they had invaded at that time. There isn't time for me to fully study or look at the book, but I put it in with some of my belongings to look at later.

Some of our fellows desire a closer look at the concentration camp. They arrive back later in the evening with their first hand grizzly observations. There are findings of lampshades made from human skins. This is the workings of the master race.

Our stay at Guending is a short two days, and I'm glad to move from such surroundings. Today is May 2nd, as we again take up our travel in the southeast direction toward Munich. We have many reasons to feel rather optimistic at this time. A true indication as to the outcome



of this terrible holocaust we've been a part of, has been reflected in the lack of traffic on our nets. The war is still going on and there are still people dying, but our intercept traffic has diminished to nearly zero. We've been working at a continuous busy pace since we landed on the continent ten months ago. The tempo of this pace has slowed to a near halt during the last week, and that is what we've been wanting. Before this week we've been too busy to indulge in the luxury of thinking. Now that we have the time to talk and think more, it seems as if we're trying to wake up from a nightmare. We're trying to readjust our nervous systems that have kept us going up till now.

We talk a lot about what is happening, reflecting back and looking ahead at this end of the cattle chute that we are approaching. Our reflected thoughts could fill several books. There are thoughts about back home and our loved ones; thoughts about Ireland, England, the Marys, and the pretty rhododendrons. Then we blend these thoughts with the thoughts of the destruction and the suffering that we've witnessed, and some that is still left to witness. Thoughts can become confusing enough to make us wish that we could keep busier.

The large city of Munich is less than twenty-five miles from where we were staying at Guending. We go through the town of Geiselbullach, and then turn onto the famous Reich Autobahn. This is a pretty good highway. Bill and some of the others are commenting. "Maybe one of these years we'll get something that's like this back in the good old United States. We could use it now with all of the traffic that we have there. This is really something - the world's first super highway."

But this highway wasn't built for the convenience of the motoring



public. This endless appearing stretch of double wide concrete was built to expedite the movement of their enormous war machine. The scene as we see it today is in remarkable contrast. The skies on this second day of May are stormy looking and threatening rain, but to our south we can still make out the outline of the Austrian Alps as they rise in the distance. On the north of the highway the land is more flat and suitable for agricultural pursuits. Women dressed in plain dress, that shows plenty of wear, can be seen in the fields cutting hay with wooden- handled scythes, as they have done for centuries. But today, their work with primitive tools, is done along side of these multi-million dollar highways. Their sweat and toil, has paid for its construction.

Following the highway we come to several places where bridges have been blown up and we have to detour around them. "They must have blown up some of these bridges themselves." Bud comments. "We wouldn't have too much need to destroy them at this stage of the game, Unless it was done earlier in the war, it impedes us more than it helps us."

"They've also been using strips of this highway for aircraft runways." Ken adds. "That's probably where some of those German jets that we saw the other day took off from."

"And here is another use for the famous highway." Bud again continues, as we observe several thousand Nazi troops in the west bound lane. Several of our machine-gun equipped jeeps are guarding them as they are marched to an area of detainment. Dirty and dejected looking, they plod along. Their grey uniforms are mixed and stripped of most insignia. "Maybe they'll get some use out of their own Dachau concentration camp." He adds.



The use of the highway gets us to the capital city of Munich, in record time. Munich has a population of nearly one million, and it's located on the Isar River. "That's another river that runs northeast, and eventually joins the Danube on its journey to the Black Sea." Bill informed me earlier, after consulting the map.

While the city is well known as a music center, it has more recently been known as the birthplace of the Nazi Party. The Beer Hall Putsch led by Adolph Hitler took place here in 1923.

The city, as we get a glance of it today, resembles that of Nuremberg that we saw on our escorted tour of April the 18th. Parts of the city have been bombed extensively, while other sections seem to have escaped destruction. Here, also, families can be seen living in propped-up sections of the bombed out structures. And the clean-up of much of the rubble from the destruction has already been started. We can see much hand labor working on that effort, this Wednesday, the second day of May.

We continue on past the city of Munich for about fifteen miles to a place called Ottendichl which is near the town of Haar. We set up our bivouac in a woody section of the area. Tents are again put into use. "How about taking a walk around the area?" Andre invites several of our gang after we had set up most of our equipment.

The copy had been slow on what few nets that remained to copy, and he had no trouble getting followers. Anything to break the enveloping boredom was welcomed. We all loved to walk, and we take off on a small road northeast of our bivouac. After several blocks we come to a clearing in the woods where some freshly cut evergreen boughs cover some



large metal objects. "What have we got here?" Bud asks a question that we all shared.

On closer observation, the metal objects take on the real appearance of gliders - airplanes without the blade propellers. And then it finally dawns on us just what we are looking at, but Andre is the first to speak. "These are the little fellows that have been playing hide and seek with our anti-aircraft gunners lately. This is a part of a new Luft-waffe known as jet aircraft. The Germans have been employing a lot of new weapons of war lately. For our own good I'm sure that they are a little too few and too late, as the saying goes."

"I've seen them fly, or I wouldn't believe that they could just by looking at them on the ground. Just what is the secret of their method of flight?" I inquire. "I still don't believe that I'd care to fly in such a contraption."

"It's really quite simple," Roy answers. "They work on the same principle as releasing air from a balloon. It's called jet propulsion, and the release of the hot air pushes the aircraft ahead."

We get braver, and more curious, as we approach closer to get a better look at the metal birds. There appears to be no sign of booby traps - but we are cautious. "How about taking my picture in front of one of these critters?" I ask Andre. "This is one thing that need proof of a picture, for nobody would believe such a tale."

"Sure thing, George," he replies. "Just show me how to work your camera. They look far out of this world now, but I wouldn't be surprised if someday this type of engine would power all of the aircraft."



"Thanks, Andre. I'll take a picture of you now, if you want one. And after this I guess that we'd better get back to the chuck-wagon."

We finish our picture taking, look around to see if there are any more planes near, and then we head back to camp.

The weather closes in on us again, and we are blessed with a few May showers. It's good weather to stay inside. We continue our shifts of operation out of habit and the main fact that we haven't been told anything to the contrary. It gets to be a little depressing in some respects. The same as knowing that two and two equal four, we know that for all practical purposes, that our part in the war is over and we should be happy. But we also share the feelings of a condemned man who has heard a rumor that he will be given a reprieve, but lacks the signed order by the Judge. Until we have an official ending, then the war is still going on and we remain the possible targets for destruction.

On a rainy Saturday, May 5th, our convoy, with members who share the questionable duties of interceptors, circled back to the town of Hear, and then proceed southeasterly in the general direction of the Austria section of Germany. "You don't need to give me the names of all of the towns, Bill, if you don't have them handy."

"It's no trouble, George," he replies. "We've been keeping a list of them up to this date, so we might just as well keep up with our project. After all, I want a record of where we go also."

We travel through the towns of Putzbrunn, Perlach, Hoehenkirchen, Bad Aibling, to Aising where we again join the Reich Autobahn. Here, again, we witness the spectacle of column after column of German



prisoners of war. The former invaders are now prisoners in their own country. It's hard to imagine the thoughts that are running through their minds as they are driven like cattle in the wet rain, and guarded by machine guns. The older soldiers who have families, with former trades or ties, are probably glad that it's all over with for them and they are thankful that they are still alive. "If the bombings or the shellings bothered any of them the way it did with us, then I'm sure they're glad that their part in the bloody mess is over." I tell some of the fellows. "But what about some of the younger soldiers, such as the storm troopers, the elite troops or fanatical followers of Hitler?

"You can be sure that they are more reluctant to be taken captive." Bud answers. "Many of them will still be willing to have another go at it to prove that they're the master race. We received an Army publication on that subject before we left England. It stated that even though they are conquered, the Germans are not to be trusted for a long time."

"And if we ever start to feel sorry for any of them, we can easily remember the suffering and death to millions that they, through their dictator, has caused." Andre injects. "We have been a part of that suffering. And thinking back to less than a week ago, we can remember the Dachau concentration camp, where millions of Jews alone were murdered."

The rain continues to fall on the wet highway and the large concentration of marching prisoners. I make a search in my duffle bag to find my camera, and then take a picture of this historic scene. It's a scene that we'll long remember.



We come across other groups of prisoners as we continue our drive to the southeast. There are detours as we come to more blown-up bridges. We proceed through the town Uebersee and then return to the Autobahn, after another town called Rab. We proceed on through Neukirchen, Teisendorf, Aufham, Mauthhausen, to the town of Swarzbach. We have now traveled across Germany and this is our first town in Austria. But a rose by any other name might mean the same, because for all practical purposes we are still in the so-called Nazi Germany. We continue on to the Austrian city of Salzburg, and a place called Lieftring.

"I never thought that we'd have to travel all across Germany just to set up billets in a little red school house." Bill comments. But here we are. I wonder if we'll have any more intercept?"

"If we have any more intercept, it'll just be for looks," Brad answers. "As everyone knows, the nets all are 'kaput.' Hey, this is a school house, but it isn't red. This must be where they taught the four 'Rs.'"

"What do you mean by four 'Rs'?" Bill inquires.

"Look at these large posters on the rollers," he answers. "They show the physical outline features of the other races, Jews and what not, as compared with the German super race. That's the other 'R.' Teach them while they are still young, was their motto. I wouldn't have believed this, if I hadn't seen it."

But our schoolhouse does have some other items that seem worthwhile. There are some pictures of the Austrian Alps with pretty wild flowers.



We spend the weekend in and around the little red school house. Bill still insists on using that name also. On Monday, May 7th, 1945, we receive the news that we had all been expecting. At Rheims, France, the Germans had accepted an unconditional surrender at the hour of 0241 GMT. The effective date would be announced soon. And that 'soon' still means that for some, the killing would still be going on.

For us, it meant that some judge was about to pardon us with freedom, or the escape from being shot at. "Well, maybe now we can write home to the folks and tell them that we're alright, and just where we wound up at." Andre spoke for all of us. Letter -writing seems to be on the priority list.

"It's too bad that President Roosevelt didn't live for another month to see the end of this war." Is another thought expressed openly by all of us.

Two days later on Wednesday, May 9th, 1945, there are some real shouts of joy around our little school house. This is V-E Day, the big day that we've been waiting for. The news comes in early, the surrender is effective at 090001, DBST. The VE is declared by all three Allied Governments at 1500 hours, DBST.

"There's a feeling here today that you will not be able to put into words, George," Bill tells me. And he is right, for there is no way to express the relief that's felt with the news. I wonder if any of us will outlive the fear of being shot at, or the fear that comes from hearing an enemy plane overhead with a potential load of bombs. Amid all of these shouts of joy, I give a deep prayer of thanks to God for providing His protection and comfort to us. I have kept up with my nightly



prayer of thanks, but this is a special.

Our tour of duty on intercept has mostly been for show during the last several days. Now our mission has been completed, and the receivers are soon put to other uses. There's music coming from some, with the occasional breaks for the news. We hear the reaction to the news from around the world, and there is much jubilation. But it's cause for much sorrow to be felt also, because all of the casualties have not yet been counted or reported. And with this sombering thought there's also the realization that there's another war with the Japanese still going on. Many of our troops over here would soon be deployed to that theater of war.

After dinner, we get to see one of the most brilliant displays of fireworks that we have ever witnessed. It's a display of real live fireworks with the noise to go with it. We see the colored lights from the firing of the very-signal pistols, as well as the display of colored smoke bombs. The real live fireworks is from real live ammunition, and it's well to stay under cover with all of the shrapnel flying around. The celebration was not announced, and for some of the Germans or Austrians, it brings the great fear that their fair city is being attacked. Salzburg has escaped any notable damage from the war, but most of the people have seen the damage wrought to other cities.

By morning the citizens have realized that the outburst was for a celebration. We're also having it slowly come to us as to what it means for this war to be over. There will be another phase of the struggle after coming this far through the cattle chute. We'll now have to find a way to get home. To go home will be our true reward, and it's



the only thing that we dream of. There are a lot of troops to move from this ETO. We have a priority system for our time to go home, but that system could change at will. I've deeply felt the growing lack of leadership since the death of our President. The power that he had and used will be hard to replace for awhile. We'll just have to wait and see how much it'll affect us.

Bill just informed me that even our celebration last night produced it's own casualties. An anti-aircraft gun fired low, and the shell tore through a barracks killing or injuring a number of soldiers. We'll probably hear more about that later.

On Friday, May 11th, we move to the main city of Salzburg, but on the outskirts of town. We are to occupy some German barracks, or an administration building of some kind. It's a large complex of two-story structures, occupying over five acres of land. The set-up was used by the Germans and was designed to be guarded. Our first approach to the structure is from the rear or east side where our motor pool will be located. The main entrance we find on the west side, and it's well landscaped. A small curved driveway leads in at right angle from a north-south main street. At the intersection on one side of this driveway there's a small sentry building, and I can see some possible guard duty for me there in the near future.

We're located on the south side of the city that's divided by the Salzach River. This river flows to the northeast and past a point that's about one hundred feet east of our new quarters. There's a walkway for the public that divides our land from the banks of the river. This river, and the city of nearly 100,000 offers the prospects of some future exploring in this new life that we'll have to get used to.



The war is over, but there's still work to be done. The motor pool crews are already checking over and cleaning up their vehicles. They've kept them up pretty good so far, but we've also done a lot of traveling lately, and there are a few dents of battle. Now there'll be time to get them really shiney.

And the cooks with their crew are also busy cleaning up and moving into our new facilities. From now on they'll be able to cook inside, and likewise we'll be able to eat inside, and even sit at tables. This'll be a first, since we left England.

"We've some real beds with springs!" Roy and some of the fellows announce to us. "You'd better hurry and pick out your favorite spot. There're a couple of extra beds in our room."

"There are no carpets or drapes," Brad complains jokingly. But they did have us in mind when they let us trade in our sleeping bags for blankets. So really fellows, I guess I shouldn't complain too much. And we have a place for showers in the basement, as well as a laundry room. There were a couple of German women doing some laundry there, so I guess that they go with the place and have the privilege of using the facilities. Do we call them German, or Austrian? Not that it matters too much."

We soon start up our favorite past time of exploring, with the first place being the inside of the buildings themselves. There are desks and shelves that contain Nazi pins and insignias of all sorts. Some say 'traffic controler,' so maybe that was one of the main functions of the Germans stationed here. "They'll make good souvenirs, as they're not too bulky to send home." Someone suggests. The items are soon depleted. I have my share, with a swastika armband and several other



rins or whatnots.

It's soon all-out souvenir season for everyone; with the finding, selling, or trading going on full scale. Some of the fellows seem to be professional traders, and they're really raking in the money. With the privilege of free postage to encourage us, most of the items are soon sent home. There's even the joke that some of the guys are even sending Jeeps home, piece by piece - maybe it isn't a joke. My share of the war booty also seems endless. Every item that we send home has to have a certificate of content signed by an officer, but that's no problem. If any problem exists, it comes in the work of crating and preparing the items for shipment home.

The source of souvenir supply is varied and from everywhere. "Does anyone want a pair of German binoculars?" Our officer announces one day. "We've just found a couple of truckloads in a warehouse." Of course he had his takers. Some German field telephones are found, and I send a set of three of them through the mail. I become the possessor of a German luger, which I trade for a dagger made in Italy.

We take some walks along the banks of the river. "A lot of the Nazi threw many of their personal items in the river when they faced capture." Bill tells us. "So keep your eyes open for some nice finds. Some of our fellows have already found a few valuable cameras. But with all of the soldiers in this area to hunt for them, the items will have been discovered."

Our search for cameras produced no results, but several other items are recovered from the water. I fish out a couple of range finders, and the length of one of them is three feet long. It will be a challenge to crate for shipment. The supply of such items will soon disappear,



but most of us now have a collection to clutter up our closets at home for many years to come.

But there's more to do than collect souvenirs. Guard duty is one of these adventures in living. I luck out most of the time by having the day shift of duty. My post is to be the sentry at the main front gate, and while it looks like an easy job to perform, it gets to be a very long two-hour tour of duty. The requirement for a soldier to perform such guard duty are quite simple. I'm a guard of the United States Army, and I'm to look the part by dressing neatly, wearing a helmet, and having a gun at my side. While I'm to appear tough and business-like, I also play the dual role of being friendly. Listed as last but with a very high priority is the job of staying awake and alert. Inactivity for two hours can become very boring and induce sleep, so great caution must be employed. In some ways the job resembles that of our former duties as intercept operators, in which a great amount of patience was required to wait for that one important message. To our advantage here in Salzburg, the people treat us with great respect and stay away from our facilities - at least for the present while we are new to them. But we realize that it would take only one fanatical Nazi to upset the peaceful routine of guard duty.

The use of lights is one questionable luxury that we now share now that the war has ended in this theater of operation. We're still at war with Japan, but the blackout restrictions, at least over here, have been eased. Maybe we were getting so accustomed to not having outside lights that we accepted it as a way of living. But now that I do see some lights burning, it does seem more cheerful around. But really it's the meaning behind the lights coming back on that is the thing to rejoice



over- the war here has ended. There's the popular song that we sometimes sing or hum, that is starting to take on the realization of a hope or a prayer coming true. It's called: "The White Cliffs of Dover." It speaks of that day when the lights will come on again all over the world. The lights are gradually coming back on.

"There's a letter, and a copy of Yank Magazine on your bed." Bud announces to me when I return from my tour of guard duty.

"Thanks, Bud," I acknowledge as I start to open the letter from home. Of course Mom, as well as everyone else on the home-front had celebrated the ending of the war here. I was anxious to find out their reaction. by now she knew that I was in Salzburg, Austria, and that I had survived the war. She states that she has received one of the souvenir items that I had sent. More would soon be arriving, and it was my hope that she would find room for all of them.

I now take the time to remove my helmet, hook my carbine under my bed, and take off my coat and shoes. With the use of the lights that I was just thinking about, to read the magazine, I stretch out on the bed to combine a little rest. The Yank Magazine is a weekly magazine that we've received for some time now. This issue is proclaimed as the victory edition, 1945. It's also called the Continental Edition, and it sells for three francs - for those that buy it. It's printed by the men... for the men of the service - and the women.

The cover shows the painting of a recent war scene. It illustrates the fighting mans' side of the victory as compared with the ticker-tape parades, and the champagne drinking. The central figures in the foreground are two battle-weary soldiers. They're kneeling over the freshly made grave of a fallen buddy. The only remaining possession of the



dead soldier is his M1 rifle, which lies on the top of his new grave. They're paying their respects for the last time. There's the typical barbed wire and a tank to the left of the scene. In the background, there is a church spire and the gutted remains of a war-torn city that's still aflame.

The inside of the magazine is cruck full o articles related to the ending of the war. We're told how the various countries celebrated VE Day. There are stories concerning the reactions to this victory news, in the cities of London, Paris, and back home. These stories compare to those the Infantry had to tell. There was a lot of celebration for joy, but there was also a lot of prayerful thanks to God. One caption under the Infantry scene sums up a lot of thought: "The war was over, and I was still alive. And I thought of all the boys in the 28th Division band, who were with me in the Ardennes, who are dead now."

Along with these written articles, there's a pictorial story of this war as outlined in pictures from start to finish. And as the saying goes: "One picture is worth a thousand words."

"Hey, Bud. When do you believe that the war was over for us?" I ask him after I notice that he had finished looking at the magazine.

"I've tried to think of an answer for a question like that before," he replies. "I believe for us, it ended when our intercept became quiet, and when the Luftwaffe quit strafing us. But there remained that fear of being shot at all the way to the end of the war on VE Day. In some respects, the war will not be over until we get back home. The memories of the war will be with us forever, and it'll affect some of us more adversely than others. What's your opinion?"



"You sound like a prophet, Bud. I agree with you. The action over here has been man-created suffering. There'll always be some type of suffering in our life besides war. Maybe the natural suffering will not seem quite as bad to us since we now have a comparison to go by.

"By the way, Brad was telling me that some of the fellows are going on a trip south to Berchtesgaden tomorrow. Are you coming with us?"

"I wouldn't miss it George," he replies. It's pretty country, and I also can't wait to see that much talked-about Eagles nest of Hitler's. Besides that, I'm still used to traveling at least every other day."

We leave on our Company self-guided tour right after breakfast. Our 'three truck caravan' heads south- southwest towards the snow-covered Alps. Besides for the opportunity to see his famous retreat, we learn that our trip serves another worthwhile purpose. Berchtesgaden has a well known brewery, and a couple of kegs of beer are on today's shopping list. The experts from our Company tell us that keg beer tastes better than the canned variety, and that the keg beer found here is the best to be found anywhere. So, for those that love beer, this trip should make their day. For those of us who have brought along a canteen of water to go with our 'C' rations, this trip should fulfill the scenic desires for our day.

As we leave the fortress city of Salzburg, we see a portion of the lower Alps. Ten miles to the southwest and located on the Barvarian and Salzburg Frontier, there is one mountain that seems higher than the others. This mountain is famous for its legends as well as being a popular spot for mountain climbers. On the top of this 5900 foot peak there's a large cross that we can see from Salzburg and most of the surrounding countryside. The mountain is called the Utersberg.



Berchtesgaden lies on the southern slope of this mountain. We reach this well known resort town by following a valley road to the east of the mountain, and passing through a couple of smaller towns. If we were not blessed with the benefits of our own GI transportation, we would be forced to use the electric train from Salzburg to Berchtesgaden. The train trip takes nearly one and a half hours according to our travel information, but we'll arrive at our destination in less than one hour.

As promised, our driver does stop at the local brewery, located on the south side of town. Most of us wait in the trucks while several of the men go inside to make arrangements to pick up a couple of kegs of beer after our return from the mountain top. The break also gives us a chance to study some maps, and tour folders that we had brought from Salzburg. Brad reads some of the tempting advertising outloud. "Who ever has not seen Berchtesgaden has not seen Bavaria. And it states that these simple words of a native Bavarian imply the views to be had of the imposing, rugged, colossal chalk mountains, glittering grey, surrounding this land, and its beautiful unrivalled meadows, reaching high into the skies. Here, in the towerering mountains, is the famous Eagles nest - secret retreat of Hitler's.

"And before the days of Hitler," Brad continues. "We find some basic information from our tour ad. 'The greatest treasure of the Berchtesgadener Land, as the country around Berchtesgaden is called, is the Konigssee, the gem of the Bavarian Alps. It is eight miles long, one half to one mile wide, and in places up to 800 feet deep, surrounded by majestic mountains, that tower over almost black water.' And regarding the town of Berchtesgaden, it states: 'This is a very popular holiday haunt , and health resort; brine baths; and winter sports.' By



the way, we're at 1870 feet above sea-level."

"We thank you, guide, for that information." I tease him. "They really throw out the flowery adjectives in those ads. The boat trip on the lake, with sunbathing and swimming sounds super nice, but I believe that our itinerary for today calls for the Eagles Nest. Lets take a rain check for that Lake Trip, however. I've a feeling that we'll have plenty of time to take that trip and many others before it's time to catch that boat heading back home."

Our drivers with the other men return and we start our drive south up the mountain that lies east of the other road and rails that leads to the lake resort areas. We make a number of switchbacks to reach our destination on the mountain. On our climb, we notice two police check points formerly staffed by the Nazi, where road blocks could be swung out across the road for instant use. As we climb higher on the road, the view of the beautiful alps unfolds all around us - then, we are nearly on top.

Now we're at the base community of the Retreat. Several weeks before today, this place was also the scene of the last fighting of the war. Now we're on an Army tour, and it's a better way to travel. We are given small maps of the area, so that we will know where we are, and just who lived in each building. There's a two mile circular drive surrounding most of the area, with at least five more road blocks located at strategic locations. Goring's and Bormann's houses are located at the top southwest side of the platt. Hitler's house is located at top center, while a guest house is on the southeast corner of the section. Below Hitler's house there's a special police building, which also guards one of the road-blocks. Below these buildings lies a mini



city by itself. There's a nursery, a large hot-house, administration building, two garages, police barracks, a large hotel, two cafes, and a Hall. These are the main buildings, but there're others.

There's an elevator, as well as a road that makes access to a nest of buildings on the top of the mountain. The elevator isn't working, so it's off limits to us. There's probably a bomb shelter and other emergency equipment located in there. All things seemed to have been oriented for the safety of their leader, and his survival - and that of the Party. There's also evidence of the planning for his quick arrivals and his emergency exits.

But as the name states, it's also a retreat - a place for him to relax in solid comfort. And except for the police setup surrounding this immediate area, the natural environment is superb. With this place as his own, how could he want or need more? Stretched to each side of us stand the snow-capped Alps, on a base of green velvet mountains. Hidden in the many valleys are the countless emerald lakes - the left-overs from the ice age. Looking down from our vista point to the southwest, we see one of these gems known as the Konigssee, or Lake Konig. It's the one that we were reading about. We can see the sheer cliffs that surround the dark waters. There are very few open beaches around the lake where a boat may land.

We munch on some 'C' rations, and then we go over to the lower set of buildings for a closer look. Hitler's house is a 'must', to wander through on our tour. "He would appreciate these escorted tours through his private house and domain, wouldn't he fellows?" I speculate out-loud as our guide shows us through the house.

"Would you mind taking my picture while I'm standing on his balcony?"



I ask Roy before we leave for another house.

He takes the picture, and then adds his own opinion of the character who formerly owned the house. "Big deal," he says. "We're walking and standing where he did." Then he casually dusts off his boots as we leave the building.

Hitler's house as well as some of the other buildings had received a limited amount of damage during the take-over - or maybe the damage was from irate GIs expressing their pent-up feelings. I take another picture of the north and balcony side of his house, and then it's time for a visit to the guest house to the east.

We may call it a guest house, but the arrangement is for a place of detention for political prisoners. In the basement there are several rooms with bare walls and no windows. There are two-inch solid wood doors fitted with heavy locks and peep-holes. Was this just a security to protect the honored guests?

Below and to the east of the guest house, are the remains of some large dog kennels. "We had to shoot all of the dogs before we could approach them." Our guide informs us as we go by the kennels. There's a lot of damage done here as well as the other areas. It'll take a lot of work to restore the buildings to their original condition.

I take a few more pictures before it's time to start on our trip back 'home.' We stop at Berchtesgaden to pick up our precious cargo of beer, on our way. We arrive back in Salzburg in plenty of time for dinner. "It was an interesting trip and one to remember." These are some of the good comments that I hear. The beer is prized as something rather special also.



The Russians have been our allies in this war against the Nazi. There has always been some disagreements with them in regards to the war strategy, but the main aim to defeat Germany has been one of unity. And on the other side of the picture, of course, it has always been the desire of the Nazi to divide the Allies and weaken us enough to cause us failure and defeat in the war. It has been known that the Russians were not happy with our time-table of the invasion. They had wanted the invasion sooner to relieve the pressure on their front. Near the end of the war they wanted us to hold back so that they could occupy certain sectors first. Maybe it seemed that we were the ones that were out of step, but the Russians had a different philosophy of warfare than was our general feeling. We all know that in combat it's just a case of survival, and most of the rules are laid aside. But as a general picture, as an Army, we brought along our own supplies to live off from, while the Russian Armies lived more off the land - taking from the people whatever they desired. The Germans were also inclined to follow the same procedure. We remember well, what happened to our Company when the German owners reported that some jewels were stolen from the old castle - we were searched. I don't believe that such a procedure would have happened with a Russian unit.

Just as the Germans preferred, for survival sake, to surrender to our rear echelon units, there was also the desire for them to surrender to the Americans rather than to the Russians. They possessed a great fear of them. Of course the opposite held true for the Nazi, and their blitzkriegs, by the rest of the world. Before the war was quite over, and while we were at the 'little red schoolhouse', we heard of, and even tried to settle disputes between the Russians and Austrians or Germans. The Russian had taken some bicycles, and the Austrians wanted



their vehicles of transportation returned. Such complaints continue to come to us, and we even received one yesterday.

Of course at this time, we are the ones that are in charge of this district, but there's a rumor, and a strong possibility that the Russians will occupy this sector in the near future. The Austrians have heard the rumor, also, and they are fearful of that prospect. These thoughts all come back to me when we see some of the Russian soldiers, and their wives or secretaries down by the river this afternoon. The men are built more on the heavy - allright fat side, and it's unlikely that they've been with a combat unit.

I only hope that we get along good together during the postwar occupation, but some obvious differences are already apparent. But for now, we are occupying the land, and we take advantage of the fact that we are here, by sightseeing on almost daily walks. We seem to get along well with most of the people, and sometimes we can almost suspiciously wonder if a war had ever been going on. With the back ground setting of the Alpine country, it's hard to say whether Salzburg would be more noted for this, or as a music and cultural center of the world. And that's just what some of the travel books that we've just bought, tell us about the district. Yes, we've been spending some of our invasion money at some of the many stores in the market place. There are from three to six of us soldiers together on these walks that we take. Other groups have other interests, and make their travel trips to suit their desires.

The city of Salzburg is divided by the river of Salzach. The division also separates the older and newer sector of the town. The book states that the old side of town is on the south side of the



river, but it seems west to me. Just as there are two sides of the town, there are also two towering rocks, one on each side of the river. The rock in the old section is the base for the festung, or fortress, that dates a history with the rest of the town back to the Roman Empire days. It was a settlement known as Juvavum, since the time of Emperor Constantin, until 477 to 700 A.D.

While the city has an old history and buildings to go with such a history, it can also boast of being a modern city with all of the present-day conveniences to go along with it. The history only adds to the many cultural outlets available to us in this month of May, 1945. Except to the extent that the disruption caused by the war has halted flow of civilian tourists, things seem quite normal. The war has brought very little physical damage to the city. There exists the facilities for air, bus, and rail transportation from, or to, here. Or how about a small boat ride on the Salzburg River? In this city of over sixty thousand people, there are two museums, four or five theater or opera houses, numerous hotels and eating places. There are over twenty Roman Catholic Churches in the vicinity, and one Protestant Church - so take your choice. And the fellows say that there's an excellent brewery located here as well as some fancy, favorite bars.

Many of the buildings we see are of a Bavarian or Alpine design, except for the two Cathedrals and the one Fortress. The dress of the people go along with this Alpine theme also. The women are generally seen in this true native attire, and the men, either walking or riding, are right at home with their garb of leather shorts with suspenders, bright shirt and stockings, topped off with a feathered alpine hat.

Between the gang of fellows that we walk with, there's always a request



or suggestion for some new adventure, including shopping for some very special gift to send home. There's a souvenir shop east of the river. "Let us go over there today," Bud suggests. "They have some postcards with some better pictures on them than it is possible for us to take with our cameras." We eventually purchase the postcards with the pictures featuring local and alpine scenes. On our way back to camp we stop in at a bakery to sample some fresh rolls that had been brought to our attention by a mouth-watering aroma drifting by as we made our way to the other shop.

Our Armed Forces have obtained the rental of an opera house that we use as a theater. We are privileged with the regular showings of the latest films, and there's a new one twice a week, so we do have one to look forward to seeing in-between our other sightseeing adventures.

"We've been here all of this time and we haven't seen the Fortress," Brad complains. So today it's time for just such a visit. Some of the buildings that we see are actually carved out of the base of the rock on which the Fortress is located. Many other buildings, shops, and Cathedrals are located on other streets near these. We buy our tickets for a ride on the cog railroad to the top of the rock and Fortress. The German name for the fortress is Festung Hohensalzburg. The railway is called Drahtseilbahn, and it was built in 1892. It's about a three minute ride to the top of the rock. About half-way on our ride up, there is the rail station called Monchsberg. Nearby this terminal, there's a very fine restaurant named "Zur Katze," and a beautiful view of the town may be seen from here. Before reaching the last rail station on top, we pass through a 72 foot tunnel which takes us through the actual walls of the Fortress itself.. This station is directly underneath a 52-foot



lookout tower. There's another restaurant near this station and also another fine view of the river, mountains, and town.

"There's the location of our Headquarter buildings over to the south," Brad comments as we look at the view. And then his discussions turn to thoughts about the Fort itself. "There's a 200-pipe musical organ that plays for tourists on regular schedules. And for those we would rather see something more gruesome, there's the torture chamber, which is the requisite of all good Fortresses. All of this information is from our brochure. We'll have to look around better when we have more time on another day. I guess many of the town's Archbishops have lived here, besides being built by one."

"It must have been a good place to hide out during some of their many wars," Bud adds. "Or a good place for them to hide when the townspeople didn't like their rule and went on riot."

The Fortress is at an altitude of 1777 feet, compared with 1379 feet at the river's level. It'll take us the same time to descend, as it did to reach here, as the cars are connected together. "The book states that the most scenic or picturesque way to the Fortress is by a road from the other side." I add to the conversation as we descend to the bottom of the rock. "There's a constantly changing view of the city as well as the mountains. The road also passes under some highly decorated arches. On our next visit we'll have to go that way."

On another day while we are up town doing some shopping, we pass by the building which is the birthplace of Mozart. "Would any of you mind if we took in a little culture today?" Roy asks the group. "After all this is the home town of the famous Mozart that we once had to study



about in school. Some music lovers would travel half way around the world just to see this place and take in one of his many operas."

There're no objections, but of course by this time we are already half way through the doorway following like sheep. It's really a chance that we shouldn't pass up. Most of the fellows in our outfit seem to be quite musically inclined. Some of the fellows, like Leonard, are excellent piano players. With such inclination, maybe that's why most of us wound up in an outfit that featured dots and dashes.

This is Mozart's Geburtshaus, or birthplace. It's a six story building located in the main section of the town near the east shadow of the Festung or Fortress. Mozart was born in a room on the third floor. This room and the adjoining living room are a part of the present museum that contains his concert piano, spinet, and other musical instruments. Family portraits, as well as other pictures, letters and documents are on display. All of these possessions are now the property of the International Foundation Mozarteum. In the floor below, we view some miniature replica stage settings used in some of his many operas. For rooms in a building that's older than the history of our United States, things have been preserved quite well. Beside the material of musical nature, there are the items that make up the furnishings of any home such as the fireplace used for cooking, chairs, tables, beds, and lamps - other than the electric kind.

The museum is open from 8 to 12, and from 2 to 6 daily, according to the sign. Such hours give them time for a leisurely lunch hour, or maybe really time for them to clean up the debris left by the tourist. "So, thank you, Roy, for the suggestion of the visit. We took in some nice culture, and it'll give us something rather interesting to write home about."



The next day, following completion of some of our regular duties around camp, we again enjoy some more walking on the lower streets of the hill or Kapuziner Berg located on the east side of the Salzach River. As is the case with most of our walks, we just start walking, never really knowing our destination or what we might see. It's a surprise for us then when we come to another Mozart family home. Looking closer at our map we find that there are several Mozart buildings, including the Mozarteum, located on this side of the river. The discovery and a tour of the homes sort of tops off our cultural intake of Salzburg, and we now have more of an understanding of the reason why it's called the music center of the world.

Walking a little up along the road, we come to an isolated and deserted house. Deserted houses have always been an attraction to kids and to soldiers - well, the enemy could be hiding there. During our tour of France and Germany we learned a number of German words or phrases dealing with war from our official phrase book. A chance for us to use some of higher education in dealing with the enemy, had rarely existed for most us in our trip across the continent. Now before us lies a chance to try out some of this learning on a 'make believe' enemy. When we are certain that there is no one around to be seen or to hear us, Roy yells out at the top of his voice, the German words equivalent words to: "Come outside with your hands in the air and surrender."

"That would we do, Roy, if someone would come out? I inquire. "The war is supposed to be over, and we would run into complication trying to find some place to take any such prisoners - it could be embarrassing." But as we had planned, luck is with us and no one does come out. So, just like a couple of contented kids, we continue our exploring of



our hill. A couple of times we stop long enough to take some pictures of the view looking down on Salzburg in its pretty alpine setting.

In our guide book there's a foreword that reads: "In Salzburg amidst lovely mountains and lakes, a town people grew up with their hearts deeply rooted in its beautiful surroundings, with their minds open to the interests of all nations of the world.

"The people developed into a highly cultivated group, natural in their behaviour, but not secluded from the world. The lovely nature of the country of Salzburg has given the Salzburgian special rich gifts and feelings for art, and these have given birth to many geniuses ranking among the greatest in the world.

"May this country and its amiable inhabitants help each foreigner feel at home whether he comes over on duty or to enjoy himself."

I agree with the book, that this is a very pretty country. And for that reason it's sometimes hard to realize that we've just come through a very bloody war, and that our newly won peace in Europe is just starting. We've been instructed in our policy of fraternization, and warned that the German people pose a threat of the potential peace for many years to come. But while we are still soldiers we're also still free to think. Most of us before the war had been too busy working for a living to think much about the peace that we enjoyed, or the war to come - until it was with us. We can wonder, is this country any different than any other country as far as the working people are concerned? In some of our free discussions, we have voiced the opinion, that generally, wars and violence are brought to us by opportunists, and people are forced into the situations that develop.



But this talk swings back to the subject of fraternization. We're to remain, until otherwise instructed, aloof as the conqueror over the enemy. The ruling has many good points considering all of the human lives that have just been lost. But in fulfilling this well meant policy there's at least one situation that makes its own rules, and has a mind of its own. The saying goes that all is fair in love and war. Trying to keep the girls and soldiers apart is like trying to divide the sky. The soldiers are lonesome for girls, and for the girls there has existed a shortage of boys.

From the window in our second story building overlooking a park across the river we sometimes, for a past time, watch a drama of this relationship unfurl. Couples are strolling and making love in the half privacy of the park and the area surrounding the river. Generally, there's less privacy and more boldness that seems to make a mockery of our so-stated policy. Maybe we're battle drunk, but the drama seems at times to be quite humorous. Anyone can be a player, and so I'm about to become a part of this little drama - quite unintentionally.

The Austrian people used to give our area a large distance between them on their travels by here. Now they go by the street in front, and by the path along the river, as if we were just a part of the landscape, and that we had been here forever. And the people of course includes the girls .

The river flowing by our buildings, has by itself, been a source of fascination for me as well as the other fellows. I could spend much time just sitting on the bank watching the swirl of the fast water. It is just such a situation that exists on one sunny day after lunch. The weather is warm and there are several other soldiers also sitting around.



And now into the scene, some very nice looking Austrian girls in pretty colored sun dresses just happen to come walking by - also enjoying the river on such a equally nice summer day. Are they lonesome and just want to be friendly, or are they spies? The three girls pick me out of the group and edge their way over to where I'm sitting and also sit down on the rocky bank.

Then to my surprise they start up a conversation in perfect English. To a soldier who has not been near any type of girl for a long time, let alone some that can speak English, it's quite an event. I'm still quite aware of who I am, and what is taking place. They are too nice looking to ever be wanting for any male companionship. They're very friendly in their conversation, and it seems that their intent is to prove that they are, and feel free to do their talking in the open. They tell me about their life and schooling in Salzburg. Their mastery of the English language they state is due to the requirement at school of all students to take several languages, including English.

"What part of the United States are you from?" one of them asks.

I inform her that I live in Washington, and tell her my name. But the questions from them are few. They tell me some more about themselves and their country in this region that they seem quite proud of. If there is any hatred in them concerning our occupation of their country, it's not expressed openly. Like many of the Bavarians, they seem to hold to the long standing idea that Austria is not Germany. There's also an expressed fear that this region will soon be occupied by the Russian forces. As a result of this fear, their love or friendliness for the Americans is now being openly demonstrated.

While I couldn't dispute their sincere approach, my mind still recalled



that this is the area where Hitler spent a lot of his life and came into power. Then there's also another conflict of thoughts. Does the action of one, or a group, condemn them all? But I also realize that like Mary allowing her pet lamb to be at school, I knew that it was against the rules of our occupation to carry on an open conversation with them. I had been enjoying myself just sitting here watching the water go by - but now for a few minutes I've been enjoying their fresh conversation. Should I demonstrate my authority as the conqueror and ask them to leave, or should I get up and leave myself? Or, should I stay like a normal warm-blooded American soldier and enjoy the fruits of battle.

As the conversations continues, I notice several other soldiers, including one of our Lieutenants, about 100 feet upstream on the bank. This gathering seems to act as a signal for one of the girls to move even closer - within touching distance of me. Then I feel a firm hand on my shoulder. "George, the Lieutenant wants to have a word with you."

"Thank you, Brad." I acknowledge. Then I excuse myself from the girls and make a hasty retreat up the bank.

I make a pert military salute, and then listen to the reminder that I knew was coming.

A short while later I'm in our room, mulling over for a few minutes just what had happened. Really, considering everything, it has been a nice day. A short distance outside of our window and below the path and bank, the waters of the Salzach continue to race on their way. Across the river in the woods by the park, the new romances between the girls and the soldiers continue to flourish more in the open. The



drama continues to unfold before our eyes like we were watching a live Mozart Opera. The captured German field glasses make ideal opera glasses. Will the rules of warfare keep the soldiers away from the fair maidens? Yes, it's hard to play the role of the conqueror.

Brad always seems to be the one that comes up with those news flashes concerning coming events. "Guess what's going to happen?" He leads into his announcement in a way that makes me work for the answer. "Tomorrow's the anniversary of 'D' day and we're all going home." I reply.

"You're right about the 'D' day part, but we're not going home. We've orders pending that will take us to Nancy, France, and one week at a rest center - at least many of us are going there."

"Hey, did the episode of my fraternization by the river yesterday have anything to do with such a desperately needed move." I inquire. "Really though it sounds great - something I've always wanted to do, next to going home."

"We'll be leaving early in the morning," he adds. "And we don't have to worry about making any arrangements, as everything has been taken care of, including the transportation in our own private trucks."

"Your episode by the river didn't have anything to do with the trip, as the plans have been made for quite awhile. You were just a victim of circumstances yesterday - but very nice circumstances, I might add. I believe that almost everyone was jealous that the three lovely ladies picked you to demonstrate their friendliness on. But take hope, maybe all of us can meet some equally fair mademoiselles in France without fear of breaking the rules of modern warfare."



It's no trouble packing for our journey to the rest area, just a change of underwear and socks. Whoops - I almost forgot my toilet articles. The weather is warm, so no extra coat besides the Eisenhower jacket is needed. "Don't forget your camera." Bud reminds me when he looked at my small pack. It did look as if I had forgotten something.

The 3253rd Signal Service Company rolls again on this bright sunny June morning. Well, about half of the Company's going anyway, someone has to stay back and look after the shop - keep the girls and the Russians from getting too wild.

It seems strange to be traveling west, with our canvas tarps, of the shiny clean trucks, rolled back. Our route has been charted on the most direct road, on our destination to Nancy, France. Part of the strange feeling comes from the fact that while we are now at peace, we have been programmed for war. Subconsciously we still expect a strafing attack to occur at any time - we still have that fear and we'll have to try and readjust.

Once again we're on the fast Autobahn, but this time we're traveling west. The more mountainous portion of the lower Alps are left behind as we follow the highway toward Muechen. Most of the country, like the plains that Muechen or Munich is built on, is a left-over from the ice-age. The melting ice resulted in large streams of water which carried with them huge masses of debris, to be deposited in the fore-land fields of rock fragments. The melting ice also left countless lakes in this region, and three of the largest are known as the Starnbergersee, the Ammersee, and the Chiemsee. Since our highway goes parallel for a few miles with this beautiful lake known as Chiemsee, a brief stop is a must. We are on a vacation, so besides the beauty of the lake for us to see, there's a site of historic value here of interest for all vacationers.



Germany and the Bavarian Country has a history of many Kings who have built cities and promoted science. A young King known as Ludwig 11, (1864- 1886) introduced the musical drama. It was his eccentric king's tendency toward melancholy which resulted in the fantastically designed castles and monuments throughout Bavaria. In seeking an outlet for this melancholy dream in which he imagined himself as the 'Sun-King', Ludwig-11 imitated Louis the Fourteenth of France. His extravagance and apparent loss of mind caused the ruling bodies to exile him to Berg on the Starnbergersee. Here, he met his death attempting to flee, and a cross marks the spot where his body was discovered in the lake.

Before us on the west end of the lake is the Castle Herrenchiemsee. This is now the center of our attention as we begin a brief tour. The castle is the most luxurious in Bavaria, and situated on an equally pretty lake - an ideal setting. The building and the landscaping is modeled after the Palace of Versailles, which was built by the King Louis, the Fourteenth. The castle has been closed for a period of the war, but it's open again, and we are the first of endless scores of tourists as the sightseeing resumes. We're given some literature as we wait in the courtyard for our guide. The courtyard is in itself, fabulous in design. There are several large peacocks strutting around and their brightly colored plumage seems to fit right in with the decor.

Our guide arrives, and we are divided into groups for the tour. The oriental rugs, and marble floors are protected along our pathway by a special floor covering. It will help to reduce some of the dirt and wear, but not all of it. It must take a huge crew just to keep the maintenance up on this place, besides the other crews of guides and police to guard against stealing.



A room known as the Mirror Gallery runs the entire length of the castle, or a distance of 328 feet. Colored oriental plaster designs of leaves, and people or events cover the walls up over the arched ceilings. In the spaces around the gilded work, various murals are blended in to complete this work of art. Red drapes bordered with gold thread frame the huge windows. Gilded castpewter candlelabras hang from the ceiling and line the gallery from ornamental stands on each side of the room. Our guide tells us that there is a place setting for 2500 candles. It would provide quite a brilliant luster when they are all lit.

And there are other rooms - many of them. We look at several of the bedrooms built for the young King Ludwig. Our guide informs us that King slept here for just two nights. "It's quite a price to pay for just a few nights lodging," comes the spoken response. And our eyes view the luxury even before it's described. There are the bright oriental rugs, muraled walls, fancy candlelabras, silk curtains and a marble fireplace. Although it's richly designed, it still contains the intimate look of a bedroom. A silk canopy supported by delicately designed gold gilded posts help to carry out this theme. A carved gold nude female statue stands guard over the top of each post. And there is also the required other furniture that is needed to complete the setting. As we leave the room I notice two gold intricately designed jeweled clocks. They are the works of a skilled craftsman.

Our tour takes us into other bedrooms of different design and furnishings. They all have a rich warm look, and yet the intimacy feeling of a bedroom. And there are other rooms adjoining these bedrooms.



"This is the bathroom," our guide informs us. The room is lined with marble tile, and the marble steps lead down to a large sunken tub. The room is large enough to substitute for a very comfortable living quarters. The bathtub is proportionately as large and it could accommodate a small swim party - almost anyway. With a few green plants landscaping the room, one gets the feeling of outside spaciousness.

"I wouldn't want the job of filling this tub with warm water," I comment as we leave the room. Then I notice that the system incorporates the use of dumb waiters. With such method of transportation the demand for hot water could easily be met either by bring up the hot water from below or by adding hot stones to water in the tub. Kings also had plenty of servants to perform such menial tasks.

There is no need for our guide to name the next room as a place for dining. He could have however described it more impressively as a "banquet Room." And here again the room is a showcase of more luxury. With its gold mold work it resembles the mirror gallery in miniture form. Murals follow the walls up past the coved ceilings.

The fireplace has a gold and marble front and mantel. In the center of the mantel there is another one of those fancy gold clocks which in this setting is flanked by two candleabra stands. Their lit candles would reflect their light and warmth into two ceiling high mirrors.

And here as in some of the other rooms, gold lined red drapes with tie-backs cover the large window and doorways. Red stuffed velvet sitting chairs and other furniture are in the room. The focal point of attraction in the center of the room is a large table with a large armed chair



on each side. A red velvet, gold laced cloth covers the center of the table. On top of this cloth and in the center of the table is a large white vase brightly filled with colored porcelain flowers. To light the table and its setting there is a large white candleabra hung from the ceiling supporting many candles. Another hidden asset of the room is featured in the dumbwaiter upon which the table rests. The table can come up from a room below with a full setting with hot food. When the meal is finished, or when it's desired the table can be lowered and cleared in the same manner. "I wonder if they would care to warm up our 'C' rations?" Bill quips as we leave the room.

Our tour takes us into some more rooms, but we pass a few that are closed off. We're soon led outside into the sunshine and the world of reality - just a bunch of battle weary GIs on our way to a rest center. We sit on a marble bench in a fancy garden surrounded by fountains, and wait for the rest of the gang to catch up with us. The visit was well worth the extra time spent to see it.

"It was nice, but I don't know whether I'd want to live here." Bill remarks as we travel in a boat over some water to our trucks and the road that leads to Nancy. Again, we're on our way to our destination. We make the regular roadside stops, and take time off at twelve to enjoy one of those nearly forgotten 'C' rations. "Sorry that they're cold, Bill. But really we couldn't ask them to warm them up for us back at the palace."

Early in the afternoon our truck is involved in a slight accident. We have sideswired a bicycle on the road. No one is injured as our driver discovers upon stopping. We could keep on going, but time is



taken to fill out a report, and to inform some residents of a nearby house about the accident. The bicycle was badly damaged, so perhaps the report will help the young driver to file a claim for a new one.

We are now back in the land of France, and the youngsters are still asking for that cigarette for papa, and chocolate for mamma. It seems like it was only yesterday that we heard their first pleas for such a handout. In most cases, as he appeared and given the article, the child would wind up eating the chocolate, and smoking the cigarette by himself. The commodities asked for, are scarce in France or Europe, they are highly prized and used for money in the exchange for other goods or services.

"Well, here we are." Brad comments as we later enter the gates of the rest area. "I suppose some of the fellows will revisit some of their old girl friends or acquaintances in Luneville. That city is only about twenty miles to our south."

In our journey from Salzburg today, we made real good time and we are in the Nancy rest center early enough to register and look around the place before dinner. The rest area itself is composed of a cluster of several large buildings. There's all sorts of recreational equipment set up for our enjoyment. There's a reading room that boasts a small library, a music room, and a place for dancing. Of immediate interest to us is the dining room and its adjoining kitchen facilities for snacks. Outside in the privacy of the courtyard there's a swimming pool, deckchairs, and tables for pingpong or other games of leisure.

For our sleeping quarters we're provided the best the Nancy has to offer. Like several of the others, I'm given a small room



located in a nearby small hotel. Everything is clean and there are real sheets on the bed. There are modern toilet facilities, but of a different style than we have in the States. The toilet consists of a six-inch hole in a tile floor. By the bed, on a night stand, there's a pitcher of water, a basin, a towel, and a glass. The room is quiet and I get a very enjoyable night's sleep.

I've always had a fascination for the city of Nancy ever since the time last year when I had intercepted the message stating that our forces had liberated the city. This is a very pretty little French city, comparing somewhat with Luneville, if any comparison is at all possible. Each city, like people, goes on its own merits. Maybe it's the freshly budded trees, and the fresh, brightly colored spring flowers that attracts my liking at this time.

There's no First Sergeant to tell us to get up and eat or to do this or do that, so maybe it's just out of habit that I get up early enough to make my way to the dining room in time for breakfast and the other meals. I do enjoy being waited on. It's the feeling that I'm King for a day. At any such rest center there's always beer and whiskey available. I should know better, but it's time for celebration, and I indulge against my better judgement, with a can of beer and a jigger of whiskey. I don't feel very good after the free refreshments, and I don't feel much better during a fretful night's sleep.

The sunshine of a new day brings me the prospects of feeling much better. By the hard way of experience I've learned my lesson - I hope. I make a pledge on the spot, that any further celebrating will be done with soft drinks and icecream. Basically, it's nice just to drink in the beauty of the French countryside with the trees, flowers, and the



cheerful people who are enjoying a new found freedom.

There's plenty to do with our time; conversations with new friends, games to play, movies to watch, with reading and good meals to fill in with. Then we return to our rooms for a good night's sleep.

Our last day at the center, Sunday, June the tenth, is a rather special day in the way of eating and entertainment. For dinner it's the chef's special, and he goes all out to bring us a meal to remember. For the entertainment there's a small troupe of young gymnasts - mademoiselles even. "Aren't you glad I reminded you to take your camera?" Bud teases me when he noticed me snapping a few pictures of the athletes.

And all good things must come to an end - even our few days at the rest center. It has been quite an experience, one that I've enjoyed, and one I'm sure that I'll remember for quite a while. It was a chance to see some of France when it wasn't at war.

But our deeper thoughts are surfaced as we arrive back at our Austrian city of Salzburg when we ask the fifty dollar question. "Is there any news yet about when we're going home?"

"None whatsoever," comes the reply. "Except there's an ugly rumor going around that Congress might change the point system, and that would mean more delays for many of us."

But there's some mail from home to cheer us up, reminding us that we still do have a home, and that someone who cares is thinking about us. But at the closing of each letter there's still that same question and reminder: "Have you heard when you might be coming home?" All of the fellows must have been asked the same question, and the answers back back home will be about the same.



"Dear Mom, Your knowledge as to when we'll get to go home is about as good as ours. I hope, like you, that it'll be soon, but we are really lacking any official information at this time. There's a rumor that if the point system staysthe same, some of us may start moving for home around the first of July. There are a lot of troops to move from here and it'll take time even if things go smooth. There does seem to be a definite lack of leadership at this stage of the activities. This is a very pretty place to be near if we do have to wait. So, like the other fellows, I'll try and make the most of the situation and enjoy the surrounding Alps. I'll keep you informed."

And to make the most of the situation, we resume our daily walks around Salzburg, and do some some occasional shopping. The movies also give us another source of pleasant pastime. The rules concerning fraternization remain in effect, but the enforcement of such rules seem to be all but forgotten. It seems now that if I choose to sit and watch the swirling waters of the Salzach, I would remain alone. While the girls are still friendly, they are more independent - by some means more secretly, the boy-girl relationship has been established with rules of their own.

The Army has started using some of the Austrians, and displaced persons as well, in employment for the needed services of our troops. They are used in laundries, supplying food, and transportation to name a few. Of course conducting tours has always been a part of their life. Their knowledge of several languages is very useful in this field of work. It seems like almost overnight we have received freshly printed literature with colored brochures inviting us to be a guest on one of their tours.

On Thursday, June 28th, our unit is presented with some of this literature, and invited to go on a three day tour south of Salzburg and



over the Alpine Road to the vicinity of a high mountain called Grossglockner. Everything will be furnished including meals, hotel, and guide. I love mountains, and I'd love to visit these Alps. The offer is indeed a temptation. There's another temptation open to me that calls for a fast decision between the two. There's a rumor that those in my point priority range might start for home within a week. That one of these temptations is just a rumor is the deciding factor. It's pretty here in Salzburg, but the inactivity during this period of waiting, is starting to drive nearly everyone up the wall. At least the tour is a positive offer, and maybe the one in a lifetime.

The trucks are lined up nice and clean early Friday morning, and we are waiting for the tour in our clean olive colored uniforms. Our guide soon arrives and we get a chance to talk to her briefly before the start of our trip. She's an Austrian who speaks English with just a slight accent of German. My thoughts reflect back to the three girls by the Salzach River and remember that their English was almost flawless. "She's not quite as good looking either." Brad reminds me. "But maybe it's better this way. She appears to be a real nice guide who would know her way around the country and resorts. The main reason for the trip is to see the country - so let's get going."

Our little convoy of sightseers is made up of one truck filled with fellows from our 2253rd Signal Service Company, and there are three other trucks filled with troops from other units. Our guide is in the lead vehicle identified as a weapons carrier. "Due credit should be given to the Red Cross." Some of the fellows tell me. "It has been with their cooperation that most of these arrangements have been made."

We have planned our trip to make a circle route around the Konigssee



The use of the highway gets us to the capital city of Munich, in record time. Munich has a population of nearly one million, and it's located on the Isar River. "That's another river that runs northeast, and eventually joins the Danube on its journey to the Black Sea." Bill informed me earlier, after consulting the map.

While the city is well known as a music center, it has more recently been known as the birthplace of the Nazi Party. The Beer Hall Putsch led by Adolph Hitler took place here in 1923.

The city, as we get a glance of it today, resembles that of Nuremberg that we saw on our escorted tour of April the 18th. Parts of the city have been bombed extensively, while other sections seem to have escaped destruction. Here, also, families can be seen living in propped-up sections of the bombed out structures. And the clean-up of much of the rubble from the destruction has already been started. We can see much hand labor working on that effort, this Wednesday, the second day of May.

We continue on past the city of Munich for about fifteen miles to a place called Ottendichl which is near the town of Haar. We set up our bivouac in a woody section of the area. Pup tents are again put into use. "How about taking a walk around the area?" Andre invites several of our gang after we had set up most of our equipment.

The copy had been slow on what few nets that remained to copy, and he had no trouble getting followers. Anything to break the enveloping boredom was welcomed. We all loved to walk, and we take off on a small road northeast of our bivouac. After several blocks we come to a clearing in the woods where some freshly cut evergreen boughs cover some



large metal objects. "What have we got here?" Bud asks a question that we all shared.

On closer observation, the metal objects take on the real appearance of gliders - airplanes without the blade propellers. And then it finally dawns on us just what we are looking at, but Andre is the first to speak. "These are the little fellows that have been playing hide and seek with our anti-aircraft gunners lately. This is a part of a new Luft-waffe known as jet aircraft. The Germans have been employing a lot of new weapons of war lately. For our own good I'm sure that they are a little too few and too late, as the saying goes."

"I've seen them fly, or I wouldn't believe that they could just by looking at them on the ground. Just what is the secret of their method of flight?" I inquire. "I still don't believe that I'd care to fly in such a contraption."

"It's really quite simple," Roy answers. They work on the same principle as releasing air from a balloon. It's called jet propulsion, and the release of the hot air pushes the aircraft ahead."

We get braver, and more curious, as we approach closer to get a better look at the metal birds. There appears to be no sign of booby traps - but we are cautious. "How about taking my picture in front of one of these critters?" I ask Andre. "This is one thing that need proof of a picture, for nobody would believe such a tale."

"Sure thing, George," he replies. "Just show me how to work your camera. They look far out of this world now, but I wouldn't be surprised if someday this type of engine would power all of the aircraft."



"Thanks, Andre. I'll take a picture of you now, if you want one. And after this I guess that we'd better get back to the chuck-wagon."

We finish our picture taking, look around to see if there are any more planes near, and then we head back to camp.

The weather closes in on us again, and we are blessed with a few May showers. It's good weather to stay inside. We continue our shifts of operation out of habit and the main fact that we haven't been told anything to the contrary. It gets to be a little depressing in some respects. The same as knowing that two and two equal four, we know that for all practical purposes, that our part in the war is over and we should be happy. But we also share the feelings of a condemned man who has heard a rumor that he will be given a reprieve, but lacks the signed order by the Judge. Until we have an official ending, then the war is still going on and we remain the possible targets for destruction.

On a rainy Saturday, May 5th, our convoy, with members who share the questionable duties of interceptors, circles back to the town of Hear, and then proceed southeasterly in the general direction of the Austria section of Germany. "You don't need to give me the names of all of the towns, Bill, if you don't have them handy."

"It's no trouble, George," he replies. "We've been keeping a list of them up to this date, so we might just as well keep up with our project. After all, I want a record of where we go also."

We travel through the towns of Putzbrunn, Perlach, Hoehenkirchen, Bad Aibling, to Aising where we again join the Reich Autobahn. Here, again, we witness the spectacle of column after column of German



prisoners of war. The former invaders are now prisoners in their own country. It's hard to imagine the thoughts that are running through their minds as they are driven like cattle in the wet rain, and guarded by machine guns. The older soldiers who have families, with former trades or ties, are probably glad that it's all over with for them and they are thankful that they are still alive. "If the bombings or the shellings bothered any of them the way it did with us, then I'm sure they're glad that their part in the bloody mess is over." I tell some of the fellows. "But what about some of the younger soldiers, such as the storm troopers, the elite troops or fanatical followers of Hitler?

"You can be sure that they are more reluctant to be taken captive." Bud answers. "Many of them will still be willing to have another go at it to prove that they're the master race. We received an Army publication on that subject before we left England. It stated that even though they are conquered, the Germans are not to be trusted for a long time."

"And if we ever start to feel sorry for any of them, we can easily remember the suffering and death to millions that they, through their dictator, has caused." Andre injects. "We have been a part of that suffering. And thinking back to less than a week ago, we can remember the Dachau concentration camp, where millions of Jews alone were murdered."

The rain continues to fall on the wet highway and the large concentration of marching prisoners. I make a search in my duffle bag to find my camera, and then take a picture of this historic scene. It's a scene that we'll long remember.



We come across other groups of prisoners as we continue our drive to the southeast. There are detours as we come to more blown-up bridges. We proceed through the town Uebersee and then return to the Autobahn, after another town called Rab. We proceed on through Neukirchen, Teisendorf, Aufham, Mauthhausen, to the town of Swarzbach. We have now traveled across Germany and this is our first town in Austria. But a rose by any other name might mean the same, because for all practical purposes we are still in the so-called Nazi Germany. We continue on to the Austrian city of Salzburg, and a place called Lieftring.

"I never thought that we'd have to travel all across Germany just to set up billets in a little red school house." Bill comments. But here we are. I wonder if we'll have any more intercept?"

"If we have any more intercept, it'll just be for looks," Brad answers. "As everyone knows, the nets all are 'kaput.' Hey, this is a school house, but it isn't red. This must be where they taught the four 'Rs.'"

"What do you mean by four 'Rs'?" Bill inquires.

"Look at these large posters on the rollers," he answers. "They show the physical outline features of the other races, Jews and what not, as compared with the German super race. That's the other 'R.' Teach them while they are still young, was their motto. I wouldn't have believed this, if I hadn't seen it."

But our schoolhouse does have some other items that seem worthwhile. There are some pictures of the Austrian Alps with pretty wild flowers.



We spend the weekend in and around the little red school house. Bill still insists on using that name also. On Monday, May 7th, 1945, we receive the news that we had all been expecting. At Rheims, France, the Germans had accepted an unconditional surrender at the hour of 0241 GMT. The effective date would be announced soon. And that 'soon' still means that for some, the killing would still be going on.

For us, it meant that some judge was about to pardon us with freedom, or the escape from being shot at. "Well, maybe now we can write home to the folks and tell them that we're alright, and just where we wound up at." Andre spoke for all of us. Letter-writing seems to be on the priority list.

"It's too bad that President Roosevelt didn't live for another month to see the end of this war." Is another thought expressed openly by all of us.

Two days later on Wednesday, May 9th, 1945, there are some real shouts of joy around our little school house. This is V-E Day, the big day that we've been waiting for. The news comes in early, the surrender is effective at 090001, DBST. The VE is declared by all three Allied Governments at 1500 hours, DBST.

"There's a feeling here today that you will not be able to put into words, George," Bill tells me. And he is right, for there is no way to express the relief that's felt with the news. I wonder if any of us will outlive the fear of being shot at, or the fear that comes from hearing an enemy plane overhead with a potential load of bombs. Amid all of these shouts of joy, I give a deep prayer of thanks to God for providing His protection and comfort to us. I have kept up with my nightly



prayer of thanks, but this is a special.

Our tour of duty on intercept has mostly been for show during the last several days. Now our mission has been completed, and the receivers are soon put to other uses. There's music coming from some, with the occasional breaks for the news. We hear the reaction to the news from around the world, and there is much jubilation. But it's cause for much sorrow to be felt also, because all of the casualties have not yet been counted or reported. And with this sombering thought there's also the realization that there's another war with the Japanese still going on. Many of our troops over here would soon be deployed to that theater of war.

After dinner, we get to see one of the most brilliant displays of fireworks that we have ever witnessed. It's a display of real live fireworks with the noise to go with it. We see the colored lights from the firing of the very-signal pistols, as well as the display of colored smoke bombs. The real live fireworks is from real live ammunition, and it's well to stay under cover with all of the shrapnel flying around. The celebration was not announced, and for some of the Germans or Austrians, it brings the great fear that their fair city is being attacked. Salzburg has escaped any notable damage from the war, but most of the people have seen the damage wrought to other cities.

By morning the citizens have realized that the outburst was for a celebration. We're also having it slowly come to us as to what it means for this war to be over. There will be another phase of the struggle after coming this far through the cattle chute. We'll now have to find a way to get home. To go home will be our true reward, and it's



the only thing that we dream of. There are a lot of troops to move from this ETO. We have a priority system for our time to go home, but that system could change at will. I've deeply felt the growing lack of leadership since the death of our President. The power that he had and used will be hard to replace for awhile. We'll just have to wait and see how much it'll affect us.

Bill just informed me that even our celebration last night produced it's own casualties. An anti-aircraft gun fired low, and the shell tore through a barracks killing or injuring a number of soldiers. We'll probably hear more about that later.

On Friday, May 11th, we move to the main city of Salzburg, but on the outskirts of town. We are to occupy some German barracks, or an administration building of some kind. It's a large complex of two-story structures, occupying over five acres of land. The set-up was used by the Germans and was designed to be guarded. Our first approach to the structure is from the rear or east side where our motor pool will be located. The main entrance we find on the west side, and it's well landscaped. A small curved driveway leads in at right angle from a north-south main street. At the intersection on one side of this driveway there's a small sentry building, and I can see some possible guard duty for me there in the near future.

We're located on the south side of the city that's divided by the Salzach River. This river flows to the northeast and past a point that's about one hundred feet east of our new quarters. There's a walkway for the public that divides our land from the banks of the river. This river, and the city of nearly 100,000 offers the prospects of some future exploring in this new life that we'll have to get used to.



The war is over, but there's still work to be done. The motor pool crews are already checking over and cleaning up their vehicles. They've kept them up pretty good so far, but we've also done a lot of traveling lately, and there are a few dents of battle. Now there'll be time to get them really shiney.

And the cooks with their crew are also busy cleaning up and moving into our new facilities. From now on they'll be able to cook inside, and likewise we'll be able to eat inside, and even sit at tables. This'll be a first, since we left England.

"We've some real beds with springs!" Roy and some of the fellows announce to us. "You'd better hurry and pick out your favorite spot. There're a couple of extra beds in our room."

"There are no carpets or drapes," Brad complains jokingly. But they did have us in mind when they let us trade in our sleeping bags for blankets. So really fellows, I guess I shouldn't complain too much. And we have a place for showers in the basement, as well as a laundry room. There were a couple of German women doing some laundry there, so I guess that they go with the place and have the privilege of using the facilities. Do we call them German, or Austrian? Not that it matters too much."

We soon start up our favorite past time of exploring, with the first place being the inside of the buildings themselves. There are desks and shelves that contain Nazi pins and insignias of all sorts. Some say 'traffic controler,' so maybe that was one of the main functions of the Germans stationed here. "They'll make good souvenirs, as they're not too bulky to send home." Someone suggests. The items are soon depleted. I have my share, with a swastika armband and several other



rins or whatnots.

It's soon all-out souvenir season for everyone; with the finding, selling, or trading going on full scale. Some of the fellows seem to be professional traders, and they're really raking in the money. With the privilege of free postage to encourage us, most of the items are soon sent home. There's even the joke that some of the guys are even sending Jeeps home, piece by piece - maybe it isn't a joke. My share of the war booty also seems endless. Every item that we send home has to have a certificate of content signed by an officer, but that's no problem. If any problem exists, it comes in the work of crating and preparing the items for shipment home.

The source of souvenir supply is varied and from everywhere. "Does anyone want a pair of German binoculars?" Our officer announces one day. "We've just found a couple of truckloads in a warehouse." Of course he had his takers. Some German field telephones are found, and I send a set of three of them through the mail. I become the possessor of a German luger, which I trade for a dagger made in Italy.

We take some walks along the banks of the river. "A lot of the Nazi threw many of their personal items in the river when they faced capture." Bill tells us. "So keep your eyes open for some nice finds. Some of our fellows have already found a few valuable cameras. But with all of the soldiers in this area to hunt for them, the items will have been discovered."

Our search for cameras produced no results, but several other items are recovered from the water. I fish out a couple of range finders, and the length of one of them is three feet long. It will be a challenge to crate for shipment. The supply of such items will soon disappear,



but most of us now have a collection to clutter up our closets at home for many years to come.

But there's more to do than collect souvenirs. Guard duty is one of these adventures in living. I luck out most of the time by having the day shift of duty. My post is to be the sentry at the main front gate, and while it looks like an easy job to perform, it gets to be a very long two-hour tour of duty. The requirement for a soldier to perform such guard duty are quite simple. I'm a guard of the United States Army, and I'm to look the part by dressing neatly, wearing a helmet, and having a gun at my side. While I'm to appear tough and business-like, I also play the dual role of being friendly. Listed as last but with a very high priority is the job of staying awake and alert. Inactivity for two hours can become very boring and induce sleep, so great caution must be employed. In some ways the job resembles that of our former duties as intercept operators, in which a great amount of patience was required to wait for that one important message. To our advantage here in Salzburg, the people treat us with great respect and stay away from our facilities - at least for the present while we are new to them. But we realize that it would take only one fanatical Nazi to upset the peaceful routine of guard duty.

The use of lights is one questionable luxury that we now share now that the war has ended in this theater of operation. We're still at war with Japan, but the blackout restrictions, at least over here, have been eased. Maybe we were gettin so accustomed to not having outside lights that we accepted it as a way of living. But now that I do see some lights burning, it does seem more cheerful around. But really it's the meaning behind the lights coming back on that is the thing to rejoice



over- the war here has ended. There's the popular song that we sometimes sing or hum, that is starting to take on the realization of a hope or a prayer coming true. It's called: "The White Cliffs of Dover." It speaks of that day when the lights will come on again all over the world. The lights are gradually coming back on.

"There's a letter, and a copy of Yank Magazine on your bed." Bud announces to me when I return from my tour of guard duty.

"Thanks, Bud," I acknowledge as I start to open the letter from home. Of course Mom, as well as everyone else on the home-front had celebrated the ending of the war here. I was anxious to find out their reaction. by now she knew that I was in Salzburg, Austria, and that I had survived the war. She states that she has received one of the souvenir items that I had sent. More would soon be arriving, and it was my hope that she would find room for all of them.

I now take the time to remove my helmet, hook my carbine under my bed, and take off my coat and shoes. With the use of the lights that I was just thinking about, to read the magazine, I stretch out on the bed to combine a little rest. The Yank Magazine is a weekly magazine that we've received for some time now. This issue is proclaimed as the victory edition, 1945. It's also called the Continental Edition, and it sells for three francs - for those that buy it. It's printed by the men... for the men of the service - and the women.

The cover shows the painting of a recent war scene. It illustrates the fighting mans' side of the victory as compared with the ticker-tape parades, and the champagne drinking. The central figures in the foreground are two battle-weary soldiers. They're kneeling over the freshly made grave of a fallen buddy. The only remaining possession of the



dead soldier is his M1 rifle, which lies on the top of his new grave. They're paying their respects for the last time. There's the typical barbed wire and a tank to the left of the scene. In the background, there is a church spire and the gutted remains of a war-torn city that's still aflame.

The inside of the magazine is chock full o' articles related to the ending of the war. We're told how the various countries celebrated VE Day. There are stories concerning the reactions to this victory news, in the cities of London, Paris, and back home. These stories compare to those the Infantry had to tell. There was a lot of celebration for joy, but there was also a lot of prayerful thanks to God. One caption under the Infantry scene sums up a lot of thought: "The war was over, and I was still alive. And I thought of all the boys in the 28th Division band, who were with me in the Ardennes, who are dead now."

Along with these written articles, there's a pictorial story of this war as outlined in pictures from start to finish. And as the saying goes: "One picture is worth a thousand words."

"Hey, Bud. When do you believe that the war was over for us?" I ask him after I notice that he had finished looking at the magazine.

"I've tried to think of an answer for a question like that before," he replies. "I believe for us, it ended when our intercept became quiet, and when the Luftwaffe quit strafing us. But there remained that fear of being shot at all the way to the end of the war on VE Day. In some respects, the war will not be over until we get back home. The memories of the war will be with us forever, and it'll affect some of us more adversely than others. What's your opinion?"



"You sound like a prophet, Bud. I agree with you. The action over here has been man-created suffering. There'll always be some type of suffering in our life besides war. Maybe the natural suffering will not seem quite as bad to us since we now have a comparison to go by.

"By the way, Brad was telling me that some of the fellows are going on a trip south to Berchtesgaden tomorrow. Are you coming with us?"

"I wouldn't miss it George," he replies. It's pretty country, and I also can't wait to see that much talked-about Eagles nest of Hitler's. Besides that, I'm still used to traveling at least every other day."

We leave on our Company self-guided tour right after breakfast. Our 'three truck caravan' heads south- southwest towards the snow-covered Alps. Besides for the opportunity to see his famous retreat, we learn that our trip serves another worthwhile purpose. Berchtesgaden has a well known brewery, and a couple of kegs of beer are on today's shopping list. The experts from our Company tell us that keg beer tastes better than the canned variety, and that the keg beer found here is the best to be found anywhere. So, for those that love beer, this trip should make their day. For those of us who have brought along a canteen of water to go with our 'C' rations, this trip should fulfill the scenic desires for our day.

As we leave the fortress city of Salzburg, we see a portion of the lower Alps. Ten miles to the southwest and located on the Barvarian and Salzburg Frontier, there is one mountain that seems higher than the others. This mountain is famous for its legends as well as being a popular spot for mountain climbers. On the top of this 5900 foot peak there's a large cross that we can see from Salzburg and most of the surrounding countryside. The mountain is called the Utersberg.



Berchtesgaden lies on the southern slope of this mountain. We reach this well known resort town by following a valley road to the east of the mountain, and passing through a couple of smaller towns. If we were not blessed with the benefits of our own GI transportation, we would be forced to use the electric train from Salzburg to Berchtesgaden. The train trip takes nearly one and a half hours according to our travel information, but we'll arrive at our destination in less than one hour.

As promised, our driver does stop at the local brewery, located on the south side of town. Most of us wait in the trucks while several of the men go inside to make arrangements to pick up a couple of kegs of beer after our return from the mountain top. The break also gives us a chance to study some maps, and tour folders that we had brought from Salzburg. Brad reads some of the tempting advertising outloud. "Who ever has not seen Berchtesgaden has not seen Bavaria. And it states that these simple words of a native Bavarian imply the views to be had of the imposing, rugged, colossal chalk mountains, glittering grey, surrounding this land, and its beautiful unrivalled meadows, reaching high into the skies. Here, in the towerering mountains, is the famous Eagles nest - secret retreat of Hitler's.

"And before the days of Hitler," Brad continues. "We find some basic information from our tour ad. 'The greatest treasure of the Berchtesgadener Land, as the country around Berchtesgaden is called, is the Konigssee, the gem of the Bavarian Alps. It is eight miles long, one half to one mile wide, and in places up to 800 feet deep, surrounded by majestic mountains, that tower over almost black water.' And regarding the town of Berchtesgaden, it states: 'This is a very popular holiday haunt , and health resort; brine baths; and winter sports.' By



the way, we're at 1870 feet above sea-level."

"We thank you, guide, for that information." I tease him. "They really throw out the flowery adjectives in those ads. The boat trip on the lake, with sunbathing and swimming sounds super nice, but I believe that our itinerary for today calls for the Eagles Nest. Lets take a rain check for that Lake Trip, however. I've a feeling that we'll have plenty of time to take that trip and many others before it's time to catch that boat heading back home."

Our drivers with the other men return and we start our drive south up the mountain that lies east of the other road and rails that leads to the lake resort areas. We make a number of switchbacks to reach our destination on the mountain. On our climb, we notice two police check points formerly staffed by the Nazi, where road blocks could be swung out across the road for instant use. As we climb higher on the road, the view of the beautiful alps unfolds all around us - then, we are nearly on top.

Now we're at the base community of the Retreat. Several weeks before today, this place was also the scene of the last fighting of the war. Now we're on an Army tour, and it's a better way to travel. We are given small maps of the area, so that we will know where we are, and just who lived in each building. There's a two mile circular drive surrounding most of the area, with at least five more road blocks located at strategic locations. Goring's and Bormann's houses are located at the top southwest side of the platt. Hitler's house is located at top center, while a guest house is on the southeast corner of the section. Below Hitler's house there's a special police building, which also guards one of the road-blocks. Below these buildings lies a mini



city by itself. There's a nursery, a large hot-house, administration building, two garages, police barracks, a large hotel, two cafes, and a Hall. These are the main buildings, but there're others.

There's an elevator, as well as a road that makes access to a nest of buildings on the top of the mountain. The elevator isn't working, so it's off limits to us. There's probably a bomb shelter and other emergency equipment located in there. All things seemed to have been oriented for the safety of their leader, and his survival - and that of the Party. There's also evidence of the planning for his quick arrivals and his emergency exits.

But as the name states, it's also a retreat - a place for him to relax in solid comfort. And except for the police setup surrounding this immediate area, the natural environment is superb. With this place as his own, how could he want or need more? Stretched to each side of us stand the snow-capped Alps, on a base of green velvet mountains. Hidden in the many valleys are the countless emerald lakes - the left-overs from the ice age. Looking down from our vista point to the southwest, we see one of these gems known as the Konigsee, or Lake Konig. It's the one that we were reading about. We can see the sheer cliffs that surround the dark waters. There are very few open beaches around the lake where a boat may land.

We munch on some 'C' rations, and then we go over to the lower set of buildings for a closer look. Hitler's house is a 'must', to wander through on our tour. "He would appreciate these escorted tours through his private house and domain, wouldn't he fellows?" I speculate out-loud as our guide shows us through the house.

"Would you mind taking my picture while I'm standing on his balcony?"



I ask Roy before we leave for another house.

He takes the picture, and then adds his own opinion of the character who formerly owned the house. "Big deal," he says. "We're walking and standing where he did." Then he casually dusts off his boots as we leave the building.

Hitler's house as well as some of the other buildings had received a limited amount of damage during the take-over - or maybe the damage was from irate GIs expressing their pent-up feelings. I take another picture of the north and balcony side of his house, and then it's time for a visit to the guest house to the east.

We may call it a guest house, but the arrangement is for a place of detention for political prisoners. In the basement there are several rooms with bare walls and no windows. There are two-inch solid wood doors fitted with heavy locks and peep-holes. Was this just a security to protect the honored guests?

Below and to the east of the guest house, are the remains of some large dog kennels. "We had to shoot all of the dogs before we could approach them." Our guide informs us as we go by the kennels. There's a lot of damage done here as well as the other areas. It'll take a lot of work to restore the buildings to their original condition.

I take a few more pictures before it's time to start on our trip back 'home.' We stop at Berchtesgaden to pick up our precious cargo of beer, on our way. We arrive back in Salzburg in plenty of time for dinner. "It was an interesting trip and one to remember." These are some of the good comments that I hear. The beer is prized as something rather special also.



The Russians have been our allies in this war against the Nazi. There has always been some disagreements with them in regards to the war strategy, but the main aim to defeat Germany has been one of unity. And on the other side of the picture, of course, it has always been the desire of the Nazi to divide the Allies and weaken us enough to cause us failure and defeat in the war. It has been known that the Russians were not happy with our time-table of the invasion. They had wanted the invasion sooner to relieve the pressure on their front. Near the end of the war they wanted us to hold back so that they could occupy certain sectors first. Maybe it seemed that we were the ones that were out of step, but the Russians had a different philosophy of warfare than was our general feeling. We all know that in combat it's just a case of survival, and most of the rules are laid aside. But as a general picture, as an Army, we brought along our own supplies to live off from, while the Russian Armies lived more off the land - taking from the people whatever they desired. The Germans were also inclined to follow the same procedure. We remember well, what happened to our Company when the German owners reported that some jewels were stolen from the old castle - we were searched. I don't believe that such a procedure would have happened with a Russian unit.

Just as the Germans preferred, for survival sake, to surrender to our rear echelon units, there was also the desire for them to surrender to the Americans rather than to the Russians. They possessed a great fear of them. Of course the opposite held true for the Nazi, and their blitzkriegs, by the rest of the world. Before the war was quite over, and while we were at the 'little red schoolhouse', we heard of, and even tried to settle disputes between the Russians and Austrians or Germans. The Russian had taken some bicycles, and the Austrians wanted



their vehicles of transportation returned. Such complaints continue to come to us, and we even received one yesterday.

Of course at this time, we are the ones that are in charge of this district, but there's a rumor, and a strong possibility that the Russians will occupy this sector in the near future. The Austrians have heard the rumor, also, and they are fearful of that prospect. These thoughts all come back to me when we see some of the Russian soldiers, and their wives or secretaries down by the river this afternoon. The men are built more on the heavy - allright fat side, and it's unlikely that they've been with a combat unit.

I only hope that we get along good together during the postwar occupation, but some obvious differences are already apparent. But for now, we are occupying the land, and we take advantage of the fact that we are here, by sightseeing on almost daily walks. We seem to get along well with most of the people, and sometimes we can almost suspiciously wonder if a war had ever been going on. With the back ground setting of the Alpine country, it's hard to say whether Salzburg would be more noted for this, or as a music and cultural center of the world. And that's just what some of the travel books that we've just bought, tell us about the district. Yes, we've been spending some of our invasion money at some of the many stores in the market place. There are from three to six of us soldiers together on these walks that we take. Other groups have other interests, and make their travel trips to suit their desires.

The city of Salzburg is divided by the river of Salzach. The division also separates the older and newer sector of the town. The book states that the old side of town is on the south side of the



river, but it seems west to me. Just as there are two sides of the town, there are also two towering rocks, one on each side of the river. The rock in the old section is the base for the festung, or fortress, that dates a history with the rest of the town back to the Roman Empire days. It was a settlement known as Juvavum, since the time of Emperor Constantin, until 477 to 700 A.D.

While the city has an old history and buildings to go with such a history, it can also boast of being a modern city with all of the present-day conveniences to go along with it. The history only adds to the many cultural outlets available to us in this month of May, 1945. Except to the extent that the disruption caused by the war has halted flow of civilian tourists, things seem quite normal. The war has brought very little physical damage to the city. There exists the facilities for air, bus, and rail transportation from, or to, here. Or how about a small boat ride on the Salzburg River? In this city of over sixty thousand people, there are two museums, four or five theater or opera houses, numerous hotels and eating places. There are over twenty Roman Catholic Churches in the vicinity, and one Protestant Church - so take your choice. And the fellows say that there's an excellent brewery located here as well as some fancy, favorite bars.

Many of the buildings we see are of a Bavarian or Alpine design, except for the two Cathedrals and the one Fortress. The dress of the people go along with this Alpine theme also. The women are generally seen in this true native attire, and the men, either walking or riding, are right at home with their garb of leather shorts with suspenders, bright shirt and stockings, topped off with a feathered alpine hat.

Between the gang of fellows that we walk with, there's always a request



or suggestion for some new adventure, including shopping for some very special gift to send home. There's a souvenir shop east of the river. "Let us go over there today," Bud suggests. "They have some postcards with some better pictures on them than it is possible for us to take with our cameras." We eventually purchase the postcards with the pictures featuring local and alpine scenes. On our way back to camp we stop in at a bakery to sample some fresh rolls that had been brought to our attention by a mouth-watering aroma drifting by as we made our way to the other shop.

Our Armed Forces have obtained the rental of an opera house that we use as a theater. We are privileged with the regular showings of the latest films, and there's a new one twice a week, so we do have one to look forward to seeing in-between our other sightseeing adventures.

"We've been here all of this time and we haven't seen the Fortress," Brad complains. So today it's time for just such a visit. Some of the buildings that we see are actually carved out of the base of the rock on which the Fortress is located. Many other buildings, shops, and Cathedrals are located on other streets near these. We buy our tickets for a ride on the cog railroad to the top of the rock and Fortress. The German name for the fortress is Festung Hohensalzburg. The railway is called Drahtseilbahn, and it was built in 1892. It's about a three minute ride to the top of the rock. About half-way on our ride up, there is the rail station called Monchsberg. Nearby this terminal, there's a very fine restaurant named "Zur Katze," and a beautiful view of the town may be seen from here. Before reaching the last rail station on top, we pass through a 72 foot tunnel which takes us through the actual walls of the Fortress itself.. This station is directly underneath a 52-foot



lookout tower. There's another restaurant near this station and also another fine view of the river, mountains, and town.

"There's the location of our Headquarter buildings over to the south," Brad comments as we look at the view. And then his discussions turn to thoughts about the Port itself. "There's a 200-pipe musical organ that plays for tourists on regular schedules. And for those we would rather see something more gruesome, there's the torture chamber, which is the requisite of all good Portresses. All of this information is from our brochure. We'll have to look around better when we have more time on another day. I guess many of the town's Archbishops have lived here, besides being built by one."

"It must have been a good place to hide out during some of their many wars," Bud adds. "Or a good place for them to hide when the townspeople didn't like their rule and went on riot."

The Fortress is at an altitude of 1777 feet, compared with 1379 feet at the river's level. It'll take us the same time to descend, as it did to reach here, as the cars are connected together. "The book states that the most scenic or picturesque way to the Portress is by a road from the other side." I add to the conversation as we descend to the bottom of the rock. "There's a constantly changing view of the city as well as the mountains. The road also passes under some highly decorated arches. On our next visit we'll have to go that way."

On another day while we are up town doing some shopping, we pass by the building which is the birthplace of Mozart. "Would any of you mind if we took in a little culture today?" Roy asks the group. "After all this is the home town of the famous Mozart that we once had to study



about in school. Some music lovers would travel half way around the world just to see this place and take in one of his many operas."

There're no objections, but of course by this time we are already half way through the doorway following like sheep. It's really a chance that we shouldn't pass up. Most of the fellows in our outfit seem to be quite musically inclined. Some of the fellows, like Leonard, are excellent piano players. With such inclination, maybe that's why most of us wound up in an outfit that featured dots and dashes.

This is Mozart's Geburtshaus, or birthplace. It's a six story building located in the main section of the town near the eastshadow of the Festung or Fortress. Mozart was born in a room on the third floor. This room and the adjoining living room are a part of the present museum that contains his concert piano, spinet, and other musical instruments. Family portraits, as well as other pictures, letters and documents are on display. All of these possessions are now the property of the International Foundation Mozarteum. In the floor below, we view some miniture replica stage settings used in some of his many operas. For rooms in a building that's older than the history of our United States, things have been preserved quite well. Beside the materal of musical nature, there are the items that make up the furnishings of any home such as the fireplace used for cooking, chairs, tables, beds, and lamps - other than the electric kind.

The museum is open from 8 to 12, and from 2 to 6 daily, according to the sign. Such hours give them time for a liesurely lunch hour, or maybe really time for them to clean up the debris left by the tourist. "So, thank you, Roy, for the suggestion of the visit. We took in some nice culture, and it'll give us something rather interesting to write home about."



The next day, following completion of some of our regular duties around camp, we again enjoy some more walking on the lower streets of the hill or Kapuziner Berg located on the east side of the Salzach River. As is the case with most of our walks, we just start walking, never really knowing our destination or what we might see. It's a surprise for us then when we come to another Mozart family home. Looking closer at our map we find that there are several Mozart buildings, including the Mozarteum, located on this side of the river. The discovery and a tour of the homes sort of tops off our cultural intake of Salzburg, and we now have more of an understanding of the reason why it's called the music center of the world.

Walking a little up along the road, we come to an isolated and deserted house. Deserted houses have always been an attraction to kids and to soldiers - well, the enemy could be hiding there. During our tour of France and Germany we learned a number of German words or phrases dealing with war from our official phrase book. A chance for us to use some of higher education in dealing with the enemy, had rarely existed for most us in our trip across the continent. Now before us lies a chance to try out some of this learning on a 'make believe' enemy. When we are certain that there is no one around to be seen or to hear us, Roy yells out at the top of his voice, the German words equivalent words to: "Come outside with your hands in the air and surrender."

"What would we do, Roy, if someone would come out? I inquire. "The war is supposed to be over, and we would run into complication trying to find some place to take any such prisoners - it could be embarrassing." But as we had planned, luck is with us and no one does come out. So, just like a couple of contented kids, we continue our exploring of



our hill. A couple of times we stop long enough to take some pictures of the view looking down on Salzburg in its pretty alpine setting.

In our guide book there's a foreword that reads: "In Salzburg amidst lovely mountains and lakes, a town people grew up with their hearts deeply rooted in its beautiful surroundings, with their minds open to the interests of all nations of the world.

"The people developed into a highly cultivated group, natural in their behaviour, but not secluded from the world. The lovely nature of the country of Salzburg has given the Salzburgian special rich gifts and feelings for art, and these have given birth to many geniuses ranking among the greatest in the world.

"May this country and its amiable inhabitants help each foreigner feel at home whether he comes over on duty or to enjoy himself."

I agree with the book, that this is a very pretty country. And for that reason it's sometimes hard to realize that we've just come through a very bloody war, and that our newly won peace in Europe is just starting. We've been instructed in our policy of fraternization, and warned that the German people pose a threat of the potential peace for many years to come. But while we are still soldiers we're also still free to think. Most of us before the war had been too busy working for a living to think much about the peace that we enjoyed, or the war to come - until it was with us. We can wonder, is this country any different than any other country as far as the working people are concerned? In some of our free discussions, we have voiced the opinion, that generally, wars and violence are brought to us by opportunists, and people are forced into the situations that develop.



But this talk swings back to the subject of fraternization. We're to remain, until otherwise instructed, aloof as the conqueror over the enemy. The ruling has many good points considering all of the human lives that have just been lost. But in fulfilling this well meant policy there's at least one situation that makes its own rules, and has a mind of its own. The saying goes that all is fair in love and war. Trying to keep the girls and soldiers apart is like trying to divide the sky. The soldiers are lonesome for girls, and for the girls there has existed a shortage of boys.

From the window in our second story building overlooking a park across the river we sometimes, for a past time, watch a drama of this relationship unfurl. Couples are strolling and making love in the half privacy of the park and the area surrounding the river. Generally, there's less privacy and more boldness that seems to make a mockery of our so-stated policy. Maybe we're battle drunk, but the drama seems at times to be quite humorous. Anyone can be a player, and so I'm about to become a part of this little drama - quite unintentionally.

The Austrian people used to give our area a large distance between them on their travels by here. Now they go by the street in front, and by the path along the river, as if we were just a part of the landscape, and that we had been here forever. And the people of course includes the girls .

The river flowing by our buildings, has by itself, been a source of fascination for me as well as the other fellows. I could spend much time just sitting on the bank watching the swirl of the fast water. It is just such a situation that exists on one sunny day after lunch. The weather is warm and there are several other soldiers also sitting around.



And now into the scene, some very nice looking Austrian girls in pretty colored sun dresses just happen to come walking by - also enjoying the river on such a equally nice summer day. Are they lonesome and just want to be friendly, or are they spies? The three girls pick me out of the group and edge their way over to where I'm sitting and also sit down on the rocky bank.

Then to my surprise they start up a conversation in perfect English. To a soldier who has not been near any type of girl for a long time, let alone some that can speak English, it's quite an event. I'm still quite aware of who I am, and what is taking place. They are too nice looking to ever be wanting for any male companionship. They're very friendly in their conversation, and it seems that their intent is to prove that they are, and feel free to do their talking in the open. They tell me about their life and schooling in Salzburg. Their mastery of the English language they state is due to the requirement at school of all students to take several languages, including English.

"What part of the United States are you from?" one of them asks.

I inform her that I live in Washington, and tell her my name. But the questions from them are few. They tell me some more about themselves and their country in this region that they seem quite proud of. If there is any hatred in them concerning our occupation of their country, it's not expressed openly. Like many of the Bavarians, they seem to hold to the long standing idea that Austria is not Germany. There's also an expressed fear that this region will soon be occupied by the Russian forces. As a result of this fear, their love or friendliness for the Americans is now being openly demonstrated.

While I couldn't dispute their sincere approach, my mind still recalled



that this is the area where Hitler spent a lot of his life and came into power. Then there's also another conflict of thoughts. Does the action of one, or a group, condemn them all? But I also realize that like Mary allowing her pet lamb to be at school, I knew that it was against the rules of our occupation to carry on an open conversation with them. I had been enjoying myself just sitting here watching the water go by - but now for a few minutes I've been enjoying their fresh conversation. Should I demonstrate my authority as the conqueror and ask them to leave, or should I get up and leave myself? Or, should I stay like a normal warm-blooded American soldier and enjoy the fruits of battle.

As the conversations continues, I notice several other soldiers, including one of our Lieutenants, about 100 feet upstream on the bank. This gathering seems to act as a signal for one of the girls to move even closer - within touching distance of me. Then I feel a firm hand on my shoulder. "George, the Lieutenant wants to have a word with you."

"Thank you, Brad." I acknowledge. Then I excuse myself from the girls and make a hasty retreat up the bank.

I make a pert military salute, and then listen to the reminder that I knew was coming.

A short while later I'm in our room, mulling over for a few minutes just what had happened. Really, considering everything, it has been a nice day. A short distance outside of our window and below the path and bank, the waters of the Salzach continue to race on their way. Across the river in the woods by the park, the new romances between the girls and the soldiers continue to flourish more in the open. The



drama continues to unfold before our eyes like we were watching a live Mozart Opera. The captured German field glasses make ideal opera glasses. Will the rules of warfare keep the soldiers away from the fair maidens? Yes, it's hard to play the role of the conqueror.

Brad always seems to be the one that comes up with those news flashes concerning coming events. "Guess what's going to happen?" He leads into his announcement in a way that makes me work for the answer. "Tomorrow's the anniversary of 'D' day and we're all going home." I reply.

"You're right about the 'D' day part, but we're not going home. We've orders pending that will take us to Nancy, France, and one week at a rest center - at least many of us are going there."

"Hey, did the episode of my fraternization by the river yesterday have anything to do with such a desperately needed move." I inquire. "Really though it sounds great - something I've always wanted to do, next to going home."

"We'll be leaving early in the morning," he adds. "And we don't have to worry about making any arrangements, as everything has been taken care of, including the transportation in our own private trucks."

"Your episode by the river didn't have anything to do with the trip, as the plans have been made for quite awhile. You were just a victim of circumstances yesterday - but very nice circumstances, I might add. I believe that almost everyone was jealous that the three lovely ladies picked you to demonstrate their friendliness on. But take hope, maybe all of us can meet some equally fair mademoiselles in France without fear of breaking the rules of modern warfare."



It's no trouble packing for our journey to the rest area, just a change of underwear and socks. Whoops - I almost forgot my toilet articles. The weather is warm, so no extra coat besides the Eisenhower jacket is needed. "Don't forget your camera." Bud reminds me when he looked at my small pack. It did look as if I had forgotten something.

The 3253rd Signal Service Company rolls again on this bright sunny June morning. Well, about half of the Company's going anyway, someone has to stay back and look after the shop - keep the girls and the Russians from getting too wild.

It seems strange to be traveling west, with our canvas tarps, of the shiny clean trucks, rolled back. Our route has been charted on the most direct road, on our destination to Nancy, France. Part of the strange feeling comes from the fact that while we are now at peace, we have been programmed for war. Subconsciously we still expect a strafing attack to occur at any time - we still have that fear and we'll have to try and readjust.

Once again we're on the fast Autobahn, but this time we're traveling west. The more mountainous portion of the lower Alps are left behind as we follow the highway toward Muechen. Most of the country, like the plains that Muechen or Munich is built on, is a left-over from the ice-age. The melting ice resulted in large streams of water which carried with them huge masses of debris, to be deposited in the fore-land fields of rock fragments. The melting ice also left countless lakes in this region, and three of the largest are known as the Starnbergersee, the Ammersee, and the Chiemsee. Since our highway goes parallel for a few miles with this beautiful lake known as Chiemsee, a brief stop is a must. We are on a vacation, so besides the beauty of the lake for us to see, there's a site of historic value here of interest for all vacationers.



Germany and the Bavarian Country has a history of many Kings who have built cities and promoted science. A young King known as Ludwig 11, (1864- 1886) introduced the musical drama. It was his eccentric king's tendency toward melancholy which resulted in the fantastically designed castles and monuments throughout Bavaria. In seeking an outlet for this melancholy dream in which he imagined himself as the 'Sun-King', Ludwig-11 imitated Louis the Fourteenth of France. His extravagance and apparent loss of mind caused the ruling bodies to exile him to Berg on the Starn-bergersee. Here, he met his death attempting to flee, and a cross marks the spot where his body was discovered in the lake.

Before us on the west end of the lake is the Castle Herrenchiemsee. This is now the center of our attention as we begin a brief tour. The castle is the most luxurious in Bavaria, and situated on an equally pretty lake - an ideal setting. The building and the landscaping is modeled after the Palace of Versailles, which was built by the King Louis, the Fourteenth. The castle has been closed for a period of the war, but it's open again, and we are the first of endless scores of tourists as the sightseeing resumes. We're given some literature as we wait in the courtyard for our guide. The courtyard is in itself, fabulous in design. There are several large peacocks strutting around and their brightly colored plumage seems to fit right in with the decor.

Our guide arrives, and we are divided into groups for the tour. The oriental rugs, and marble floors are protected along our pathway by a special floor covering. It will help to reduce some of the dirt and wear, but not all of it. It must take a huge crew just to keep the maintenance up on this place, besides the other crews of guides and police to guard against stealing.



A room known as the Mirror Gallery runs the entire length of the castle, or a distance of 328 feet. Colored oriental plaster designs of leaves, and people or events cover the walls up over the arched ceilings. In the spaces around the gilded work, various murals are blended in to complete this work of art. Red drapes bordered with gold thread frame the huge windows. Gilded castpewter candlelabras hang from the ceiling and line the gallery from ornamental stands on each side of the room. Our guide tells us that there is a place setting for 2500 candles. It would provide quite a brilliant luster when they are all lit.

And there are other rooms - many of them. We look at several of the bedrooms built for the young King Ludwig. Our guide informs us that King slept here for just two nights. "It's quite a price to pay for just a few nights lodging," comes the spoken response. And our eyes view the luxury even before it's described. There are the bright oriental rugs, muraled walls, fancy candlelabras, silk curtains and a marble fireplace. Although it's richly designed, it still contains the intimate look of a bedroom. A silk canopy supported by delicately designed gold gilded posts help to carry out this theme. A carved gold nude female statue stands guard over the top of each post. And there is also the required other furniture that is needed to complete the setting. As we leave the room I notice two gold intricately designed jeweled clocks. They are the works of a skilled craftsman.

Our tour takes us into other bedrooms of different design and furnishings. They all have a rich warm look, and yet the intimacy feeling of a bedroom. And there are other rooms adjoining these bedrooms.



"This is the bathroom," our guide informs us. The room is lined with marble tile, and the marble steps lead down to a large sunken tub. The room is large enough to substitute for a very comfortable living quarters. The bathtub is proportionately as large and it could accommodate a small swim party - almost anyway. With a few green plants landscaping the room, one gets the feeling of outside spaciousness.

"I wouldn't want the job of filling this tub with warm water," I comment as we leave the room. Then I notice that the system incorporates the use of dumb waiters. With such method of transportation the demand for hot water could easily be met either by bring up the hot water from below or by adding hot stones to water in the tub. Kings also had plenty of servants to perform such menial tasks.

There is no need for our guide to name the next room as a place for dining. He could have however described it more impressively as a "banquet Room." And here again the room is a showcase of more luxury. With its gold mold work it resembles the mirror gallery in miniture form. Murals follow the walls up past the coved ceilings.

The fireplace has a gold and marble front and mantel. In the center of the mantel there is another one of those fancy gold clocks which in this setting is flanked by two candleabra stands. Their lit candles would reflect their light and warmth into two ceiling high mirrors.

And here as in some of the other rooms, gold lined red drapes with tie-backs cover the large window and doorways. Red stuffed velvet sitting chairs and other furniture are in the room. The focal point of attraction in the center of the room is a large table with a large arched chair



on each side. A red velvet, gold laced cloth covers the center of the table. On top of this cloth and in the center of the table is a large white vase brightly filled with colored porcelain flowers. To light the table and its setting there is a large white candelabra hung from the ceiling supporting many candles. Another hidden asset of the room is featured in the dumbwaiter upon which the table rests. The table can come up from a room below with a full setting with hot food. When the meal is finished, or when it's desired the table can be lowered and cleared in the same manner. "I wonder if they would care to warm up our 'C' rations?" Bill quips as we leave the room.

Our tour takes us into some more rooms, but we pass a few that are closed off. We're soon led outside into the sunshine and the world of reality - just a bunch of battle weary GIs on our way to a rest center. We sit on a marble bench in a fancy garden surrounded by fountains, and wait for the rest of the gang to catch up with us. The visit was well worth the extra time spent to see it.

"It was nice, but I don't know whether I'd want to live here." Bill remarks as we travel in a boat over some water to our trucks and the road that leads to Nancy. Again, we're on our way to our destination. We make the regular roadside stops, and take time off at twelve to enjoy one of those nearly forgotten 'C' rations. "Sorry that they're cold, Bill. But really we couldn't ask them to warm them up for us back at the palace."

Early in the afternoon our truck is involved in a slight accident. We have sideswired a bicycle on the road. No one is injured as our driver discovers upon stopping. We could keep on going, but time is



taken to fill out a report, and to inform some residents of a nearby house about the accident. The bicycle was badly damaged, so perhaps the report will help the young driver to file a claim for a new one.

We are now back in the land of France, and the youngsters are still asking for that cigarette for papa, and chocolate for mamma. It seems like it was only yesterday that we heard their first pleas for such a handout. In most cases, as he appeared and given the article, the child would wind up eating the chocolate, and smoking the cigarette by himself. The commodities asked for, are scarce in France or Europe, they are highly prized and used for money in the exchange for other goods or services.

"Well, here we are." Brad comments as we later enter the gates of the rest area. "I suppose some of the fellows will revisit some of their old girl friends or acquaintances in Luneville. That city is only about twenty miles to our south."

In our journey from Salzburg today, we made real good time and we are in the Nancy rest center early enough to register and look around the place before dinner. The rest area itself is composed of a cluster of several large buildings. There's all sorts of recreational equipment set up for our enjoyment. There's a reading room that boasts a small library, a music room, and a place for dancing. Of immediate interest to us is the dining room and its adjoining kitchen facilities for snacks. Outside in the privacy of the courtyard there's a swimming pool, deckchairs, and tables for pingpong or other games of leisure.

For our sleeping quarters we're provided the best the Nancy has to offer. Like several of the others, I'm given a small room



located in a nearby small hotel. Everything is clean and there are real sheets on the bed. There are modern toilet facilities, but of a different style than we have in the States. The toilet consists of a six-inch hole in a tile floor. By the bed, on a night stand, there's a pitcher of water, a basin, a towel, and a glass. The room is quiet and I get a very enjoyable night's sleep.

I've always had a fascination for the city of Nancy ever since the time last year when I had intercepted the message stating that our forces had liberated the city. This is a very pretty little French city, comparing somewhat with Luneville, if any comparison is at all possible. Each city, like people, goes on its own merits. Maybe it's the freshly budded trees, and the fresh, brightly colored spring flowers that attracts my liking at this time.

There's no First Sergeant to tell us to get up and eat or to do this or do that, so maybe it's just out of habit that I get up early enough to make my way to the dining room in time for breakfast and the other meals. I do enjoy being waited on. It's the feeling that I'm King for a day. At any such rest center there's always beer and whiskey available. I should know better, but it's time for celebration, and I indulge against my better judgement, with a can of beer and a jigger of whiskey. I don't feel very good after the free refreshments, and I don't feel much better during a fretful night's sleep.

The sunshine of a new day brings me the prospects of feeling much better. By the hard way of experience I've learned my lesson - I hope. I make a pledge on the spot, that any further celebrating will be done with soft drinks and icecream. Basically, it's nice just to drink in the beauty of the French countryside with the trees, flowers, and the



cheerful people who are enjoying a new found freedom.

There's plenty to do with our time; conversations with new friends, games to play, movies to watch, with reading and good meals to fill in with. Then we return to our rooms for a good night's sleep.

Our last day at the center, Sunday, June the tenth, is a rather special day in the way of eating and entertainment. For dinner it's the chef's special, and he goes all out to bring us a meal to remember. For the entertainment there's a small troupe of young gymnasts - mademoiselles even. "Aren't you glad I reminded you to take your camera?" Bud teases me when he noticed me snapping a few pictures of the athletes.

And all good things must come to an end - even our few days at the rest center. It has been quite an experience, one that I've enjoyed, and one I'm sure that I'll remember for quite a while. It was a chance to see some of France when it wasn't at war.

But our deeper thoughts are surfaced as we arrive back at our Austrian city of Salzburg when we ask the fifty dollar question. "Is there any news yet about when we're going home?"

"None whatsoever," comes the reply. "Except there's an ugly rumor going around that Congress might change the point system, and that would mean more delays for many of us."

But there's some mail from home to cheer us up, reminding us that we still do have a home, and that someone who cares is thinking about us. But at the closing of each letter there's still that same question and reminder: "Have you heard when you might be coming home?" All of the fellows must have been asked the same question, and the answers back back home will be about the same.



"Dear Mom, Your knowledge as to when we'll get to go home is about as good as ours. I hope, like you, that it'll be soon, but we are really lacking any official information at this time. There's a rumor that if the point system staysthe same, some of us may start moving for home around the first of July. There are a lot of troops to move from here and it'll take time even if things go smooth. There does seem to be a definite lack of leadership at this stage of the activities. This is a very pretty place to be near if we do have to wait. So, like the other fellows, I'll try and make the most of the situation and enjoy the surrounding Alps. I'll keep you informed."

And to make the most of the situation, we resume our daily walks around Salzburg, and do some some occasional shopping. The movies also give us another source of pleasant pastime. The rules concerning fraternization remain in effect, but the enforcement of such rules seem to be all but forgotten. It seems now that if I choose to sit and watch the swirling waters of the Salzach, I would remain alone. While the girls are still friendly, they are more independent - by some means more secretly, the boy-girl relationship has been established with rules of their own.

The Army has started using some of the Austrians, and displaced persons as well, in employment for the needed services of our troops. They are used in laundries, supplying food, and transportation to name a few. Of course conducting tours has always been a part of their life. Their knowledge of several languages is very useful in this field of work. It seems like almost overnight we have received freshly printed literature with colored brochures inviting us to be a guest on one of their tours.

On Thursday, June 28th, our unit is presented with some of this literature, and invited to go on a three day tour south of Salzburg and



over the Alpine Road to the vicinity of a high mountain called Grossglockner. Everything will be furnished including meals, hotel, and guide. I love mountains, and I'd love to visit these Alps. The offer is indeed a temptation. There's another temptation open to me that calls for a fast decision between the two. There's a rumor that those in my point priority range might start for home within a week. That one of these temptations is just a rumor is the deciding factor. It's pretty here in Salzburg, but the inactivity during this period of waiting, is starting to drive nearly everyone up the wall. At least the tour is a positive offer, and maybe the one in a lifetime.

The trucks are lined up nice and clean early Friday morning, and we are waiting for the tour in our clean olive colored uniforms. Our guide soon arrives and we get a chance to talk to her briefly before the start of our trip. She's an Austrian who speaks English with just a slight accent of German. My thoughts reflect back to the three girls by the Salzach River and remember that their English was almost flawless. "She's not quite as good looking either." Brad reminds me. "But maybe it's better this way. She appears to be a real nice guide who would know her way around the country and resorts. The main reason for the trip is to see the country - so let's get going."

Our little convoy of sightseers is made up of one truck filled with fellows from our 2253rd Signal Service Company, and there are three other trucks filled with troops from other units. Our guide is in the lead vehicle identified as a weapons carrier. "Due credit should be given to the Red Cross." Some of the fellows tell me. "It has been with their cooperation that most of these arrangements have been made."

We have planned our trip to make a circle route around the Konigssee



area, to a point about 40 miles south of Salzburg. From this point we'll make a side trip of thirty miles over the Grossglockner Alpine Road to the town of Heiligenblut in the Province of Carinthia - and that is looking ahead. Our excursion has just started, so, with the aid of a small guide book, and the help from our real live guide, I'll try and keep track of the points of interest as we proceed. At six miles we come to the Castle of Goldenstein, and the small city by the same name. The castle is now used for a school.

Just before we reach the town of Hallein, a distance of 11 miles, we pull over to the side of the road for a lovely view of the mountains. The Salzach river is in front of us, and to the west are mountains of the region near Berchtesgaden. It's a very pretty view, and our guide describes it as being a, "Very romantic place." She sort of blushes after making the statement, realizing that they might not have been the right words. But then I wonder if they were or not. The fellows do seem a little aloof, and maybe most of them like me, had the nonfraternizationpolicy drummed into them like a brainwash. Later she quips, "Maybe if we had a little wine it would liven the bunch up more." That remark seems to break the ice, and there's more communication - as there should be.

Hallein is a town of 8,000, and boasts of having Europe's largest swimming bath. It's a very old town, with a salt mine near here that's bigger than the one near Berchtesgaden. Historic evidence shows that the Romans as well as the Celts worked in these salt mines.

At a distance of 18 miles we go through the town of Golling that lays claim to having two world-famous waterfalls, as well as some lakes. We go through the charming village of Werfen next, at about 28 miles. A



fortress built in 1077 by an Archbishop is located here. On a branch road, and a four hour drive from here, Europe's largest ice caverns can be seen.

We continue on our route going past the rail junction town of Bischofshofen to the beautiful summer resort of St. Johann with its new two spired Gothic Church. From here we take a side trip of three and one half miles to visit the Lichenssteinklamm, or gorge and falls. It feels good to stretch my legs after 42 miles of truck driving.

I bring my camera along on the walk to hopefully take some pictures. We're led along a well-built tourist trail for a couple of blocks besides the Klamm. There are guard rails, and built-in steps to climb in some places. Even with the provisions for our safety, one can feel the sensation of smallness or even fear as we proceed on the trail. There are a lot of pretty views for a picture, but it's too dark in this gorge for the speed of the film that I have in the camera. The sky is nearly shut out by the overhanging rock cliffs that extend upward over a thousand feet. An eerie blue light seem to penetrate around us. And if the light wasn't enough problem to discourage picture taking, there's a constant mist or spray falling over us as the turbulent and foaming water rushes through the narrow ravine. Brad is right behind me, but he's unable to hear me, so we have to revert to sign language for any communication.

Later we make our way back down the wet walkway and stairs. At the end of the Klamm there's a spectacular 260 foot waterfall. It's easy to understand why this Klamm has the reputation of being one of the finest in the Alps. How are we to get some pictures of this natural wonder? This is a resort for tourists or vacationers and there are stores and



hotels to take care of their needs. With a few schillings we buy some nice large photographs for souvenirs. Other items of Bavarian craftsmanship are also purchased for gifts to be sent home.

While I had purchased some pictures of the Klamn, I desired something more personal to add to our presence here. It's light enough for a street scene, and I take a picture showing the small resort with our trucks and some of the fellows in the background near the trucks. The white and brown trimmed two story buildings are quite pretty with their steep roofs and carved balconies in front. With the backdrop of the Alps, and the splash color of a few bright flowers, the scene is one of a postcard. I have further luck in taking the picture as two small children dressed in typical Bavarian style come into view.

We take the road back to St Johann, and then proceed in a more westerly direction, following the same course as the Salzach River for ten miles to the town of Lend. From here we travel south on a side road past the town of Hofgastein to the famous resort town of Badgastein. This side trip adds another fifteen miles to our travel. This is another very pretty resort town of the Alps, and it's quite large for a resort. We have arrived at lunch time, so before we look around, we need to find a place to eat. And it seems that our guide has just the right place picked out for us to have lunch. It's called Hotel Gruner and it has a cafe set up with tables and chairs. From the walls and running up over the coved ceilings, are colored murals depicting various Alpine scenes.

But we came here to eat, so, what will it be, sir? You guessed it - 'C' rations. I'd often dreamed about eating such food in such a fancy place as this, but I really didn't think that it would happen. Of



course we really knew that the rations would be our first meal - and they are always as bad as we complain. They warm them up for us, and we have some hot coffee while enjoying some nice conversation with our hostess, and guide.

While we're eating our lunch we also find out that this will be just the place to buy some more pictures and other souvenirs, before going outside for a few minutes of sightseeing.

This is a world famous resort with its hotels, churches, stores, and bathing places. The two large waterfalls in the center of the town, really contribute to its beauty. Brad has been reading some advertising in our travel brochures, and he gets my attention.

"Listen to this, George, about how good this thermal water that contains radium, is supposed to be. This water has a maximum temperature of 120 degrees and is piped to every hotel and bath place in the city. It's listed as a cure for old age, nervous diseases, neuralgia, sciatica, nervous debility, tabes dorsalis, gout, rheumatism, and other complaints. How about that? It sounds almost like they found the fountain of youth."

"I don't even know what some of those diseases are, Brad." I reply.

"But I was thinking, since they do a lot of sailing and other winter sports around this area, it'd be nice after a full day's hard work-out to return to the hotel to soak some of those sore muscles in a real warm thermal bath."

But we have other objectives for today. So, with full stomachs, and enough sightseeing, we again proceed back to the main road to continue our westward course. After ten miles of travel we reach the village of Bruck, which is the gateway city for the Grossglockner Alpine Highway to the south. This so-called miracle of Austrian road-building



technique was planned and directed by an engineer named Wallack. The work was started in 1930, and completed, as far as the Salzburg territory goes, in 1934. The road will take us from the valley near Bruck where the altitude is 2,486 feet, to the summit of the pass, at an altitude of 8,225 feet. The summit is 20 miles from here and forms the boundary between Salzburg Province, and the Province of Carinthia. The Carinthia section of the road was completed soon after the Salzburg section was completed. After leaving Bruck, on our travels this afternoon, we first go through a small settlement named Dorf Fusch. At a distance of 8-1/2 miles south of this village we have a gorgeous vista of the Perleiten Valley enclosed by the near-by magnificent glaciers. Further ahead at the town of Ferleiten, there are two very inviting alpine hotels. From this distance of 9 miles from Bruck we're at an altitude of 3,777 feet according to one of the highway signs which we translate from Kilometers. From here, the real mountainous portion of the road begins. This section of the road is wider, and still continues under the maximum grade of 12%.

We go past a waterfall named Schleier, and then enter a series of switchbacks to reach the first view and parking area at 12 miles and an elevation of 5,319 feet. Stopping here just briefly to take in the wonderful view that greets us, we begin to see some of the work that went into the construction of this road. We continue on around two more curves we reach an altitude of 5,074 feet at 13-1/2 miles. From this altitude on up, there are few, if any, trees. There is a parking area to stop and take in the view, and there's also an Inn located here that looks like a good place to eat - or maybe warm up some of those good flavored 'C' rations. But we continue on and up around two more curves where we enter a steeper region



referred to as the Witches Kitchen, or 'Hexenkutche'. At a steep place named the Edelweisswand, the road goes around several more curves to another parking area. Our distance from Bruck is now 16 miles, and at 7,795 feet, we can definitely feel the cooler and thinner air.

On up from here we make a long sweeping curve over the Torlgrat, or one of the two summit ridges. Then we swing around another peak called the Torlkopf and over to another parking ground. It's time to get out of the trucks and stretch our legs with a little running, and take some deep breaths of the cool fresh air. There is at this place called Fuschertorl, a well run hut. There is also some snow on the ground near us, so it doesn't look or feel much like summer on this 29th day of June.

Before the last grade leading up to the summit, we noticed a branch road leading off to our left - and now we have a chance to ask our guide about it. "It's a one mile long scenic road going to the top of the Edelweiss-Spitze," she replies. "It's 8,456 feet high, and really is the highest part of the road. There's a parking area there - and what a romantic view. On a clear day one can see far into Italy, a view of over 19 glaciers, and one can see over 30 mountains that are over 10,000 feet high. It's just wonderful - yes, that's the word."

From our parking area, we now descend to the shore of a little alpine lake where there's a parking area called Fuscherlacke. Next, the road leads back up to about 7,639 feet where we go through the 124 yard long Mittertorl Tunnel. We follow around the 'V' portion of the two fingered ridge on an eastern wall. We now follow some switchbacks back and up to an elevation of 8,225 feet, at a distance of 20- 1/2 miles from



Bruck. At this point we go through a 339 yard long tunnel of Hochtör, which marks the border between the Salzburg and Carinthia Provinces. We're on the other side of the other fingered ridge, and we are now overlooking the large Moell Valley filled with many resorts and the famous alpine village of Heiligenblut. From our vantage point up here we can also see many icefields in the westerly valleys that lead up to a group of higher ridges and peaks.

We start our decent following some switchbacks down some steep slopes of the first hump. Our speed increases as we go down slopes with less curves, and we don't seem to notice things as much as when we were climbing. At a place called Tauernock, 6,892 feet, our convoy stops just long enough for our guide to point out to us the 'big one', or Grossglockner. It's truly a majestic peak.

Following some more curves around a wall of rock, we come to the Guttal Bridge, and a branch point of the road. We've come a distance of 25 miles, and we're at an elevation of 6,087 feet. The glacier road leads to the right or west and the direction of Grossglockner. The road that we take at this time leads down to the village of Heiligenblut and other roads to the south. For tonight, our destination will be the village. We continue our decent more gradually as the mountain tapers off with fewer curves. The church from which the village received its name, has a spire that can be seen for many miles around. And while the church may be the center of interest for the village, tonight our interests will be in the fancy inn that the Red Cross and our guide have reserved for us. We're a hungry bunch of tourists after all of the traveling and all of the fresh mountain air. Our trucks are now parked on the street in front of the inn, where we're introduced and shown to our quarters. For dinner we're served



a nice hot meal - home cooked. Of equal, or even more importance than the meal in this tourist or resort center, is the entertainment and social participation. There's instrumental music as well as singing. In the spotlight for our special benefit tonight, our hostess introduces an Austrian singer and movie star. She sings about five folk-type songs - one song that includes some yodelling. She's a fine singer and also very pretty.

The entertainment is concluded as the hour gets late, and it's time for bed. I have a single room upstairs on the northside of the building. After the excitement of the trip, coupled with the feeling of being in a strange bed, I lie awake for awhile reminiscing of the events and the beauty of the country that now surrounds us. In some ways, it reminds me of our Olympic Mountains back in Washington State.

With these thoughts, I finally get to sleep, and wake up early in the next morning, feeling quite rested. Brad has noticed the special guest singer coming out of the room next to mine, and of course he has to kid me about such observation. "Leastwise, George, besides later bragging that you once heard a famous movie star sing over here, you can also say that you slept next door to her."

A good breakfast is served before we take off on our village sight-seeing. This isn't too large of a village, but it's well programed for the tourists, or mountain climbers and skiers. Of priority to visit, is a souvenir and photo shop. Again, as in Salzburg, *they offer much* - better pictures than I can take with my camera. With the others, as well as myself buying the pictures, we soon help to deplete their stock. There are pictures of the Grossglockner and the surrounding mountains. Other scenes are of the Moell Valley, the church,



and other buildings around Heiligenblut.

And it's the church that's the focal point of our sightseeing this morning. The outside of the church is a beautiful landmark that can be seen from all over the valley, and we'd seen it earlier from high up on the side of the mountain. The inside of the church is a creation of dazzling beauty. If the ornamental work around the altar is real gold, then it must be worth a fortune. There's a caretaker on duty who explains many questions concerning the early history that's a part of this church. He tells the story of the vial of blood that was taken from Jerusalem during the time of Jesus and brought here for safekeeping. This place was thus honored, and later named because of this event.

Our sightseeing in Heiligenblut is finished, and we load up once again into our trucks for a trip to the region of the glaciers near Grossglockner. For this trip, we go back on the Alpine Highway to the Guttal Bridge where the highway makes a branch, and then continues going west on what's called the Glacier Road. The road climbs to an elevation of 7,747 feet in five miles to the terminus of the Franz-Josefs Hoehe. There are plans to extend the road even farther and operate a cable railway to the top of another mountain. Our destination for today is 1-1/2 miles below this at the Glocknerhaus and parking ground.

Our guide is acquainted with many people in this area, and one of them is an avid mountain climber and guide who relates some of his experiences to us after we are introduced. "My father and some other relation of mine have been killed on Grossglockner." He tells us. "I'll continue to climb the mountain. Don't ask me why - maybe just



because it's there, and I love climbing it. Maybe someday I, too, will be killed climbing it, or another mountain."

As he continues to talk we gaze at the 6 mile long Pasterzen Glacier that stretches from below us, past the 12,487 foot Grossglockner to the glacier covered pyramid of the Johannisberg of 11,370 feet. It has been interesting talking with him and hearing his stories.

After lunch, we again swing back north over the Alpine Highway for our trip back over the summit that leads to Salzburg. It's getting late in the day as we again enter the beautiful Ferleiten Valley and stop at the Lukashansl Alpine Hotel located in the alpine village of Ferleiten. This is to be our reserved home for tonight. We had passed by this hotel on the road yesterday not dreaming that we'd be staying here tonight.

We clean up, and then enjoy another well served meal. Then we are again treated to some Austrian hospitality and entertainment that seems to hold more importance on the agenda than the custom of eating. The proprietors seem glad that the war is over, and that they can again resume the work that they love. We listen to accordion music, then there is singing, followed by several different types of parlor games. That are social games, - one of them is the favorite of pinning the tail on the donkey, while another is spin the bottle. I don't really know how that game turned out - I excuse myself and go to bed. Maybe I should have stayed. There were some rather nice looking frauleins present that made it really tempting to stay on.

After a good night's sleep, we are treated to a nice breakfast that included some freshly picked berries. There are several Edelweiss Flowers in a center vase. They've been wonderful hosts, giving us



good memories that will last forever.

Our convoy again returns to the Alvine Highway, traveling north to the junction town of Bruck. We next travel 5 miles northwest to Zell Am See. It's a pretty resort town on an equally pretty lake. As a last gesture of hospitality, we're treated to an afternoon meal at the local Red Cross Building. This romantic trip arranged by the Red Cross and the Army, to the very heart of the Alps, has truly been appreciated by all of the fellows. I hear all of their comments of agreement. Following dinner some of the fellows try their hand at being sailors by rowing a boat out on the lake. As usual many of us crowd into the souvenir shop and buy pictures showing views of the resort and the lake. Other views on some postcards show some views of the cable car trip from the lake to the top of a nearby mountain just west of the lake. It'd be fun to take a trip to the top, even if not for the purpose of skiing.

Having some film left in my camera, I take some pictures of the lake showing some of the rowboats. We sit for a while and toss some crumbs of bread to some ducks that are swimming by. It's a peaceful scene. "Too bad Bill didn't want to go with us," I comment to Brad. "He missed out on a fine trip."

"I know, George," he replies. "But he was afraid that he would miss out on a chance to go home. I can't say that I blame him."

"I debated that same problem too, Brad. But I took the gamble and came along. I think it was worth it, no matter how things may turn out. It was a once in a lifetime trip."

Later in the afternoon we resume our travels by skirting the Konigsee



region where we join the autobahn for the last leg of our journey back to our base at Salzburg. It's been a nice guided tour, and we give a hearty "Thank you, and goodbye to our guide."

Brad and I spend some time looking for Bill, to tell him about our trip. Then one of the fellows breaks the news to us. "He left with some other fellows for home. He said to tell you goodbye. Oh, your name was called too, George, but I guess that you were on the trip."

The news he gave us could have floored me. I still had no regrets about the trip though. Maybe, just maybe, we might catch up with them before things are over concerning this points ruckus.

But it didn't take much of a prophet to forecast that there would soon be some general exodus of all troops from this region. General Patton had served as governor of Austria for awhile. And now things are beginning to change high up in that command, and so we're bound to be swept along with it. Still restless from our recent travels, we had hardly settled down to the normal routine of our Army life in Salzburg, when we receive the news of the impending movement. In fact, it has been less than a week since our trip. Today is July 5th, as we hear the announcement. "We'll be leaving Salzburg on the 6th of July. This will also mark an end of the 3253rd Signal Service Company as a unit. You will be assigned to other various type Signal Units at our new location for your eventual return home. By the way, we have some little mementoes to give you."

We're given an itinerary of our route through the war in Europe. A set of maps that show our progress is also distributed. The heading for the itinerary reads: "All this was necessary to defeat Germany! What a trip! May it never happen again!"



And it's goodbye to Salzburg! We leave early in the morning on the famous Reich Autobahn. This'll be the last convoy of the 3253rd, and we're still complete except for the first few that had already left the unit the week before. Even Cognac, and a few of her grown pups are still with us. A few of the fellows still had hopes of taking some of them home.

The detours around some of the destroyed bridges are still a part of our route as we travel in the direction of Munich. We pass the castle of Chiemsee, and continue on for about 5 miles where we finally stop at an Army Installation to mark the end of our ride as such a unit. We are at Rosenheim, Germany, not far from Munich. We are not in the town proper, but outside at a place called Camp Goulette. The entrance sign also reads: "Third Army Signal Intelligence Battalion."

Our stay here waiting for our new assignments will definitely be of short duration. It'll be interesting though, for this is a radio - or junkman's paradise. All sorts of German electronic gear has been assembled here, sorted and then junked. We take time for our regular exploring walks, but a couple of us always end up at the junk pile of gear, looking for something more that we can send home through the mail. Whether we got to go home soon or not, we knew that the mail would. There are even jokes being made about wrapping ourselves up as packages to be mailed home.

Monday, July 9th, is a day for goodbyes. Some pictures are taken, and I get a number of names with addresse for future correspondence. A large number of us have been assigned to the 97th Signal Battalion at Bamberg, Germany.

As we go north, we travel again through the large city of Munich, and



Nuremberg. The fast repair to the damage done to these cities is evident, with repair construction crews seen everywhere. They are even starting to build some new tall apartment units.

Eventually we arrive at our new quarters in Bamberg, Germany. When we went through here before, during the war, we slept in a bivouac area in woods near the river and in tents. Now we are to stay in the barracks of some large buildings. The area of space covered by these buildings and the motorpool, covers over five acres of land. We're now a part of the 97th Signal Battalion, but most of the old gang from the 3253rd are still staying together. In time we will get to meet some other fellows from the other units that were sent here.

This isn't as pretty a place as the town of Salzburg, but as the days go by we do feel more at home. Some of the fellow visit more in the town, but many of us content ourselves by remaining in the area near the camp - but that may change.. We take walks to the old bivouac area where we once stayed, and take a few pictures. There are other walks taken along the Regnitz River, and some pictures are taken showing some fancy homes near the hills, that have been untouched by the war - sort of a rarity in some of these regions.

These paths, or roads along each side of the Regnitz River afford us many hours of walking pleasure. There's another form of activity that takes place along these roads that's called "Girl-watching." Such a pastime isn't always confined to soldiers, or to this part of the world. But we're a part of it now during this game called: "Waiting to go home."

This is summer and it's hot here. But there's a nice cool river flowing by us as it makes its way to the north. Maybe it isn't clean, but it's



wet and cool. I've not noticed many men or soldiers swimming, but it's a popular place for the women and children. They come from every direction as soon as the sun warms the air. The fraus and frauleins change from their street clothes to swim suits at the river, using the reverse procedure as they leave. Does it sound like an exciting show of strip-tease for the soldiers? The seasoned GI girl-watcher knows different. It's agreed that the greatest accomplishment that one may have through observation, is the realization of the speed and discreteness that the act of swimsuit changing can be performed. Of course it's hard to say just what goes on in the minds of men or women. There's probably some other objective to their madness.

"What seems to get me, is the way they let some of their children, both boys and girls go wading or swimming without any suit on, except their birthday model." Brad made the unsolicited remarks after we return to our barracks. "They also let them have free access to the open for their toilet duties. Some of the children seem to be a little old to claim the title of child, also. Of course, I know that we must have a lot of faults that they don't like - such as just being here.

"Changing the subject, George. there's a new show at our theater. Do you want to go?"

"Sure, Brad, it'll help pass the time," I concur.

Passing the time gets to be the name of the game. We go to every new show, and take our daily walks. We are living a life of pleasure that's getting to be quite boring. The fellows have rigged up radios with wires leading to the speakers in our rooms, and that helps. Congress of the United States has added to our confused state with the announcement that the point system is being changed- they like to help out.



On the positive side of thinking, we at least know by their action that we'll be heretofore some length of time before we can even think of going home.

As was the case before and during the invasion, some of the gang take out an intended escape from the frustration by indulging in drink. Their reaction to the drinking varies with the individual involved. Some will drink and appear sleepy and subdued. Others will use such a time to vent some built up anger. So, we really don't know just what type of creature will be coming through the barracks' door anytime at night. I expect anything, and that's generally how it turns out. Some of the fellows still test their bottled drinks by burning a sample of the contents. And the question is again asked as to what that would prove? The test wouldn't show up poison. It would only show that there's a substance in the mixture such as alcohol that will burn and kill certain bacteria.

Displaced persons, or DPs, are a product of the war. Most of them flee from their home and land as the steamroller of war pushes them. Some of them just wander, while others are taken as prisoners to be used as slave labor if they are physically able. Now they have been released from their wanderings, or captivity and wish to return to their home or seek a new one. Our Army has a process plan of handling such persons. One of the required jobs in such processing is called 'delousing.' And some of the units assigned to this task are with the 97th Signal Battalion. DDT is dusted on the bodies and clothing of the DPs. "That sounds like a fascinating job." One of our fellows comments to a worker. "It must be quite a thrill to lift up the women's dresses and dust them with the powder."



"It might seem that way," he replies, "but really it gets to be quite sickening at times. We come across some real dirty bodies, and actually there isn't much glamor to the job."

So, many of the DPs are cleaned up and put to work. Some can be seen painting the walls and interiors of the buildings, and they're very good painters. Many of the women are put to work in the kitchen and dining rooms. In most of our journey of the war through France and Germany, we ate from messkits that we had to clean up after each meal. Now we have china plates, or dishes and place settings. The food is now brought to our tables or replenished by the DPs, and we leave the dirty dishes on the table when we're through eating, for them to clean up. It's a pretty nice life for us, you say? Well, maybe in some ways it is - or could be. It's good for the DPs, as it gives them a chance to work and earn money for their return home. The DPs treat us nice in their work for us. But to those of us whose only job is waiting, our lack of work or related activity is only adding to our boredom.

"But one can't blame the DPs for any of our circumstances." Bud rationalizes about our discussion of the subject. "As the French would say, 'this is war.' In more ways than one, we are but displaced persons ourselves."

Bud's right, that this is but a part of the war...at least we would eventually get a chance to go home, and that's better than a lot of our buddies who died giving us that chance. On the other side of the ledger there's a grave of a German soldier located in the courtyard near our barracks. A large number of them will not get to go home either. The mound of dirt for his grave has an iron cross on it for identification.

But not everyone in the Battalion is idle. There are the cooks with



their helpers, the crew of the Headquarters Company who are working with the records, and the men of the Motor Pool who still have to keep their trucks in good shape. one of the tasks of this later group is to run the motors of their trucks at least ten minutes a day.

And there's another unit working for us also. Special Services in co-operation again with the Red Cross have been planning some vacations for us - to keep us out of mischief. There are trips planned to Scotland, the Alps, and Switzerland to name a few. On July 30th, there's an announcement for all good soldiers who read the bulletin board, to see. "All members of the 97th Signal Battalion will be granted 18 days furlough, starting August 1st." And, "No, the 97th would not be shipped out before we returned!" Was the answer when we inquired about our future status in this regards.

The trip to Scotland seems to suit my fancy for an interesting vacation trip, and I sign up. Of course the Switzerland trip was nearly my choice. "Where are you off to, Brad?" I ask.

"I was a little undecided like you, George," he replies. "But I decided on the Switzerland trip at the last minute. Maybe I'll buy a nice watch or camera while I'm there. Anyway, I wanted to see the Switz Alps."

But I wouldn't be alone on my trip to Scotland, and there would be new friends to meet even though we each had our own plans. The whole deal sounds like a mass exodus from this area by the 97th, as far as the whole unit is concerned. Maybe some of the furloughs would be at different times. On our trip we would get to go by rail and boat, and go through such cities as Paris and London. Hey, Bud would like that - he always wanted to visit Paris. Too bad he isn't going, either, on this one.



And I wonder about the condition of the rails, for our travel, also. They must have really worked hard to get them all repaired so soon for travel, for passengers as well as freight.

For the passengers, train travel often means odd hours to start trips, and nights without full sleep. On Wednesday, August 1st, at one o'clock in the morning we leave Bamberg by truck for the rail station at the town of Rothenback. I make some sleepy conversation with some of the fellows in the truck but things are mostly quiet. We arrive at the station at 0300, and find out that there are other trucks here with troops from other units. We are always in the habit of hurrying up to wait, but the train is on time this early morning. While it seems like a wonder to us of the Army, I guess that it is a tradition for the trains and railroad men everywhere to at least try and be on time. We board the already crowded train, settling down for our big journey as the train starts smoothly on its way. Well, it's fairly smooth - just a couple of small jerks as the slack takes up on each car.

This is the first train ride for me since our ride from Scotland to London. On these cars there isn't any signs of the warning posters that were so prominent over there during the war. There were various signs such as; "Shh. The enemy is listening." Of course these are German or French rail cars, and maybe they used some equivalent to our warnings. I've heard that the Nazi did make use of such posters at various places, but I haven't really noticed any of them. In these dimly lit cars there is something else that's visible. This train is supposed to be a GI special for furlough troops, but there are some women - frauleins or whoever on board. They had stayed sort of hidden until the train was under way, and now they appear from their hiding places. They stay mostly between the cars with their lovers. The



location affords a good place to get on and off the train, and dodge the checkups made by the MPs. A train ride to someplace in exchange for a night of love - that sounds like a good price to pay. Some of them may also be looking for a good home in the U.S.A. At any rate, some GIs are not wasting one moment of their furlough.

But there are more important things to do than just watch them - sleep for instance. I'm tired, and that condition combined with the roll of the cars, and the clackety-clack of the wheels, completes the ingredients needed to bring on sleep.

When I wake up it's daylight. So, besides having a conversation with the soldier next to me, I can watch some of the German countryside as it unfolds through the train's windows. Oh yes, the GIs with their women friends are still with us. They do look a little bedraggled though - like they had been several nights without sleep.

"We will eat breakfast in Augsburg." Is the word that's passed along through the cars. We arrive at 1100 in the morning. It's almost too late to call it breakfast, but with nice yummy fried potatoes and eggs, I guess we could call it lunch which I know we'll miss. This is one of those extravagant setups where they feed 1,000 men at a sitting. Each meal means a lot of preparation and cleanup. Anyway, it's a good meal for us, and served on trays.

"I wouldn't care to do the dishes here." One of the soldiers comment as we're leaving. At sometime, he must have served on KP.

"All aboard!" This order, as well as the other instructions for eating, have come over the public address system. At least everyone can hear it - even the frauleins. We're off with a nice smooth start - and this



area, to a point about 40 miles south of Salzburg. From this point we'll make a side trip of thirty miles over the Grossglockner Alpine Road to the town of Heiligenblut in the Province of Carinthia - and that is looking ahead. Our excursion has just started, so, with the aid of a small guide book, and the help from our real live guide, I'll try and keep track of the points of interest as we proceed. At six miles we come to the Castle of Goldenstein, and the small city by the same name. The castle is now used for a school.

Just before we reach the town of Hallein, a distance of 11 miles, we pull over to the side of the road for a lovely view of the mountains. The Salzach river is in front of us, and to the west are mountains of the region near Berchtesgaden. It's a very pretty view, and our guide describes it as being a, "Very romantic place." She sort of blushes after making the statement, realizing that they might not have been the right words. But then I wonder if they were or not. The fellows do seem a little aloof, and maybe most of them like me, had the nonfraternizationpolicy drummed into them like a brainwash. Later she quips, "Maybe if we had a little wine it would liven the bunch up more." That remark seems to break the ice, and there's more communication - as there should be.

Hallein is a town of 8,000, and boasts of having Europe's largest swimming bath. It's a very old town, with a salt mine near here that's bigger than the one near Berchtesgaden. Historic evidence shows that the Romans as well as the Celts worked in these salt mines.

At a distance of 18 miles we go through the town of Golling that lays claim to having two world-famous waterfalls, as well as some lakes. We go through the charming village of Werfen next, at about 28 miles. A



fortress built in 1077 by an Archbishop is located here. On a branch road, and a four hour drive from here, Europe's largest ice caverns can be seen.

We continue on our route going past the rail junction town of Bischofshofen to the beautiful summer resort of St. Johann with its new two spired Gothic Church. From here we take a side trip of three and one half miles to visit the Lichenssteinklamm, or gorge and falls. It feels good to stretch my legs after 42 miles of truck driving.

I bring my camera along on the walk to hopefully take some pictures. We're led along a well-built tourist trail for a couple of blocks besides the Klamm. There are guard rails, and built-in steps to climb in some places. Even with the provisions for our safety, one can feel the sensation of smallness or even fear as we proceed on the trail. There are a lot of pretty views for a picture, but it's too dark in this gorge for the speed of the film that I have in the camera. The sky is nearly shut out by the overhanging rock cliffs that extend upward over a thousand feet. An eerie blue light seem to penetrate around us. An if the the light wasn't enough problem to discourage picture taking, there's a constant mist or spray falling over us as the turbulent and foaming water rushes through the narrow ravine. Brad is right behind me, but he's unable to hear me, so we have to revert to sign language for any communication.

Later we make our way back down the wet walkway and stairs. At the end of the Klamm there's a spectacular 260 foot waterfall. It's easy to understand why this Klamm has the reputation of being one of the finest in the Alps. How are we to get some pictures of this natural wonder? This is a resort for tourists or vacationers and there are stores and



hotels to take care of their needs. With a few schillings we buy some nice large photographs for souvenirs. Other items of Bavarian craftsmanship are also purchased for gifts to be sent home.

While I had purchased some pictures of the Klamn, I desired something more personal to add to our presence here. It's light enough for a street scene, and I take a picture showing the small resort with our trucks and some of the fellows in the background near the trucks. The white and brown trimmed two story buildings are quite pretty with their steep roofs and carved balconies in front. With the backdrop of the Alps, and the splash color of a few bright flowers, the scene is one of a postcard. I have further luck in taking the picture as two small children dressed in typical Bavarian style come into view.

We take the road back to St Johann, and then proceed in a more westerly direction, following the same course as the Salzach River for ten miles to the town of Lend. From here we travel south on a side road past the town of Hofgastein to the famous resort town of Badgastein. This side trip adds another fifteen miles to our travel. This is another very pretty resort town of the Alps, and it's quite large for a resort. We have arrived at lunch time, so before we look around, we need to find a place to eat. And it seems that our guide has just the right place picked out for us to have lunch. It's called Hotel Gruner and it has a cafe set up with tables and chairs. From the walls and running up over the coved ceilings, are colored murals depicting various Alpine scenes.

But we came here to eat, so, what will it be, sir? You guessed it - 'C' rations. I'd often dreamed about eating such food in such a fancy place as this, but I really didn't think that it would happen. Of



course we really knew that the rations would be our first meal - and they are always as bad as we complain. They warm them up for us, and we have some hot coffee while enjoying some nice conversation with our hostess, and guide.

While we're eating our lunch we also find out that this will be just the place to buy some more pictures and other souvenirs, before going outside for a few minutes of sightseeing.

This is a world famous resort with its hotels, churches, stores, and bathing places. The two large waterfalls in the center of the town, really contribute to its beauty. Brad has been reading some advertising in our travel brochures, and he gets my attention.

"Listen to this, George, about how good this thermal water that contains radium, is supposed to be. This water has a maximum temperature of 120 degrees and is piped to every hotel and bath place in the city. It's listed as a cure for old age, nervous diseases, neuralgia, sciatica, nervous debility, tabes dorsalis, gout, rheumatism, and other complaints. How about that? It sounds almost like they found the fountain of youth."

"I don't even know what some of those diseases are, Brad." I reply. "But I was thinking, since they do a lot of skiing and other winter sports around this area, it'd be nice after a full day's hard work-out to return to the hotel to soak some of those sore muscles in a real warm thermal bath."

But we have other objectives for today. So, with full stomachs, and enough sightseeing, we again proceed back to the main road to continue our westward course. After ten miles of travel we reach the village of Bruck, which is the gateway city for the Grossglockner Alpine Highway to the south. This so-called miracle of Austrian road-building



technique was planned and directed by an engineer named Wallack. The work was started in 1930, and completed, as far as the Salzburg territory goes, in 1934. The road will take us from the valley near Bruck where the altitude is 2,486 feet, to the summit of the pass, at an altitude of 8,225 feet. The summit is 20 miles from here and forms the boundary between Salzburg Province, and the Province of Carinthia. The Carinthia section of the road was completed soon after the Salzburg section was completed. After leaving Bruck, on our travels this afternoon, we first go through a small settlement named Dorf Fusch. At a distance of 8-1/2 miles south of this village we have a gorgeous vista of the Perleiten Valley enclosed by the near-by magnificent glaciers. Further ahead at the town of Ferleiten, there are two very inviting alpine hotels. From this distance of 9 miles from Bruck we're at an altitude of 3,777 feet according to one of the highway signs which we translate from Kilometers. From here, the real mountainous portion of the road begins. This section of the road is wider, and still continues under the maximum grade of 12%.

We go past a waterfall named Schleier, and then enter a series of switchbacks to reach the first view and parking area at 12 miles and an elevation of 5,319 feet. Stopping here just briefly to take in the wonderful view that greets us, we begin to see some of the work that went into the construction of this road. We continue on around two more curves we reach an altitude of 5,074 feet at 13-1/2 miles. From this altitude on up, there are few, if any, trees. There is a parking area to stop and take in the view, and there's also an Inn located here that looks like a good place to eat - or maybe warm up some of those good flavored 'C' rations. But we continue on and up around two more curves where we enter a steeper region



referred to as the Witches Kitchen, or 'Hexenkutche'. At a steep place named the Edelweisswand, the road goes around several more curves to another parking area. Our distance from Bruck is now 16 miles, and at 7,795 feet, we can definitely feel the cooler and thinner air.

On up from here we make a long sweeping curve over the Torlgrat, or one of the two summit ridges. Then we swing around another peak called the Torlkopf and over to another parking ground. It's time to get out of the trucks and stretch our legs with a little running, and take some deep breaths of the cool fresh air. There is at this place called Fuschertorl, a well run hut. There is also some snow on the ground near us, so it doesn't look or feel much like summer on this 29th day of June.

Before the last grade leading up to the summit, we noticed a branch road leading off to our left - and now we have a chance to ask our guide about it. "It's a one mile long scenic road going to the top of the Edelweiss-Spitze," she replies. "It's 8,456 feet high, and really is the highest part of the road. There's a parking area there - and what a romantic view. On a clear day one can see far into Italy, a view of over 19 glaciers, and one can see over 30 mountains that are over 10,000 feet high. It's just wonderful - yes, that's the word."

From our parking area, we now descend to the shore of a little alpine lake where there's a parking area called Fuscherlacke. Next, the road leads back up to about 7,639 feet where we go through the 124 yard long Mittertorl Tunnel. We follow around the 'V' portion of the two fingered ridge on an eastern wall. We now follow some switchbacks back and up to an elevation of 8,225 feet, at a distance of 20- 1/2 miles from



Bruck. At this point we go through a 339 yard long tunnel of Hochtor, which marks the border between the Salzburg and Carinthia Provinces. We're on the other side of the other fingered ridge, and we are now overlooking the large Moell Valley filled with many resorts and the famous alpine village of Heiligenblut. From our vantage point up here we can also see many icefields in the westerly valleys that lead up to a group of higher ridges and peaks.

We start our decent following some switchbacks down some steep slopes of the first hump. Our speed increases as we go down slopes with less curves, and we don't seem to notice things as much as when we were climbing. At a place called Tauernock, 6,892 feet, our convoy stops just long enough for our guide to point out to us the 'big one', or Grossglockner. It's truly a majestic peak.

Following some more curves around a wall of rock, we come to the Guttal Bridge, and a branch point of the road. We've come a distance of 25 miles, and we're at an elevation of 6,087 feet. The glacier road leads to the right or west and the direction of Grossglockner. The road that we take at this time leads down to the village of Heiligenblut and other roads to the south. For tonight, our destination will be the village. We continue our decent more gradually as the mountain tapers off with fewer curves. The church from which the village received its name, has a spire that can be seen for many miles around. And while the church may be the center of interest for the village, tonight our interests will be in the fancy inn that the Red Cross and our guide have reserved for us. We're a hungry bunch of tourists after all of the traveling and all of the fresh mountain air. Our trucks are now parked on the street in front of the inn, where we're introduced and shown to our quarters. For dinner we're served



a nice hot meal - home cooked. Of equal, or even more importance than the meal in this tourist or resort center, is the entertainment and social participation. There's instrumental music as well as singing. In the spotlight for our special benefit tonight, our hostess introduces an Austrian singer and movie star. She sings about five folk-type songs - one song that includes some yodelling. She's a fine singer and also very pretty.

The entertainment is concluded as the hour gets late, and it's time for bed. I have a single room upstairs on the northside of the building. After the excitement of the trip, coupled with the feeling of being in a strange bed, I lie awake for awhile reminiscing of the events and the beauty of the country that now surrounds us. In some ways, it reminds me of our Olympic Mountains back in Washington State.

With these thoughts, I finally get to sleep, and wake up early in the next morning, feeling quite rested. Brad has noticed the special guest singer coming out of the room next to mine, and of course he has to kid me about such observation. "Leastwise, George, besides later bragging that you once heard a famous movie star sing over here, you can also say that you slept next door to her."

A good breakfast is served before we take off on our village sight-seeing. This isn't too large of a village, but it's well programed for the tourists, or mountain climbers and skiers. Of priority to visit, is a souvenir and photo shop. Again, as in Salzburg, they offer much - better pictures than I can take with my camera. With the others, as well as myself buying the pictures, we soon help to deplete their stock. There are pictures of the Grossglockner and the surrounding mountains. Other scenes are of the Moell Valley, the church,



and other buildings around Heiligenblut.

And it's the church that's the focal point of our sightseeing this morning. The outside of the church is a beautiful landmark that can be seen from all over the valley, and we'd seen it earlier from high up on the side of the mountain. The inside of the church is a creation of dazzling beauty. If the ornamental work around the altar is real gold, then it must be worth a fortune. There's a caretaker on duty who explains many questions concerning the early history that's a part of this church. He tells the story of the vial of blood that was taken from Jerusalem during the time of Jesus and brought here for safekeeping. This place was thus honored, and later named because of this event.

Our sightseeing in Heiligenblut is finished, and we load up once again into our trucks for a trip to the region of the glaciers near Grossglockner. For this trip, we go back on the Alpine Highway to the Guttal Bridge where the highway makes a branch, and then continues going west on what's called the Glacier Road. The road climbs to an elevation of 7,747 feet in five miles to the terminus of the Franz-Josefs Hoehe. There are plans to extend the road even farther and operate a cable railway to the top of another mountain. Our destination for today is 1-1/2 miles below this at the Glocknerhaus and parking ground.

Our guide is acquainted with many people in this area, and one of them is an avid mountain climber and guide who relates some of his experiences to us after we are introduced. "My father and some other relation of mine have been killed on Grossglockner." He tells us. "I'll continue to climb the mountain. Don't ask me why - maybe just



because it's there, and I love climbing it. Maybe someday I, too, will be killed climbing it, or another mountain."

As he continues to talk we gaze at the 6 mile long Pasterzen Glacier that stretches from below us, past the 12,487 foot Grossglockner to the glacier covered pyramid of the Johannisberg of 11,370 feet. It has been interesting talking with him and hearing his stories.

After lunch, we again swing back north over the Alpine Highway for our trip back over the summit that leads to Salzburg. It's getting late in the day as we again enter the beautiful Ferleiten Valley and stop at the Lukashansl Alpine Hotel located in the alpine village of Ferleiten. This is to be our reserved home for tonight. We had passed by this hotel on the road yesterday not dreaming that we'd be staying here tonight.

We clean up, and then enjoy another well served meal. Then we are again treated to some Austrian hospitality and entertainment that seems to hold more importance on the agenda than the custom of eating. The proprietors seem glad that the war is over, and that they can again resume the work that they love. We listen to accordion music, then there is singing, followed by several different types of parlor games. That are social games, - one of them is the favorite of pinning the tail on the donkey, while another is spin the bottle. I don't really know how that game turned out - I excuse myself and go to bed. Maybe I should have stayed. There were some rather nice looking frauleins present that made it really tempting to stay on.

After a good night's sleep, we are treated to a nice breakfast that included some freshly picked berries. There are several Edelweiss Flowers in a center vase. They've been wonderful hosts, giving us



good memories that will last forever.

Our convoy again returns to the Alpine Highway, traveling north to the junction town of Bruck. We next travel 5 miles northwest to Zell Am See. It's a pretty resort town on an equally pretty lake. As a last gesture of hospitality, we're treated to an afternoon meal at the local Red Cross Building. This romantic trip arranged by the Red Cross and the Army, to the very heart of the Alps, has truly been appreciated by all of the fellows. I hear all of their comments of agreement. Following dinner some of the fellows try their hand at being sailors by rowing a boat out on the lake. As usual many of us crowd into the souvenir shop and buy pictures showing views of the resort and the lake. Other views on some postcards show some views of the cable car trip from the lake to the top of a nearby mountain just west of the lake. It'd be fun to take a trip to the top, even if not for the purpose of skiing.

Having some film left in my camera, I take some pictures of the lake showing some of the rowboats. We sit for a while and toss some crumbs of bread to some ducks that are swimming by. It's a peaceful scene. "Too bad Bill didn't want to go with us," I comment to Brad. "He missed out on a fine trip."

"I know, George," he replies. "But he was afraid that he would miss out on a chance to go home. I can't say that I blame him."

"I debated that same problem too, Brad. But I took the gamble and came along. I think it was worth it, no matter how things may turn out. It was a once in a lifetime trip."

Later in the afternoon we resume our travels by skirting the Konigsee



region where we join the autobahn for the last leg of our journey back to our base at Salzburg. It's been a nice guided tour, and we give a hearty "Thank you, and goodbye to our guide."

Brad and I spend some time looking for Bill, to tell him about our trip. Then one of the fellows breaks the news to us. "He left with some other fellows for home. He said to tell you goodbye. Oh, your name was called too, George, but I guess that you were on the trip."

The news he gave us could have floored me. I still had no regrets about the trip though. Maybe, just maybe, we might catch up with them before things are over concerning this points ruckus.

But it didn't take much of a prophet to forecast that there would soon be some general exodus of all troops from this region. General Patton had served as governor of Austria for awhile. And now things are beginning to change high up in that command, and so we're bound to be swept along with it. Still restless from our recent travels, we had hardly settled down to the normal routine of our Army life in Salzburg, when we receive the news of the impending movement. In fact, it has been less than a week since our trip. Today is July 5th, as we hear the announcement. "We'll be leaving Salzburg on the 6th of July. This will also mark an end of the 3253rd Signal Service Company as a unit. You will be assigned to other various type Signal Units at our new location for your eventual return home. By the way, we have some little mementoes to give you."

We're given an itinerary of our route through the war in Europe. A set of maps that show our progress is also distributed. The heading for the itinerary reads: "All this was necessary to defeat Germany! What a trip! May it never happen again!"



And it's goodbye to Salzburg! We leave early in the morning on the famous Reich Autobahn. This'll be the last convoy of the 3253rd, and we're still complete except for the first few that had already left the unit the week before. Even Cognac, and a few of her grown pups are still with us. A few of the fellows still had hopes of taking some of them home.

The detours around some of the destroyed bridges are still a part of our route as we travel in the direction of Munich. We pass the castle of Chiemsee, and continue on for about 5 miles where we finally stop at an Army Installation to mark the end of our ride as such a unit. We are at Rosenheim, Germany, not far from Munich. We are not in the town proper, but outside at a place called Camp Goulette. The entrance sign also reads: "Third Army Signal Intelligence Battalion."

Our stay here waiting for our new assignments will definitely be of short duration. It'll be interesting though, for this is a radio - or junkman's paradise. All sorts of German electronic gear has been assembled here, sorted and then junked. We take time for our regular exploring walks, but a couple of us always end up at the junk pile of gear, looking for something more that we can send home through the mail. Whether we got to go home soon or not, we knew that the mail would. There are even jokes being made about wrapping ourselves up as packages to be mailed home.

Monday, July 9th, is a day for goodbyes. Some pictures are taken, and I get a number of names with addresse for future correspondence. A large number of us have been assigned to the 97th Signal Battalion at Bamberg, Germany.

As we go north, we travel again through the large city of Munich, and



Nuremberg. The fast repair to the damage done to these cities is evident, with repair construction crews seen everywhere. They are even starting to build some new tall apartment units.

Eventually we arrive at our new quarters in Bamberg, Germany. When we went through here before, during the war, we slept in a bivouac area in woods near the river and in tents. Now we are to stay in the barracks of some large buildings. The area of space covered by these buildings and the motorpool, covers over five acres of land. We're now a part of the 97th Signal Battalion, but most of the old gang from the 3253rd are still staying together. In time we will get to meet some other fellows from the other units that were sent here.

This isn't as pretty a place as the town of Salzburg, but as the days go by we do feel more at home. Some of the fellow visit more in the town, but many of us content ourselves by remaining in the area near the camp - but that may change.. We take walks to the old bivouac area where we once stayed, and take a few pictures. There are other walks taken along the Regnitz River, and some pictures are taken showing some fancy homes near the hills, that have been untouched by the war - sort of a rarity in some of these regions.

These paths, or roads along each side of the Regnitz River afford us many hours of walking pleasure. There's another form of activity that takes place along these roads that's called "Girl-watching." Such a pastime isn't always confined to soldiers, or to this part of the world. But we're a part of it now during this game called: "Waiting to go home."

This is summer and it's hot here. But there's a nice cool river flowing by us as it makes its way to the north. Maybe it isn't clean, but it's



wet and cool. I've not noticed many men or soldiers swimming, but it's a popular place for the women and children. They come from every direction as soon as the sun warms the air. The fraus and frauleins change from their street clothes to swim suits at the river, using the reverse procedure as they leave. Does it sound like an exciting show of striptease for the soldiers? The seasoned GI girl-watcher knows different. It's agreed that the greatest accomplishment that one may have through observation, is the realization of the speed and discreteness that the act of swimsuit changing can be performed. Of course it's hard to say just what goes on in the minds of men or women. There's probably some other objective to their madness.

"What seems to get me, is the way they let some of their children, both boys and girls go wading or swimming without any suit on, except their birthday model." Brad made the unsolicited remarks after we return to our barracks. "They also let them have free access to the open for their toilet duties. Some of the children seem to be a little old to claim the title of child, also. Of course, I know that we must have a lot of faults that they don't like - such as just being here.

"Changing the subject, George. there's a new show at our theater. Do you want to go?"

"Sure, Brad, it'll help pass the time," I concur.

Passing the time gets to be the name of the game. We go to every new show, and take our daily walks. We are living a life of pleasure that's getting to be quite boring. The fellows have rigged up radios with wires leading to the speakers in our rooms, and that helps. Congress of the United States has added to our confused state with the announcement that the point system is being changed- they like to help out.



On the positive side of thinking, we at least know by their action that we'll be here for some length of time before we can even think of going home.

As was the case before and during the invasion, some of the gang take out an intended escape from the frustration by indulging in drink. Their reaction to the drinking varies with the individual involved. Some will drink and appear sleepy and subdued. Others will use such a time to vent some built up anger. So, we really don't know just what type of creature will be coming through the barracks' door anytime at night. I expect anything, and that's generally how it turns out. Some of the fellows still test their bottled drinks by burning a sample of the contents. And the question is again asked as to what that would prove? The test wouldn't show up poison. It would only show that there's a substance in the mixture such as alcohol that will burn and kill certain bacteria.

Displaced persons, or DPs, are a product of the war. Most of them flee from their home and land as the steamroller of war pushes them. Some of them just wander, while others are taken as prisoners to be used as slave labor if they are physically able. Now they have been released from their wanderings, or captivity and wish to return to their home or seek a new one. Our Army has a process plan of handling such persons. One of the required jobs in such processing is called 'delousing.' And some of the units assigned to this task are with the 97th Signal Battalion. DDT is dusted on the bodies and clothing of the DPs. "That sounds like a fascinating job." One of our fellows comments to a worker. "It must be quite a thrill to lift up the women's dresses and dust them with the powder."



"It might seem that way," he replies, "but really it gets to be quite sickening at times. We come across some real dirty bodies, and actually there isn't much glamor to the job."

So, many of the DPs are cleaned up and put to work. Some can be seen painting the walls and interiors of the buildings, and they're very good painters. Many of the women are put to work in the kitchen and dining rooms. In most of our journey of the war through France and Germany, we ate from messkits that we had to clean up after each meal. Now we have china plates, or dishes and place settings. The food is now brought to our tables or replenished by the DPs, and we leave the dirty dishes on the table when we're through eating, for them to clean up. It's a pretty nice life for us, you say? Well, maybe in some ways it is - or could be. It's good for the DPs, as it gives them a chance to work and earn money for their return home. The DPs treat us nice in their work for us. But to those of us whose only job is waiting, our lack of work or related activity is only adding to our boredom.

"But one can't blame the DPs for any of our circumstances." Bud rationalizes about our discussion of the subject. "As the French would say, 'this is war.' In more ways than one, we are but displaced persons ourselves."

Bud's right, that this is but a part of the war...at least we would eventually get a chance to go home, and that's better than a lot of our buddies who died giving us that chance. On the other side of the ledger there's a grave of a German soldier located in the courtyard near our barracks. A large number of them will not get to go home either. The mound of dirt for his grave has an iron cross on it for identification. But not everyone in the Battalion is idle. There are the cooks with



their helpers, the crew of the Headquarters Company who are working with the records, and the men of the Motor Pool who still have to keep their trucks in good shape. one of the tasks of this later group is to run the motors of their trucks at least ten minutes a day.

And there's another unit working for us also. Special Services in co-operation again with the Red Cross have been planning some vacations for us - to keep us out of mischief. There are trips planned to Scotland, the Alps, and Switzerland to name a few. On July 30th, there's an announcement for all good soldiers who read the bulletin board, to see. "All members of the 97th Signal Battalion will be granted 18 days furlough, starting August 1st." And, "No, the 97th would not be shipped out before we returned!" Was the answer when we inquired about our future status in this regards.

The trip to Scotland seems to suit my fancy for an interesting vacation trip, and I sign up. Of course the Switzerland trip was nearly my choice. "Where are you off to, Brad?" I ask.

"I was a little undecided like you, George," he replies. "But I decided on the Switzerland trip at the last minute. Maybe I'll buy a nice watch or camera while I'm there. Anyway, I wanted to see the Switz Alps."

But I wouldn't be alone on my trip to Scotland, and there would be new friends to meet even though we each had our own plans. The whole deal sounds like a mass exodus from this area by the 97th, as far as the whole unit is concerned. Maybe some of the furloughs would be at different times. On our trip we would get to go by rail and boat, and go through such cities as Paris and London. Hey, Bud would like that - he always wanted to visit Paris. Too bad he isn't going, either, on this one.



And I wonder about the condition of the rails, for our travel, also. They must have really worked hard to get them all repaired so soon for travel, for passengers as well as freight.

For the passengers, train travel often means odd hours to start trips, and nights without full sleep. On Wednesday, August 1st, at one o'clock in the morning we leave Bamberg by truck for the rail station at the town of Rothenback. I make some sleepy conversation with some of the fellows in the truck but things are mostly quiet. We arrive at the station at 0300, and find out that there are other trucks here with troops from other units. We are always in the habit of hurrying up to wait, but the train is on time this early morning. While it seems like a wonder to us of the Army, I guess that it is a tradition for the trains and railroad men everywhere to at least try and be on time. We board the already crowded train, settling down for our big journey as the train starts smoothly on its way. Well, it's fairly smooth - just a couple of small jerks as the slack takes up on each car.

This is the first train ride for me since our ride from Scotland to London. On these cars there isn't any signs of the warning posters that were so prominent over there during the war. There were various signs such as; "Shh. The enemy is listening." Of course these are German or French rail cars, and maybe they used some equivalent to our warnings. I've heard that the Nazi did make use of such posters at various places, but I haven't really noticed any of them. In these dimly lit cars there is something else that's visible. This train is supposed to be a GI special for furlough troops, but there are some women - frauleins or whoever on board. They had stayed sort of hidden until the train was under way, and now they appear from their hiding places. They stay mostly between the cars with their lovers. The



location affords a good place to get on and off the train, and dodge the checks made by the MPs. A train ride to someplace in exchange for a night of love - that sounds like a good price to pay. Some of them may also be looking for a good home in the U.S.A. At any rate, some GIs are not wasting one moment of their furlough.

But there are more important things to do than just watch them - sleep for instance. I'm tired, and that condition combined with the roll of the cars, and the clackity-clack of the wheels, completes the ingredients needed to bring on sleep.

When I wake up it's daylight. So, besides having a conversation with the soldier next to me, I can watch some of the German countryside as it unfolds through the train's windows. Oh yes, the GIs with their women friends are still with us. They do look a little bedraggled though - like they had been several nights without sleep.

"We will eat breakfast in Lugsburg." Is the word that's passed along through the cars. We arrive at 1100 in the morning. It's almost too late to call it breakfast, but with nice yummy fried potatoes and eggs, I guess we could call it lunch which I know we'll miss. This is one of those extravagant setups where they feed 1,000 men at a sitting. Each meal means a lot of preparation and cleanup. Anyway, it's a good meal for us, and served on trays.

"I wouldn't care to do the dishes here." One of the soldiers comment as we're leaving. At sometime, he must have served on KP.

"All aboard!" This order, as well as the other instructions for eating, have come over the public address system. At least everyone can hear it - even the frauleins. We're off with a nice smooth start - and this



time it really is smooth. We have switched to an electric engine, and this time the controlled power is with us, making the difference.

For a lack of something better to do I have started taking notes concerning the time that we arrive at the main towns on our route. It's just short of being a diary. Maybe it's because that I'm still a GI and don't know any better, but I keep track of the time with the Army's time system - such as: 1000 is used instead of saying that it's one o'clock.

And so I write: "1500, Stuttgart; 1900, Rhine crossing." Crossing the Rhine River means that it will not be very long before we're in France. At 2030, or 8:30 P.M. time, we go through the city of Strassburg, and we're greeted by rain - we're lucky to be inside. At 10:30 P.M. we're at another Frenchtown called Saarburg, and it's time again for chow. Our orders and instructions are again relayed over a public address system. The names of the towns that we've been passing through all sound familiar. This is the name of the French town that we stayed in for two weeks last November and sighted a buzz-bomb. It's more peaceful today.

It's a late hour for eating, and I'm starting to get tired from lack of a full night's sleep. So, when we're back on the train I've no trouble falling to sleep. Our train comes to a stop about two hours later. I wake up long enough to see that it's 2 A.M., and check for the name of the station, which the sign identifies as "Nancy, Saar Station." While still half asleep, I recall the events that have centered around this town. The train moves on once again towards Paris and I'm once more asleep and dreaming about the time I spent at the Nancy Rest Center almost two months ago. This dream is interwoven with another dream concerning the capture of Nancy by our troops.



I awake when it gets light, and I learn that there are four hours of travel time left to view the French countryside before we arrive in Paris. From my conversations with various soldiers I learn that while some of the troops like myself will be going as far as Scotland, others will be going only as far as Paris or other nearby towns.

At 11 o'clock sharp, we arrive in the romantic city of Paris. Today is Thursday, August 2, 1945, and I've finally set foot in the big city. It's the place that we skirted around during the war but never quite got to see. We seem to be getting into the habit of eating meals at the 11 o'clock hour - whether it's day or night. Only, this time instead of calling it breakfast, we are officially notified that it's lunch. This is another large messhall, and we're being treated like very important people.

After a nice meal we are presented with some travel rations, such as cigarettes, toilet articles, and candy. But what does a soldier who doesn't smoke, want cigarettes for? The word gets around that such an item will buy other articles such as perfume that might not otherwise be for sale. So, that thought is running around in the back of my mind. Along with the rations we're given instructions concerning where we'll eat dinner, and the name of the station where our train will leave later this evening for Le Havre. "Until then, you are free to see Paris."

With these words everyone takes off just like school was out, each going his own way. I start out with a soldier who could speak French, but as I guessed, that luck wouldn't last very long, and I'm soon on my own. So, look out, little soldier, you are alone in the big, wonderful, and sometimes wild city of Paris.

After two nights and one day and a half of train riding, I'm feeling



as I must also look - a little grubby. So, it'll be a haircut and a shave for the first order of business. It doesn't take much knowledge of the French language to identify a barbershop. There's one near the depot, and I'm waited on in near record time. I could have shaved myself later, but I decided to go all out this time and splurge. Later I regretted having the shave with the straight razor as it makes my face burn. But there's another luxury to indulge in once in a lifetime. I sit in a chair like it's routine procedure, while a young lady goes to work cleaning and trimming my fingernails. And to top off the big affair, I have my boots shined. Finally, I feel that I'm presentable enough to see Paris - shorter 80 francs plus tip, but happy.

I've always been interested in art work and art supplies. My attention is soon drawn to a shop where an artist is drawing portraits. And why not have my portrait drawn while I'm still half way presentable? There is no problem with the language barrier, for he has a service to sell. The price could be in francs, but in this case the bargaining is done with three packs of cigarettes. My only concern is whether the finished picture really looks like me. But it was done in Paris, and that carries enough weight.

There's another item of scheduled purchase before I start some plain free-lance window shopping. Perfume and Paris seem to go together, and I want to send some gifts home. So it is that Perfume seems to fit in as that one special gift. A place to buy the merchandise isn't hard to find. The words perfume and cosmetics seem to be just a part of the French language. Even if that fact were not so, I'm sure that I could be guided to the spot by the scent. I've often heard the comment that the reason perfume is so popular here, is that there always been a shortage of water. Do you believe that? Even though the custom of



substituting perfume for bathing may have been handed down from generations, the smell of perfume is nice - good perfume. The product has been used for many years all over the world, even with water baths.

A soldier in uniform means business or money in the till for the shopkeeper, and I'm waited on promptly. Of course, I have to be given samples of many perfumes by the saleslady - mademoiselle, or madame as her married status might be. I'm really in no hurry, because I've all afternoon to shop. Finally I make the purchase, and I'm a carton of cigarettes lighter.

I now indulge in my scheduled sightseeing. To a soldier who is used to seeing men and women in military uniform, the civilian fashions are now observed with interest. Some of the women have slit skirts, and their coiffure seems to come in many tints and style. Their use of other cosmetics is evident, and all of these items seem to glare at me, in a nice way. And the men, they seem to be wearing clothes other than the olive drab creations. Besides observing the clothing styles, there's the French architecture and other customs to observe. We have been promised a conducted tour of Paris when we return from Scotland, but now I have a chance to observe more of the daily life of France. One of their accepted customs or way of life, is the use of public outdoor toilets where there seems to be only partial privacy. It's hard for me to accept their presence - but they are handy.

Paris has its subways, and that means of transportation is a must on my list of things to do. The use of subways is new for me, and here they're crowded with people going in every direction. How do you buy a ticket? How do you know where to go or get off? Watch out for your money and belongings! Things could disappear fast around here. I take



time to check my moneybelt. The door of the door of the train closes after I'm literally pushed inside. I'm going nowhere in particular, just riding. Pig Alley, or its French equivalent spelling, is one of the stations the train stops. Some of these districts have a reputation that warns the new traveler to stay away. I crisscross the city of Paris, all underground, and this means of travel is quite an experience.

By some miracle, I end my travels at a location near the Red Cross Club, at the scheduled 1800 hours, and in time for chow. Alright, it's called dinner now instead of chow, but it's a very good evening meal.

Our orders are to be at the Grande Station at 2130 hours, or one hour before train time. I arrive early and decide to make use of the men's room. In a big railway station such as this, there surely must be a restroom.. I find the entrance to a large room that's plainly marked men, or "monsieurs." As I start to enter I notice that there are women as well as men in here, and I make a hasty retreat. After circling the block once, and checking my French book, I again reenter the room. Yes, this is the mens room, and there are women in here also who are cleaning women. They are cleaning the floors and the bowls. Casually I observe their custom. The men use the facilities, and if a woman is cleaning the facility, or around it when it's needed, the woman moves and works to one side for a few moments. And so, life goes on - this is no time to be bashful, soldier.

Our train for Le Havre leaves promptly at 10:00 P.M., and it's another one of those nights where we try and sleep on the train. A person has to be in fairly good shape to start out on one of these vacations. But I do sleep, and we arrive at Le Havre, at 6, in the morning. Trucks are waiting to take us north from this port city, to a small resort town of Etretat, that's also located on the English Channel. We arrive



at 0930, and find out that this location is used as an Army rest center, and a stop-over point for our trip to Scotland. We stack our gear near some barracks, giving us a chance to clean up before breakfast time. And for us, breakfast is early this morning - at 10, instead of the 11 o'clock time that we've been having for the last couple of days.

Before we have finished eating, there's an announcement that we hear over the speakers of the PA system that an orientation will be held here at 1100 hours. And at this prescribed time a Lt. Duniver, takes over the briefing and we are told how we are to behave as soldiers on this trip to Scotland. The point that he seems to emphasize is that we're not supposed to behave the way some soldiers might desire, during our trip to Scotland. "You'll be assigned billets for the two nights that you are here. Also, you'll have a chance to exchange some of your money for English shillings, and pounds. Some new and clean clothing will be issued to you, and you'll be given some additional rations."

We feel half human with such nice treatment. I had an eye on the rocky beach, and I'd like to visit there, but we're kept quite busy cleaning up and getting new supplies, and there's no time - maybe there'll be time after supper. We're getting back to the more normal, or routine Army hours, and supper is served at 1700 hours. I make a notation that our messkits haven't been used yet. We were told to bring them along on this trip, but nobody is complaining about someone else ~~washing~~ the dishes we dirty.

By 8 o'clock I'm free at last to take that long awaited stroll along the beach and touch again the waters of the English Channel. For a brief moment my thoughts are reflected back to the days that we spent along these same waters in England - Lynton with the rhododendrons,



'D' day in England, and our own 'D' day plus 36, at Omaha Beach.

It's peaceful here this evening as I continue to reminisce. There aren't many soldiers here this evening, and just a few French civilians. With such a scarcity of people, it isn't hard to observe a nice looking French woman, who is standing part way up on a cliff, looking out over the water as if she's expecting a ship to appear. She's still there when I sleepily wander back to my billet for the night.

I'm tired, and I'm anxious to try out my new bed, so I retire rather early. I didn't get a full night's sleep on the train, and now that tiredness, coupled with the smell of fresh salt air, seems to be a good inducer of sleep. But First Sergeants seem to have the opposite effect. "Alright, you fellows. It's 0530 hours, reveille, and everybody up. Chow will be at 6."

I'm up, along with most of the fellows, and eating an early breakfast. It's nice to be up early for a full day's loafing. And, except for taking time out for meals, my new residence is on the beach. There're a lot more people here on the beach today, August 4th - and maybe because it's also Saturday would account for the larger crowd. Some are just sunbathing, but there are many who are either wading or swimming in the water. "I would like to join some of them in swimming, but I don't have a spit." I comment, while I'm talking with an MP.

"You have on underwear, don't you?" He asks. "If you do, you won't have a problem. Many of them go swimming in that manner, and it's the accepted apparel."

I believed him, for I'd also heard about the swimming apparel worn down on the French Riviera. But, I stay dressed and content myself watching the others swim. I take off my shoes and go wading, but the rocks



are rough on the toes. Oh well, I can take some pictures, and buy some more at a nearby store.

In the evening, there's time again for me to make one last visit to the beach. On the nearby cliff, the young woman is again looking out over the water. My curiosity gets the best of me, and I ask the MP who is on patrol if he has noticed her.

"Yes," he replies, "she's a regular visitor to that spot. It seems as if she's waiting for someone to return from war, or mourning their death. Everyone leaves her alone to her privacy, and respects her vigil."

Again, it's early to bed and early to rise. The time of 5:30 A.M. comes early when one is sleeping and having romantic dreams. We're served a hearty breakfast at 6, that includes eggs, potatoes, and ham. It's a good thing that we're up early and eat a man type of breakfast. Today is traveling day, and we have to carry our bags to some waiting trucks that are located nearly a mile away. We are due to have our baggage on the trucks by 7 A.M., and we are on time. We have some waiting, as the orders are for the trucks to leave for the port city of Le Havre, at 0800.

There are no dock facilities repaired for us to use at Le Havre, we notice as we arrive at 9:30. We're loaded onto an LTC for a ten minute ride out to our vacation ship, the Motonqueen. We're on board at 10:30, and we're reminded to set our watches back for the 11 o'clock sailing. The war has too much of a traumatic effect to forget events overnight, if ever. Because of that fact, I think back to the last time that we were on a boat on these same waters, at Omaha Beach. Today's sailing is different. There're no blimps overhead to protect us against strafing



attacks, and we do not hear the bombing or artillery fire today. On this ship we're allowed to walk on the top open deck if we don't mind the breeze. The view today is worth any such discomforts as a breeze, and I plan to spend most of my time up here enjoying that view and making conversation with new acquaintances.

There's a pleasant interruption at 1330 for lunch - but it might also be our supper as it is almost late enough, so, let us compromise and call it chow. Anyway it's good, warm, and it isn't a 'C' ration as we had on the last sea voyage. Our messkits stay packed in our duffle bags, and I believe they just wanted us to carry them for ballast.

Our pleasant sea voyage comes to an end after five hours, when we dock at Southampton, at 1830. Going down the gangplank we expressed feelings that it was too bad that the boat with us on it, couldn't just keep going on to America and home. Maybe the boat wouldn't be strong enough for the stormy seas. Anyway these are just thoughts, and really I for one, feel very happy that we are even reversing the route of our former travels. This port was our debarkation port to France - remember?

Our lunch that we had earlier must have been dinner, for there has been no further mention of eating. Busses are waiting at the dock to take us to the railway depot for another ride on one of their small-looking trains. And, surprise! At the depot we're welcomed with coffee and doughnuts by our faithful Red Cross girls. So, we do eat, after all. "Thank you, miss. That tasted mighty good."

Our train leaves at 1930, and the ride to London is uneventful, as darkness soon overtakes the 3-1/2 hour ride. There's just time for a little shuteye.

It's 11 P.M. when we arrive at the London station. Many repairs have



been made to the depot and yards, but there's still much visible evidence of the heavier bombings. We have a tour leader, and we stay together as a group. At one minute before midnight, we board a subway for a ride to the Red Cross Club building. I'm glad not to have made the trip alone at this late hour. At the Club's desk where we are assigned our rooms for the night, there is this reminder that we are again in civilization: "Warning! Be sure and check your money and other valuables in the safe for the night." I comply with the order before taking the elevator up to my room.

There're several reasons for sleeping in later this Monday morning, August 6th. I was up late last night, we're on furlough, and this isn't an Army Compound with First Sergeants. But there's a good reason or two, for getting up by 8:30. That time is as late as they serve breakfast, and I do want to get in a little London sightseeing.

"You're on free time until our Scotland train leaves tonight at 7:30." Our guide leader informs us as we are starting out. "You may eat your meals here if you wish, however. There is one reminder for your benefit, concerning a trait of the British people. Don't feel offended if they don't take the initiative to speak to you, as it's merely an accepted custom that respects your right for privacy. But I'm sure that it won't be hard for you to strike up a conversation, if you desire."

I team up with a soldier named Dan, for the sightseeing. As was the case in Paris, we first make an underground survey of London, by way of the subway. And as in Paris, London also has certain districts that may be best to avoid, or approach with caution. But we try to go to as many locations as we can, and in doing so we become a part of the mob of daily commuters who always seem to be in a hurry - pushing and



shoving. We surface just long enough at each station to get our bearings for the next jaunt. Hyde Park is the name of the station that we come to at 11 A.M. The district in the bright summer sun looks interesting enough to tempt us into going for a walk.

Walking in the fresh air seems to whet our appetites for an early lunch. A fish and chips special beckons us in with its drifting outside aroma. With a bag of warm food to eat as we walk, we continue our sightseeing near the Thames River. We play no favorites, and visit other districts.

The long walk, with only the light lunch to fortify us, prompts us to return early to the Columbia Red Cross for the evening meal. "Well, at least we can say that we've seen some of London by foot and subway." I remark to Dan while we're eating. "Their respect for privacy didn't bother us any."

"No, we had a nice time, George," he replies. "Of course we were too busy walking to do much talking. Those few that we did talk with were very pleasant."

Our group leaves the Red Cross Club at 7:30 P.M. for our walk to the King Cross Station. Our train for Edinburgh, Scotland leaves the London station promptly at 9:30 P.M. We leave the bright lights of the big city behind, and soon become a part of the dark countryside. Whether we sleep or not, this is our bed for the rest of the night. This is a first-class car with comfortable seats. And that, combined with the reassuring train noises and motion, is all that I need to take me to dreamland.

It's daylight when I awake, and our train is speeding through the Scottish countryside. While it's now cloudy and threatening rain, I'm



happy that I can at least see a few of the smaller towns and some of the hills, before we arrive in Edinburgh.

When we pull into the Edinburgh station at 0745, the weather decides to give us a royal welcome with some rain. This terminal is known as the Waverly Station. With our luggage in hand, we make our way down some splashing streets to our hotel, or Red Cross Club, on Princess Street. Everything and everyone is a little wet - but we're still in a good humor. My first impression of our surroundings is excellent. We are located east of a very wide street, that borders a very beautiful park. On the top of a hill in the same westerly direction, is the outline of a large castle. "That's the Edinburgh Castle." Our leader informs us. "We'll visit there later today."

At this time our attention is directed to the inside of the building that is our home in Bonnie-Scotland for the next fun packed week. This is an older building located in what seems to be the busiest, as well as the prettiest section of the city. The dining hall and kitchen are on the ground floor, while an area for entertaining are located on the floor above. Our room for sleeping are on the next two floors above these. Our attention is directed to the posted regulations regarding the use of the rooms; such as the hours, noise, and visitors.

We had arrived at the Club in time for a late breakfast, and before we can finish eating, our guide outlines part of the schedule for the day. "Our tour of the city will start at 1100 hours. That will give you time to rest and clean up a little before we leave."

Like the rest of the fellows, I take my luggage up to my assigned room. I can have a shower tonight, but right now I'd better shave at least. And with two hours to wait, there's time to write a short letter home.



"Dear Mom, This is a very pretty city, and it seems more like home than any other place that I've been over here in Europe. Looking out of my west window I can see the lovely Princess Street Gardens and the Castle of Edinburgh. Down the street to the south there's a monument, and some Parliament Buildings. I hope that it stops raining by the time we start our tour...."

I finish the letter and arrive downstairs, as our tour leader for the day, George Robertson, is introduced. Sorry as a twenty year old man, he is proud to state that he is in his seventies. "I've a tour planned, but if you have some place special that you would like to visit, be sure and let me know." He informs us first thing.

The rain has stopped, leaving the air fresh-smelling. And we're glad the rain has quit, because we're going to be doing a lot of walking. At every place we visit on our tour, we're introduced and given a brief history of the establishment. The stops on the tour include a newspaper plant, a Courtroom where a trial is in progress, and a church - St. Charles Cathedral, is its name. The highlights of its history and structural design are described. It's a very beautiful church, inviting me to take a picture of it with George Robertson and our group.

The castle is the last stop on his places to visit - and the main one also. It's located across the park and up the hill from where we are now. "Would you like to ride up there on the trolley?" One is going by us now, in the street to the front of us, and Mr. Robertson hails it.

"How much would you charge us to ride up to the castle?" He asks the driver.

"The regular price of three pence," replies the man.



"Three pence is too much," retorts our guide. "One penny would be plenty." He's unable to bargain with the driver - so, we walk up the hill and to the Castle. After hearing their dialog, I wonder if the whole affair might have been staged for our benefit to demonstrate the Scotch thrift. But the results demonstrated common sense rather than thrift, because it wasn't too far to go up the hill, and the walk through the park was beneficial.

There are guards on duty at the castle on the hill. Besides a visit to the Royal Palace, we see the St. Margaret's Chapel, and some other historical edifices. On the darker side of historical display, we see the dungeon and the torture chamber, which includes the place where certain notables and commoners as well, were beheaded. Before us is the instrument of destruction in the cold form of a guillotine. Cannons are spaced around the outside walls, all just a part of the defense of the Crown. Our view from here, like the one we could see from the Salzburg Fortress, is superb. "That 822 foot hill that you see over there is known as King Arthur's Seat." Mr. Robertson informs us as we view the various landmarks. "It's from that hill that he is alleged to have watched his forces defeat the Picts."

Other places are pointed out to us such as the new east portion of the city, and the shipyards. There are the Parliament Buildings, the University, the house of John Knox, and the Robert Louis Stevenson Memorial House. Spires from the many churches and cathedrals dot the landscape. As we are leaving we are told about some of the other monuments. There is one for Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Lord Nelson. Of interest to us, is that there's a statue of Abraham Lincoln erected in honor of the Scotsmen who died while engaging in the American Civil War.



We make our way back down through the paths of the Princess Street Gardens. This is a place of real beauty. Be sure and stay on the paths! Crews are all over the area, pruning, cultivating, and continually changing the beds with new flowers. One large flower arrangement that seems to be a central attraction is a clock. There are real flowers for the hands, numbers, and the background. There is a crew working on that bed now. And yes, the time is correct, as I check my watch.

The tour ends back at our Club, and we thank George Robertson for escorting us on the 3-1/2 hour tour of the city. It was a good way to get things off to a good start.

"I didn't realize that this country had such an old history." Dan comments to me on this aspect of the tour. "The new part of the city was finished in the year of 1800, or not long after we became a nation known as the United States of America. The Romans occupied this city during early history, for 300 years. I thought the area around Austria was the only real old section of the world, before I came here."

"It has a history alright," I reply. "I also think that the Princess Street Gardens is as pretty a spot as I've ever seen. But one thing that I'll remember longer than anything else is the hospitality shown us by our guide, George Robertson."

We end the first day of our Scottish vacation, with a motion picture show at 1800.

Wednesday, August 8th, I start off the day with a downtown window shopping spree. There are many tempting articles to buy, even though some things because of the war are not yet available. Later in the afternoon, at 1700 there's time for a short movie before a scheduled



swim at 1830 hours.

The swimming pools are located on the north side of the city, and involve a short ride on a bus to get there. Yes, there are two pools visited on our trip. We stop at one that seems a little crowded, so we go on to another enclosed pool. While they are inside pools, they utilize the water from the firth or bay that's nearby, so the water is salty. It's a nice pool that looks inviting, but this soldier doesn't have a suit - I remember being in that predicament before. But here I'm not alone as very few of the fellows have a suit for swimming.

Our smart Red Cross Hostess is used to such obstacles, and informs us that we can rent some at the office. "I only hope that they have enough and in the right sizes," she states.

"This is the last suit near your size," the manager announces as he hands it to me.

I take it into the dressing room to try it on. It's a little big alright. Maybe if I don't try too much diving, it'll stay on. First a shower awaits me, and then it's into the pool. The water is cool compared with the air temperature, but once I get wet, it's better to stay submerged in the water..By swimming faster the coolness of the water is not noticed as much. And at long last in what seems like years, I have a chance to swim - it's fun. But, the cold water is not a place to remain for too long of time.

We have showers of fresh water and rinse off the salt. Except for our dog tags we looked like civilians for awhile, and now we change back into our uniforms. "It was invigorating, anyway." Someone remarks when we are once again back in the sunshine. "But it's warm enough



now to make us wish we were back in the water again."

A gang of hungry soldiers, with some pretty Red Cross girls, head back to town. The girls have some games planned for us tonight at 2100. They're sure keeping us busy with their programs and that's nice.

I start off the following morning, Thursday, at 0900, by doing some more shopping. There are lots of things to see in this city. One shop that I notice today is a portrait studio. I decide to have my picture taken, and make an appointment for 1200. It's a full length picture, and for my attire I am decked out with Scottish kilts, blouse, and the works. I wait in the shop for a while following, to receive the finished product. As a Scotsman, maybe I look better as an American soldier, but at least it shows that I was in Scotland.

Later there's a tram ride scheduled for us by the girls, at 1300. Following the ride, we are their guests to enjoy a nice meal at a restaurant overlooking the water of the Firth of Forth. The restaurant is really near another small town called Musclevburgh. It is a candle light affair with music, and some lovely Red Cross hostesses to complete the setting for an equally lovely meal.

That affair should have filled our day - "Our cup runneth over." But there is more planned. At 1830 tonight, a dance is to be held in the entertainment room. Is it formal? Well, almost, it's our formal uniforms and some very pretty dresses for the lasses. And just what am I doing at a dance? I haven't danced a step in my life. Oh well, I can watch the others dance and enjoy the music.

"Really, George," inquires our hostess after she introduces herself. how come your not dancing? We have some nice music, and we don't want



to disappoint our volunteers."

"I don't know how to dance," I reply bluntly.

"That's no excuse," she continues. "They are nice looking girls, and they are equally nice teachers. Come, you can start with me!"

She was a nice teacher, and they all turn out to be nice teachers. They're good sports, anyway, to put up with me stepping on their toes and feet all of the time. It's a first for me, and it's fun. I'm really beginning to enjoy this vacation with each passing moment. "There is to be no dating with our Red Cross Volunteers." A poster reminds us as we are leaving the room.

Those were the rules, but it's hard to regulate love or romance here or back in Austria. And even if these girls wouldn't, or maybe couldn't date, there are others that would. Dan brings an offer of a date for me, around noon on Friday. "I've met a nice Scottish girl," he begins. "She has a girl friend, and I was wondering if you would be interested in meeting her. We could go over to their place after dinner and meet her mother. Then later, maybe we could go swimming - I've got an extra suit."

"Thanks Dan," I reply. "Sure, I'll go. It sounds like fun, and I don't believe that the Red Cross has anything planned for this evening." I wondered about a blind date, but sometimes the unexpected can be exciting - if not rewarding. Anyway, I wouldn't back out now.

We leave for their place soon after dinner. It's about one mile of walking to their home. We exchange introductions in their modest apartment, and then engage in a lengthy conversation interspersed with



the serving of refreshments. There's much to say - where we're from, and what we've been doing.. This is a chance to release some chatter that has welled up inside of us for quite some time. I glance occasionally at my date. I feel that I've the best girl.

It's time to go swimming, and it's dark. "I've never been on a midnight swim before, either." I announce after some of their comments. The girls seem to know their way to the water. Just how deep or clean it is, I don't know, but it is cold. It sounds a little crazy; taking the time to change into a suit, and then changing back into uniform just for a couple of splashes in the water. But who am I kidding? It's fun just being with them and talking. We sit on a log and talk for awhile, and then we start back to town. Going by the playgrounds of a schoolyard we stop for a short while and test out some swings. By now I'm swinging quite high even without the aid of a pushed swing.

We walk the girls back to their home where we say goodnight. There are plans made for another date. It's early in the morning when we return to our Red Cross Hotel. While it's late, I'm not sleepy yet, and I take time to have a shower before going to bed.

It was late to go to bed, and it's late to rise. I miss breakfast, but I really don't care. For awhile, at least, I'm floating on a cloud. There are some dates on the 11th, 12th, and 13th that I don't seem to have time to finish filling out in my book of notes about the trip. There's some other activity going on at the Red Cross Club that I somehow have missed. I've been dating a very pretty, and nice Scottish girl. She seems quite young, but acts mature. But maybe, more than anything, the war has made me feel my age. I wish I had known her earlier, or could remain here to know her longer.



I have the pleasure of seeing her some more, and together we explore the city of Edinburgh. We have dinner with her mother in town. A trolley ride out to the Botanical Gardens is made in the afternoon.

There are several daytime strolls along the parkway by the beach. "You had better tuck your wallet in your pocket better," she warns me at one time in a motherly fashion. "I'm sorry to say that there ~~are~~ are people in this district who would be tempted to lift it from you."

It has been fun being with her, and with the others from the Red Cross as well, for the entire week. I had forgotten for a short while about the war, and this - well it was a reward in some ways from the war and being here, even briefly. It's Monday August 13th, and time for good-byes. I get her name and address, as well as her mother's. "I hope that you'll write." She has a very pretty signature.

Later in the evening as our train leaves the Waverly Station at 2120, I glance eagerly out of the window to see if she might be there. But it's late, and there's no one there who resembles her. I've seen other GIs part from new found romance in our travels and I've kidded them about it relating it with the poem by Robert Burns. And now I'm on the parting end myself, and I again think of his poem:

"Ae fond kiss and then we sever;  
Ae farewell, and then forever!  
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,  
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.

Who shall say that fortune grieved him,  
While the star of hope she leaves him!  
Me, nae cheerful twinkle lights me;  
Deep despair around benights me.



I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,  
Nothing could resist my Nancy:  
But to see her was to love her;  
Love but her, and love forever.

It seems like a fitting tribute, and this romantic day-dreaming, coupled with the rhythmic sounds and motion of the train, surrenders to the forces of sleep.

And if one can sleep while traveling, there's the double reward of getting the needed rest while traveling miles of distance. Like most of the fellows. I've had a very pleasant vacation or furlough, that has filled me with lasting worthwhile memories. Now we are again traveling east on the course of our former route into combat, and some of those memories are again stirred. I've had a brief taste of freedom from the thoughts of war and it's surroundings. It has made me more restless than ever to seek a permanent escape of these shadows. The road down the chuteto home and escape can only be made by way of our return to Bamberg. Sleep and miles traveled, are now my allies.

Our route for returning will be the same as coming here, except in reverse fashion. There'll also be fewer stopovers. We arrive from Edinburgh at our King's Cross Station at 0720, Tuesday. We have breakfast at the Red Cross Club, and later a nice lunch.

We leave the Club in time to go by subway and catch the 2P.M. train at the Waterloo Station for Southampton. After a two hour train ride we arrive at Southampton and continue by bus for a one-hour ride to our camp and bed for tonight. It's a former staging area, but it's more peaceful now. We arrive in time for the serving of a good meal, to be followed later by what we hope to be a good night's sleep.



The time is ten minutes after midnight when we are awakened and on our feet by the deafening noise of every horn or boat whistle in the area trying to out-do one another with volume. The Japs have surrendered! There are tears of joy shed with this news announcing the end of the war. Many of us had relations who were engaged in that Pacific War - I had a brother. We had earlier heard the news about the atomic bombings of the Japanese Islands, and in a way we were expecting something dramatic in the news to break. But it's a very welcome announcement, and one that'll make our trip back to Bamberg just a whole lot lighter and happier. It's hard to get back to sleep, and we talk for some time, to release our tensions.

After breakfast, at 9 A.M. we load on busses again and head for our boat at the dock. It's 12 noon when we go up the gangplank of our ship, the 'Marine Wolf.' "That's a name that sounds like it has a lot of adventure attached to it." Dan exclaims. "And that big ship tied up over there - I believe that's the Queen Mary. Now that's a boat I'd like to be heading back to the good old U.S.A. in."

I take several pictures of the dock and the Queen Mary, while he's talking, and our boat gets under way. "That's a pretty boat, besides being big," I reply. "I believe that we could get back home in about five days with that boat under us. But right now, I'd almost settle for a rowboat - and with our luck, that's probably what we'll get."

Our crossing of the English Channel seems to take a little longer than when we went over. But setting the time ahead this time, might have just added to that illusion. Our arrival time at Le Havre is 2100. The hour is too late to travel to the Rest Center, so we're given billet in a nearby camp for the night. Coffee and doughnuts serve as our



7 A.M. breakfast. The next order of business for the day is another truck ride back to Mtertat, where we arrive at 1100. The rest center is a very welcome site.

We have time to clean up a little before lunch. With that item taken care of, and we have been given some more rations and instructions, there's still time left in the afternoon for us to stroll along the rocky beach. It's always interesting to watch the forces of the water as they continually pound and work away at the shoreline. Most all of the time in the summer, there's always a crowd of people at the beach, and they must be fascinated in the same manner. Dan makes a comment about the absence of the lone girl on the cliff. To us, as well as others, she has become a legend, and a part of the seascape on this beach. "I don't see her up there this afternoon," he remarks. "She probably doesn't go up there until after work, or the end of the day."

"We won't be here at that time to find out for sure," I reply. "Our trucks leave for Le Havre at 5:45 P.M., so, we'll be long gone."

We continue to talk about many things; about what we'll do when we get back home, and about what impact the end of the war will now have on us. The lights will really be on all over the world now. These thoughts remind me again of the song about the blue-birds flying over the white cliffs of Dover. And I glance up at these cliffs - and I remember the vigil of the lone girl. The lights have come on again, but a lot of heartaches and suffering will continue. We take a last glance at the beach and head back for camp, and an early 4:30 chow-time.

It's 2130, when our trucks arrive at the Le Havre railroad station. The train leaves promptly at 2300 for the overnight ride back to the fabulous city of Paris. If one can't sleep on a train, he's out of



luck. Most of us are either fortunate, or we go to sleep from sheer exhaustion. And there are two more nights of travel back to camp, so, we'd better sleep.

It's Friday morning, August 17, 1945, and we are back in Paris, France. The night's travel has given us rest, and we've covered many miles. Paris is the romantic city on the Seine River. The river winds its way through the heart of the city, and there are thirty-two bridges that span its banks within this area. Paris is accessible by means of bus, and air travel as well as train. There are six main railway lines entering the city, and we entered one from the west side this morning at 8 A.M. We'll leave the city at 8:30, this evening, from a depot on the east side where we had entered at the start of our trip to Scotland.

The Red Cross Club is again our official headquarters for the remainder of the day, to shave, clean up, and get some nourishment. And for today there's an added treat in store for us, as our hostess announces;:

"Following breakfast, two of us will lead your group on a fast tour of the city. Paris has a lot of historic attractions, and we'll try and visit the highlights of these. They'll be sights that you'll long remember. Be prepared to do a lot of walking."

And it is walking that we do on our escorted tour of Paris, with our Red Cross Gals. We're shown many important streets such as the Rue de la Paix, and the Champs Elysees. There are the buildings of the art - the opera, and the Louvre. These visits all take time and many steps. The history, and points of interest are explained to us by our guides. Maybe some of the facts we'll remember and some we won't, but it's all interesting - at least for now. We get to see a museum, a hotel, a Court Building, Napoleon's Tomb, and the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Now



we are walking in some gardens at the base of the Eiffel Tower. I've some film left in my camera for a picture. To get the tower all in the picture, I have to keep backing up. "It's a tall structure of 984 feet, and it was built in 1889 for the World's Fair." Our guide explains to us. "There are 38,000 square feet of floor space in the tower, which was used by four restaurants during the time of the exposition. The tower required 7,000 tons of steel in its construction. Elevators, and spiral staircases, provide access to the different levels. An elevator is located in each column."

Perhaps the climax of our tour, is when we pose for a group picture in front of the Arc de Triomphe. "The pictures should be ready, to give each of you one, by six, or dinner-time tonight," she announces.

The Arc is a point of recognition for all victorious troops. Many of our troop marched through here after the liberation of Paris. Its a fitting place to end this tour on our trip.

The walking has made us tired and hungry - both, we are told, are healthy signs of an American Soldier. The tour has also made the day pass quickly. We receive a print of the group souvenir picture when we arrive back at the Club. As a finale, we gorge ourselves with a nice meal.

It's time for that subway ride to the eastside depot, and our awaiting train. There remains two days and two nights ahead of us in travel. We get the benefits again of traveling while we sleep. Except for making the regular 1/2 hour meal stops, the steel tracks move us steadily along. We arrive in Nancy, France at 0800, Saarburg at 1000, Strassbourg at 1300, and Stuttgart at 2200 hours.



After another night of sleep while traveling, we arrive in Nuremberg, Germany, on Sunday, August 18, at 8 o'clock in the morning. One thing that I did notice on this return trip, is the absence of the female hitchhikers - not that anyone seems to miss them. I guess they just wanted to go west and get out of this country. For the gang of us that are with the 97th Signal Battalion, our trip comes to an end when we reach Bamberg at 1600 hours, Sunday. For those troops stationed at other locations, the train continues on.

This is the same old place that we left just 18 days ago - it hasn't changed any. Yet, it does seem more deserted now, as some of the fellows must still be on their furloughs, and those that are here must be out trying to wear the rest of the shoeleather off of their shoes by walking the river banks. Many of them will be back by dinner time, if they're still here. It seems like we've been away from here longer than we actually were on the trip. That's how vacations go.

Later Sunday evening, many more of the traveling QIs of the 97th, begin to drift back into camp. There's no news yet about our departure date, but I do learn that some of our officers have been assigned to other units.

"In some ways my return to our Headquarters in Bamberg, reminds me of returning to an empty schoolhouse during summer vacation." I tell Brad the first time that I see him on Monday morning. What time did you get in?"

"A lot of us got back here near midnight," he replies. "I didn't like coming back to this camp, either. If we had some idea of what was going on, it wouldn't seem quite so bad."



"We sure had fun on our trip, though. We went for a boat ride on Lake Lucerne, and we did a lot of hiking - on a glacier even. We saw several of the main cities including Bern - here's a watch that I bought there, and fairly reasonable too.

"And how did your trip go?" he asks.

"I had fun, Brad. I got in some sightseeing and shopping in Paris. We stayed several days at a rest center on the French coast, called Etretat, where you might say that we did some more sightseeing - but it was restful on the beach. We looked around London and took a few more subway rides. Of course Edinburgh, Scotland was our main destination and place of interest." I continue. "I really enjoyed it because, well, maybe in some ways it reminded me more of home. We did a lot of sightseeing and met some very nice people. The Red Cross was wonderful in making all of the arrangements for the complete trip. It's sort of crazy in some ways; I've been too busy working before the war to think of anything like dancing, and I had to pick Edinburgh to make any attempt at learning. Their feet will long remember me, but they were good sports and teachers. Oh, and I met a very nice young Scottish girl and her Mom. It was a first for me - enjoying the company of someone like her.

"I would have liked to have stayed over there a while longer. It was a chance to have several days of freedom away from surroundings of our former battle area. The waiting to go home will now be harder than ever to endure."

"I thought that I was the only one that had such feeling, George," he replies. "There's not even a rumor about the date when we'll be leaving. Although there's no killing involved, I guess that we'll just have to



accept this period as another phase of the war."

The barracks gradually fill with the returning GIs from their vacations, and they all now share the anxiety of waiting. Bud, Roy, Andre and the others, all return. Occasionally another officer or enlisted man will mysteriously leave for home or some other location, but most of us remain. The number of displaced persons working here seems to have increased, although we know that a great many of them have returned to their homes, or moved to other locations, also.

The DPs, and our officers treat us real well, giving us a life of luxury. But the days pass into weeks, and the weeks add up. Blantly we have nothing to do but wait to go home, and it's getting to be torture. The DPs as well have as some of our officers and men, have jobs to do that make life seem worth living. For most of us, our life is one of getting up in the morning, eating, going for a walk, or to a movie, eating again, and then going back to bed at night. We discuss the situation in which we find ourselves. There's a rumor that some field drill is being planned for us. But quite frankly we all wonder how a bunch of home-hungry GIs, who have been through the war with fighting and killing, well, how could they ever be pacified in staying here?

But as September draws to a close, the rumor of possible field drill is squelched with the appearance of an official notice on the bulletin board: "We will be leaving Bamberg, Germany, on October 1st." There's the last minute hustle with the order following, to turn in supplies, and to pick up our laundry. Our guns and ammunition are turned in as we are shipping out - for home? Even the boys who do a lot of gambling wouldn't bet on that issue.

"There's one thing that we do know for sure." Andre brings the news



to me. "Cognac just presented *us* with another litter of pups. There's no cigars being passed out this time, either. She's one thing around here that's dependable. I hear that several of the fellows are trying to get permission to take several of the older pups home with them."

"Well good for her, Andre. She was a fine dog for us to have during the war, for protection as well as companionship." I reply. "I sure hope that she'll get a good home - we'll all miss her."

Not everyone from the 97th Signal Battalion from Bamberg will be leaving. But for those of us that are leaving, Monday morning, October 1, 1945, finds us in a very happy mood. "We should be on the high seas by this time next week!" is the comment that is heard along with other remarks quite often. "It's getting into the fall season now, so it's about time that we were leaving here. It's getting so cool that the frauleins have even stopped swimming in the river." The remarks continue as we load up and pull out of the parking area. About the last thing that we see as we pull out into the street is Cognac, the Company mascot. She'll miss us for a while, but then, she has her work cut out for her taking care of her pups.

Our destination is a small town 40 miles to our south by the name of Zirndorf. It's about 6 miles west of the large city of Nuremberg. The real purpose of stopping here is not known by anyone that I've asked. I only hope, like everyone else, that someone who is in charge somewhere, knows what they're doing. But one positive thing is certain, we've made a start. Although it seems to be a start that reminds me of being moved from a large waiting room of a doctor's office, to a smaller waiting room where we continue to wait for the doctor who will make the examination. In this smaller camp with its quonset huts, we're back to the



to the use of mess kits again, which seems more normal for Army life.

And do you remember Bill who left with some of the other fellows from Salzburg, while we were visiting in the Alps? "It's good to see you, Bill. We thought that you'd be home long before this. What happened?"

"It's a long story, and it's been a long wait, George," he replies. "I've been here ever since leaving Salzburg, except for some time to visit Paris. Somebody has sure fouled up this point system and transportation for us."

Besides meeting Bill, I meet some of the fellows from my old 92nd Signal Battalion. They are planning to go home on a furlough, and then returning to work in communications. "You ought to consider it also." One of them invites. "There's good pay in it for you, and better than the rat race on the outside."

"I've only one main desire at this time," I reply. "and that's to get home and out of the service."

I also meet up with a few fellows that I knew in the 84th Signal Company. From their conversation I learn that they were shipped overseas several months after I was.

And there are some other fellows I come across, but thank goodness just a minority, who having no definite plans for the future, welcome all of the delays of our departure. Much of the Army discipline at this stage is very lax, and they work their trades with the unfolding circumstances. Loud speakers from a central wired source, are rented out to the barracks. The fellows will pay willingly for anything that will help pass the time. Stocks of captured German war material are constantly traded



by the experts in this field. They build up small fortunes. Whiskey is sold for a high profit. Some of the fellows make their extra money by selling the services of prostitutes. There're several names tagged on these fellows, but 'pimp' is generally the accepted term.

We have one in our barracks who occupies the bed next to the door, and she sleep with him except when her services are booked with the clientele of this or other barracks. "Someday I have hopes to settle down with some nice man in America," she announces nonchalantly one day near lunch time. As she talks, she is busy giving herself a bath in front of the barracks stove, using a basin of hot water, a rag, and a towel. For her it's a routine procedure without the least thought of modesty. At least she tries to keep herself clean. But already, I'm feeling sorry for that poor husband that she hasn't picked yet.

There are regulations regarding all of these forbidden activities, but who worries about regulations at a time like this? We're going home, remember? And that's what a lot of us believe as our convoy leaves Zirndorf on the morning of October 3rd. We're going west into France, and a boat which we dream of, that will take us home.

At least part of our wishful thinking is correct. We're in France, and in a central location of what appears to be a soul- forsaken wasteland. Our engineers have leveled off the land and erected a beautiful city of tents. For some unknown reason they call it Camp Chicago. There's actually a real city near here, yet out of sight, by the name of Marchais. For identification purposes we're now a part of the 200 Field Artillery Battalion. Someone now has the choice of sending us to either the west or south ports of France, and we should



be at this location for not more than a couple of days - we continue to dream. The men have been shuffled around like blowing seeds, but for some good fortune, a small group of us continue to remain together.

Filled with hours of inactivity, the days stretch into weeks. Walking the barren tent-lined streets gets to be monotonous. About the only activity that really flourishes is the game of dice. It's a full scale business that's done out in the open and nearly 24 hours a day. A blanket is stretched tight over some type of board that forms a landing field for the two cubes. Thousands of dollars change hands daily, and more at payday. And don't distract the players, as some could be losing, and in a bad mood.

But as the weeks pass without any hope of immediate departure, everyone is understandably in a bad mood and not just the dice players. Some of the fellows in our unit who seem to possess some influence, have written to several Congressmen, but without apparent success. "However, what could they expect?" we comment. "It was these fellows who fouled up the point system to start with on all fronts." And the chant is taken up; "When are we going home?" This period of waiting wouldn't be as bad if we had something definite to look to in the form of a set date. Of course, a better location would also help our morale. We are all greatly disappointed.

Entertainment is provided for our enjoyment. There are movies, and live shows with comedians and actors. With the live shows, the troops vent their pent-up feelings on the actors with insulting remarks and boos. The actors try to do their best, but the fellows resort to entertaining themselves by tossing scores of air-filled rubbers into the air of the theater. I realize the feelings of the fellows, but why take it



out on the actors? It makes one ashamed to be a part of them at such times.

The days of weary waiting pass by. It's November 14th, and heavy frost covers the tents and ground in the morning. Winter is coming on, but there's a ray of hope for us. Maybe the letters to the Congressmen didn't do any good, and maybe our prayers had more positive effect. The news is that we're moving out!

Joinville, France, is a town that we fought our way through during the war, and we're here again briefly on November 15th. Our hopes are again built up. With the news that we might be getting closer to our embarkation point, there's another activity that's taking place on a larger scale. "Have you seen my Eisenhower jacket?" someone asks. "I hung it up on the line just ten minutes ago."

We've been in the habit of airing out our bedding and clothing during the war. Such a habit now demands the constant vigil with a club. A couple of minutes is all that it takes for clothing and bedding to be heading for the black market. Such items are much more valuable than cash or francs, as one who is a little careless will learn. Sometimes it's the French who will steal the articles, but more often it's other GIs who steal them to trade for other goods, or to sell them.

We've been taking pictures of the camps along our paths of travel. As I am taking a picture of our place at Joinville, Andre makes a helpful suggestion: "We've both been taking pictures, George. Maybe we can trade some of them when we get home. Between the two of us there ought to be at least one good one for our records."

"Thank you, Andre," I reply. "I've got your address. For some crazy,



hopeful reason I've been taking a picture as soon as we arrive at an area or new camp, thinking that we might be moving out the next day. I won't say that I've grown more patient, but rather I think that I've just learned to accept disappointments."

Someone must have rolled the dice right this time. It's August 19th, and we're heading south. At least this narrows the questions of where and when we'll sail, down to just the single question of "when?"

It's nice to see some parts of France that we haven't seen before. Our route takes us along the Rhone River and valley, past the industrial cities of Rhone and Lyon. Further along south, there's richer agricultural land with many fine vineyards. It's truly a beautiful valley, even at this late time of the year. Our camp, for the night at least, is the Calais Staging Area, somewhere near Marseilles, France. Still being hopeful GIs, we take some pictures of the camp after we had finished dinner. And we're just being hopeful, as there's no news at all about the availability of a boat - even a rowboat.

Some of the fellows not content with the poor results from writing to their Congressmen, have resorted to writing to the news media. If it doesn't produce any transportation for us, we can now at least say that we made the headlines. "Troops near riot over failure to obtain transportation home." Yes, that's us, and we all shared the same feelings.

Just the knowledge that we're being heard is encouraging to us. And whether or not the publicity had anything to do with it, on November 24th, we receive the welcome news that a boat will soon be available for us. We'll have to wait a few days for them to clean it up and fumigate it, then it'll have to be aired out. The boat was being used



to transport French troops to one of their wars in Africa. It's good news to learn that we'll have a boat of some sort, but the idea that we've been having to sweat it out while our boats were being made available for them, and such use, just didn't set too well with us. Regardless of such reasons for our delays, there's now a noisy, and joyful celebration in our camp -sailing home at last. Somehow Brad, Bill, Andre, myself, and a few others, have managed to stay together during this last stage of the battle. We have a late gab-fest to talk over some of our adventures.

And it's time to write a very important letter home to Mom. Airmail should beat our boat, even if our boat should be a fast one.

On November 26, 1945 we're busy taking pictures as our trucks leave the Calais Staging Area. There're more pictures taken when we reach Marseilles, and board our boat, the Samuel Ashe, U.S.A.T. I take another picture of the dock, and another as the tugs pull us away from the dock. There are a few moments of quiet reflections as we leave the shore and the harbour. There are mixed emotions of a lot of memories, some bad, but some good. I've had many friends during the war, as well as on some of our trips following. Somehow, it's still quite hard for for me to grasp the realization that, at last, I'm going home.

The waters of the Mediteranean are calm as a lake as we plow west. Unlike leaving New York, and going to the war, now, no one is seasick. As one result of this, there are long chow lines. This boat's known as a Liberty Ship, it's life expectancy is considered to be quite short, and it's speed of travel is slower than most ships. But it's a boat, and if we don't hit too many or hard of storms, maybe it'll hold up until we can reach America.



I spend much of my time on top deck with the gang during the daylight hours. This seems to a desired place to be for everyone on such voyages as this. Maybe it's partly because it isn't quite as depressing as staying down in the darker hold of the ship. Some of the fellows have learned the trick of tying their dirty clothes to a long rope and letting them dangle in the water along side of the ship. Maybe it's a good way to wash them, but they would still have the task of removing the salt from the clothes, but they could have an idea for that also.

The porpoises and flying fish find no fault with our boat as they play games of leap frog, in the waters around us. "There's part of the African coast, over there," someone points out. And later on: "That must be Spain, on our right. I can even make out a town."

It's to be on the deck in the evening when the stars are out. I guide the ship by them - in my own way. And at such quiet, peaceful times I feel a closeness to God, and I thank Him for His protection, and pray for His continued protection during the rest of our voyage home. The other fellows on deck must have shared some of the same thoughts.

"There's something very different and comforting about this ocean trip." Andre remarks. "We have full running lights on now - there's no black-out. We're at peace!"

We have piped music to our bunk area in the hold, and the music is sometimes interrupted to bring us an announcement. "For your information, we will be passing the Rock of Gibraltar at 0430. If it isn't foggy, you'll have a chance to see it."

I wanted to see the Rock, and I make a point to try and wake up and



get a glimpse of it. At the prescribed time, I'm sound asleep. But shortly afterwards I manage to wake up enough to grope my way up to top side. It's cool and dark. Also it's foggy, and some of the fog looks like it could be the rock - but I'm not sure. One thing is certain - we have entered the open seas, and the rougher water is making itself felt. The chow lines grow shorter as the fellows grow sicker.

On December 3rd, someone is really sick on our ship. Appendicitis is the cause of the excitement. Another ship with medical facilities has been alerted previously, and is now standing by to make the transfer of the soldier. It's a rescue on the high seas, and I take a picture of the ship. The rescue mission is completed successfully and we're on more sailing west.

There's a chart on the wall near the messhall, or galley, that shows our location and distance for each day of travel. We're now halfway across the Atlantic, and the music of the BBC, with the friendly chimes of Big Ben on the hour, fade from the ships radios. Now we are entertained by the music from our own American networks, and we hear some of the latest hits. But I'll miss some of the symphonic music that we heard on occasions. The fellows are feeling better at this time, and the chow lines are again long. On the 9th of December, we hit a storm, and the chow lines grow shorter. I'm feeling brave and I go on deck to take a picture of the storm. At one moment we are on top of a mountainous wave, and the next instant we're in a low valley. Our ship quivers as we hit the waves head on, and the propeller throbs as the stern of the ship is carried out of the water. I escape once again to the safety of our hold.

We now seem to be in one storm after another. Our ship is now off the



Virginia coast and we hit the tail-end of a hurricane. We had attempted to try and go out of our way to miss it. "All troops will remain below decks!" Comes the stern warnings over the PA. The doors to our hold is slammed shut as our boat starts to toss in the rough seas. Later, it seems like the end has come to our ship as we roll dangerously to a low angle on one side. Packs, bags, garbage cans, and any other loose article, plunge to one side with the tilt. "The ships steering has lost it's automatic control, but we hope to have it working manually shortly." Comes the announcement of explanation. They work fast and we're soon righted. There're some short and fast prayers being made also - at least by me.

The storm continues throughout the rest of the day and into the night, but gradually it weakens. Our travel score for the previous day *we lost* quite a few miles. But we're lucky to be afloat. We have a leak in one of the holds, and the Coast Guard has been standing by us for a possible rescue. Ironically, we have also been standing by another ship that has had one of it's holds flooded - another Liberty Ship? Today is December 13th, and Thursday, as we near the coast of the United States and cooler waters. During the night a cold draft comes down an open doorway from the outside, and I awake with a sore throat. But it's an awakening to some good news too. "We'll soon be approaching New York Harbour. Be sure and have your gear together for an orderly debarkation."

Everyone has been ready with or without the announcement, this is the reward for getting through the war and the months of waiting for transportation home. Everyone is now crowded on the top decks for a view of the harbour and the Statue of Liberty. We enter the Narrows,



after first stopping to pick up the harbour pilot. Our docking will likely be along the East River on Manhattan, And since the Statue of Liberty is farther west of the waters between Manhattan and Staten Island, we probably won't see it, or it will appear quite small. But there's another and closer treat in store for us. A small welcome ship filled with live girls singing popular music has arrived to escort us in. The girls and the music get our undivided attention. There're many songs reflecting over the calm waters of the harbour and river, but one of them seems to be a favorite of mine, and also fitting for the occasion: "Going to take a sentimental journey home," are a part of the words sung. Everyone should be shouting, but we're mostly quiet, and there are even a few shed tears of uncontrolled emotion. And there is time for a simple "Thank you God."

Red Cross Girls are standing by with coffee and doughnuts as we step lively down the gangplank onto the dock and American soil. Besides coffee, they have a large number of cartons of milk to meet the overwhelming number of requests. "What does it taste like - this fresh cows milk?" They fill us in with some of the news also. There's a strike of some sorts going on in New York City. The news sounds normal we're back home, and in New York now.

"You fellows made front page news!" They announce eagerly to us. "The Coast Guard was standing by your ship. We're glad that you made it safely to port."

As they mention it, I recall walking around the large rope that controlled our steering, as we made our way off of the ship.

A convoy of trucks are waiting for us, and we are escorted through the busy streets of New York City, with red lights flashing, and



the wail of the sirens from the police cars.

We are at a well-organized Army Camp at the end of our spectacular brief ride. We'll be here for several days for some preliminary work before we're given transportation to our regional discharge centers. There's time for a few more goodbyes before we are sent to different locations at the camp.. This is a big camp known as Kilmer, and there are many locations to go to, with a lot of space between. We're also back in the land of saluting with the "yes, Sir." Most of the officers seem to be young graduates. But really, if we stay out of their way,

they treat us pretty good. It's wonderful to be back in the good U.S.A. again. The fresh vegetables, salads, and real fresh milk are truly appreciated. And the beds aren't so bad either., but I still feel like I'm on a boat rocking with the waves.

But we're back in the land of reality and First Sergeants again also. "Alright you guys, it's 0530, everybody up!"

Shortly after breakfast, I locate a Western Union office at Camp to send a telegram home. Today is Saturday, December 15th, and the time is 9:44 A.M. our time. Mom should get the message by 8:00 A.M. Pacific time, letting her know that I made it back safely. "From Camp Kilmer, New Jersey: Arrived in USA yesterday. Next stop Fort Lewis, Love: Sgt George L. Sanford. "

We begin our processing immediately at the Camp, by taking brief physicals. And they are brief - I guess they figure if we stood the two years in Europe and the boat trip back here, then we must be in good shape. Anyway there're no big complaints made by us at this stage, we just want to get home.



We are provided a complete clean uniform to wear home, while the other clothing we have is to be turned in. "You have your choice of taking home an overcoat or a raincoat, soldier. What will it be?" - I keep the raincoat. Later I purchase a small luggage bag to replace my barracks bag, and I'm beginning to feel more like a civilian.

The next day we are given instructions concerning our transportation to our nearest discharge center. Those of us living in the northwest will be going to the Fort Lewis location. The officer goes into more detail with his announcements. "Those of you who live nearly across the United States will be flown to the nearest centers. Others that are living closer will be shipped by rail. Are there any questions?"

"I don't care to travel by air, sir. Do I have to?"

"Soldier," the officer replies. "You are still in the Army, and you will travel by the means that we designate, and you don't have a choice."

The officer has answered the question that I might have asked. I keep quiet. There's a well-grounded fear of the C-47 planes. These planes are known as the work-horses of the Army, and there have been several of them crash lately. One of them crashed just two days ago, and all of the returning veterans were killed. Of course that occurred in a mid-west blizzard - but this is winter weather all over the country, and unpredictable. One encouraging thought is that seasoned commercial airline pilots will be flying us.

I told Mom in the telegram that the next stop would be Fort Lewis, but I didn't say what day. And the days at our Camp slip by. It's near Christmastime and there are decorations in some of the barracks and



some colored outside lights. There're no blackouts now, the lights are on here again as well as the rest of the rest of the world. Christmas carols and songs fill the air.

On Thursday evening, December 20th, near midnight, we are in our C-47 transport, waiting near the end of the runway for clearance to take off. The motors speed up and we lift off in the crisp winter air over New York and New Jersey. The street lights with the Christmas decorations cast a dazzling reflection of the colored lights in the snow below us. Gradually we leave the glow of the city, seeing only the lights of one or two moving, toylike autos on the highway. Now, we're alone in the dark night, with just the constant drone of our motors. All things seem peaceful, and again I offer a prayer to God on this Christmas season, for his protection on our new journey.

No, I'm unable to sleep, there's too much anxiety and excitement. But I do get some rest while daydreaming about endless things. If I need more excuses for being unable to sleep, I could blame it on the seats. They are bench-like affairs of webbing fastened to each side of the plane - ten on each side. They resemble seating installed for carrying troops making parachute jumps. All we need is to have a parachute.

It's still dark when we circle the Detroit field and land for refueling. The operation takes about fifteen minutes, and we're again airborne. "Something is wrong!" one of the fellows comments. "We're not gaining altitude, but just circling around these smokestacks. It's sort of scary."

He's right, and our plane makes a large circle and gets clearance for relanding at the airfield. "The landing wheels refused to raise up,"



comes a later report after some minor repairs are made. "We should do alright now."

This try, we gain altitude and head west. With about the same amount of air time that it took to come from New York to Detroit, we now reach the city of Minneapolis for a waiting breakfast.

It's a good breakfast, but there's no time to sit around and talk, for we have a schedule to meet. We sign our names on the breakfast check so that the government can pay them the bill later. The idea of just signing our name and letting Uncle pay for it, would be a good one to continue with, but there's the catch to it that we would have to remain in the service. "Clear to take off!" is the word that comes from the tower that interrupts my thoughts. As the plane gains altitude fast, I wonder if my stomach will remember to stay down. "Warnings of snow-storms ahead." The pilots receive the reports. There may be possible delays.

We are now over the state of North Dakota, and we land at Bismarck for refueling and a weather check. "You have clearance to Miles City," and we are again airborne.

The hills and valley are deep and treacherous around our landing field at Miles City, Montana. There's an hour delay at the airport while we wait for clearance from ahead at Billings.

When we arrive at Billings, it is dark and snowing lightly - and cold. It's also dinner time, and we're hungry. It's a good meal that we have at the airport, and again we sign we sign for the check. There'll be a delay for our flight. The weather has closed in up ahead and we are grounded. We wait at the airport, sitting inside for awhile, and then walking around outside in the cold and snow for a change. All of



us could use some sleep, but there appears to be no chance for that luxury. It's 3 o'clock in the morning when we finally receive the clearance to Butte.

The engines are cold, and the fuel pots under the engines are lit to warm up the oil. We enter the plane while the flames are still burning. The engines cough and smoke for awhile, and then they take over on their own. In my make-believe way, I help the plane to lift up in the cold morning air. We continue to gain higher altitude as we near the Rocky Mountains and the divide. Looking down through the morning light, we can see the ribbons of highways with the ant-like cars. And there's a tiny train following the path of a twisty river bank. Butte, Montana, is on the top of the Divide, and we need the altitude to approach it. Gradually the distance between us and the ground shrinks. We can now see the outlines of the trees and the rocks, and we appear to be dangerously close as we cross the divide, circling for our landing at Butte. The runway is lined up and we touch down - then there's an explosion from below causing us to swerve slightly, but we manage to recover and carry out a forward, straight path while the brakes and flaps slow us to a stop. "We've had a blowout!" comes the speculative remark. "The pilot sure did a good job of getting us out of that situation."

"We'll be staying here overnight," comes a later verdict. "A new tire will have to be shipped in from Seattle."

Some taxis are provided for our short trip to town, and we check in at the best hotel. Three nice meals are ours for the signing of the checks during the day. We walk around the city for awhile, and I could enjoy it more if I wasn't so tired and sleepy. Sleep does come to me later in a very nice bed. But it isn't as relaxing, or as sound of



sleep, as it should be, for I'm too tired and worked up with excitement. But with the coming of morning, I'm at least more rested.

We sign our individual checks for our rooms and breakfast, and then we get some transportation back to the airport. Our plane has been repaired, and we take off without incident. We are high, and climbing higher going over the tall snow-clad peaks of the rest of Montana, Idaho, and then, over Washington. We have good visibility and high thin cloudiness. We're favored with a tail wind and we're making fast time, in a ride that feels like we're floating. We cross the Cascades, on our decent to touch down at the Seattle airport.

Army busses are at the port, and one of them is assigned to take us to the Fort. We are assigned to barracks for overnight sleep, and meals are provided. The next morning an officer gives us our instructions.

"You'll be given a twenty-four hour pass, and you'll report back here tomorrow to complete the paperwork for your discharge."

"Tomorrow is Christmas. Do we have to report back here tomorrow, Sir?" One of the gang inquires.

"Tomorrow is just another day for us," he replies. "Those are your orders, I would advise you to be on time."

I wanted to get out of service just as fast as anyone else, but I thought over several times about the remark that he had made saying that tomorrow was just another day. For most of us who were in combat, we had waited through a lot of anxious moments to accept tomorrow as just another day. Our priorities in service put the returning home to our loved ones at the head of the list. Getting officially out of service could wait until a brief reunion of some type had been made. In his



Christmas message last year, General Patch stated that it was his wish and desire that all servicemen spend the next Christmas home with their loved ones and families. And, for all of us, tomorrow is a very special day. But, for now, we're still in the Army and orders are meant to be carried out. To fulfill this order, I had to make the right connection for the bus and do 300 miles of travel to get home and back in the 24 hour period. But I'm determined to go home, and I hope and pray that I'll be back on time.

It feels strange buying an interurban ticket to Seattle for myself. There's no help to be had from the Army now. As I start out my steps are a little wobbly and I feel like I'm in a daze. Memories drift back to me about things that I'd forgotten about. And there's the ride to Yakima, and the meeting with my brother Harold and his wife. He's out of the service and married now. My other brother Champ, and his wife with their three children come over for the happy occasion. And then there's Mom! She seem a little thinner, and doesn't look too well. There are some hearty hugs and kisses - with a few tears. There's much to say and talk over, and time passes swiftly. Later when we're alone, she mentions her cough.

"I just can't seem to get rid of it," she comments. "It seems so persistent, I've had it for some time - since over in Seattle visiting with my brother."

As she mentions her illness, I reflect back to my thoughts in service, and the comparing the war and man caused suffering with the other so called natural suffering of man through such illness. Man should help prevent suffering and not cause it. There is one type we can accept easier than the other. But I wonder, as others seem to feel, that she



is but another one of the indirect casualties of the war.

I'm home! and I've many things to be thankful and happy for. I have a home cooked meal, and later my own bed to rest and sleep on. But, I'm still in a daze, like awakening from a long, long sleep. And resting on my bed later, before going to sleep for the night, I think over the events that have happened since I've been away. I'm home now, and I'll have to start a new life or way of living. There're no First Sergeants here, but there'll be others who'll demand that their orders be carried out. Mom has been sick for some time and this is the first that I've heard about it, although I've sometimes wondered about her health. Yes, I know that soldiers aren't always told such things, to worry them - they have enough things to take care of, and maintain their morale, so it's just as well.

I have a night's sleep, and it's Christmas morning! I have much to thank God for this day He has given us. I'm home and I'm leisurely enjoying a nice breakfast at home. And then with a start like awakening from a dream, to face reality, I look at the clock and realize what time it is. I'm supposed to be back at the Fort by noon, and I'm late now to catch the bus. They can't do any more than shoot me. I can't make it back at this time, and I'll have to accept that fact. For a while longer it'll be Christmas and I'll be home. I take a few moments to talk and pass out a few presents that I brought along. I'll catch the first bus back to Seattle.

And on the bus ride back to the Fort, I think about Mom's condition, and My own, too. I'm not sure about the condition of my own health.

How had the war affected me? Maybe only time would tell. I'd been warned about the effects of my exposure to war. But right now I have to realize that I've a greater responsibility in looking after



Mom - I'm the only one left at home. These thoughts, with the dread that I'm now AWOL, keeps turning around in my mind as the bus heads westward.

It's December 26th, before I can report to the assigned discharge center. Thoughts about being late are foremost in my mind as I enter the room. This is my first such encounter or experience in the Army. Five minutes or a day wouldn't matter - I'd still be late. And this is the Lieutenant's first observation as he picks up my records. "You're late soldier," he reprimands. "you know that I could have you Court Martialled for such an offence?"

"Yes, Sir." I reply. "I know I'm late. There's no excuse for me to have missed the bus-even though it was Christmas. I realize what you could do - but I don't believe you will."

He pauses for a moment thinking out loud; "It was Christmas yesterday - I'd forgotten." And then he admits; "No you're right, I wouldn't." With that remark, he drops the subject and proceeds to work on the papers. Several questions are asked as he continues his work. "You have four battle stars - you were in the ETO"

The answers are affirmative. He completes the papers and hands them to me to check over. "Be sure they're right," he cautions.

I check over the papers, and notice first thing that there's no mention in any form of the infiltration course injury, and I pause for a while to study this.

"Is something wrong?" he inquires.

I reflect on things fast. It would probably take as much as six more



months of service to make such a correction. If conditions should get worse, then it'll just have to be that way. I'm needed at home, and I want out. In these brief fast reflections, I recall the Sergeants promise back in the 92nd Signal Battalion. "Wait until after the war, soldier, you'll have plenty time then to get justice." Yes, that's it, therewould be plenty of time later.

"No, everythings alright," I reply to the Lieutenant's question. "Where do I sign?"

I complete the signing of the papers and he hands me a copy. "Good luck to you George," he responds. "You are now a civilian. Have a Happy New year."

"Thank,you, Sir," I answer. "Thanks for everything. And a very Happy New Year to you, also."



time it really is smooth. We have switched to an electric engine, and this time the controlled power is with us, making the difference.

For a lack of something better to do I have started taking notes concerning the time that we arrive at the main towns on our route. It's just short of being a diary. Maybe it's because that I'm still a GI and don't know any better, but I keep track of the time with the Army's time system - such as: 1300 is used instead of saying that it's one o'clock.

And so I write: "1500, Stuttgart; 1900, Rhine crossing." Crossing the Rhine River means that it will not be very long before we're in France. At 2030, or 8:30 P.M. time, we go through the city of Strassburg, and we're greeted by rain - we're lucky to be inside. At 10:30 P.M. we're at another Frenchtown called Saarburg, and it's time again for chow. Our orders and instructions are again relayed over a public address system. The names of the towns that we've been passing through all sound familiar. This is the name of the French town that we stayed in for two weeks last November and sighted a buzz-bomb. It's more peaceful today.

It's a late hour for eating, and I'm starting to get tired from lack of a full night's sleep. So, when we're back on the train I've no trouble falling to sleep. Our train comes to a stop about two hours later. I wake up long enough to see that it's 2 A.M., and check for the name of the station, which the sign identifies as "Nancy, Saar Station." While still half asleep, I recall the events that have centered around this town. The train moves on once again towards Paris and I'm once more asleep and dreaming about the time I spent at the Nancy Rest Center almost two months ago. This dream is interwoven with another dream concerning the capture of Nancy by our troops.



I awake when it gets light, and I learn that there are four hours of travel time left to view the French countryside before we arrive in Paris. From my conversations with various soldiers I learn that while some of the troops like myself will be going as far as Scotland, others will be going only as far as Paris or other nearby towns.

At 11 o'clock sharp, we arrive in the romantic city of Paris. Today is Thursday, August 4, 1945, and I've finally set foot in the big city. It's the place that we skirted around during the war but never quite got to see. We seem to be getting into the habit of eating meals at the 11 o'clock hour - whether it's day or night. Only, this time instead of calling it breakfast, we are officially notified that it's lunch. This is another large messhall, and we're being treated like very important people.

After a nice meal we are presented with some travel rations, such as cigarettes, toilet articles, and candy. But what does a soldier who doesn't smoke, want cigarettes for? The word gets around that such an item will buy other articles such as perfume that might not otherwise be for sale. So, that thought is running around in the back of my mind. Along with the rations we're given instructions concerning where we'll eat dinner, and the name of the station where our train will leave later this evening for Le Havre. "Until then, you are free to see Paris."

With these words everyone takes off just like school was out, each going his own way. I start out with a soldier who could speak French, but as I guessed, that luck wouldn't last very long, and I'm soon on my own. So, look out, little soldier, you are alone in the big, wonderful, and sometimes wild city of Paris.

After two nights and one day and a half of train riding, I'm feeling



as I must also look - a little grubby. So, it'll be a haircut and a shave for the first order of business. It doesn't take much knowledge of the French language to identify a barbershop. There's one near the depot, and I'm waited on in near record time. I could have shaved myself later, but I decided to go all out this time and splurge. Later I regretted having the shave with the straight razor as it makes my face burn. But there's another luxury to indulge in once in a lifetime. I sit in a chair like it's routine procedure, while a young lady goes to work cleaning and trimming my fingernails. And to top off the big affair, I have my boots shined. Finally, I feel that I'm presentable enough to see Paris - shorter 80 francs plus tip, but happy.

I've always been interested in art work and art supplies. My attention is soon drawn to a shop where an artist is drawing portraits. And why not have my portrait drawn while I'm still half way presentable? There is no problem with the language barrier, for he has a service to sell. The price could be in francs, but in this case the bargaining is done with three packs of cigarettes. My only concern is whether the finished picture really looks like me. But it was done in Paris, and that carries enough weight.

There's another item of scheduled purchase before I start some plain free-lance window shopping. Perfume and Paris seem to go together, and I want to send some gifts home. So it is that Perfume seems to fit in as that one special gift. A place to buy the merchandise isn't hard to find. The words perfume and cosmetics seem to be just a part of the French language. Even if that fact were not so, I'm sure that I could be guided to the spot by the scent. I've often heard the comment that the reason perfume is so popular here, is that there always been a shortage of water. Do you believe that? Even though the custom of



substituting perfume for bathing may have been handed down from generations, the smell of perfume is nice - good perfume. The product has been used for many years all over the world, even with water baths.

A soldier in uniform means business or money in the till for the shopkeeper, and I'm waited on promptly. Of course, I have to be given samples of many perfumes by the saleslady - mademoiselle, or madame as her married status might be. I'm really in no hurry, because I've all afternoon to shop. Finally I make the purchase, and I'm a carton of cigarettes lighter.

I now indulge in my scheduled sightseeing. To a soldier who is used to seeing men and women in military uniform, the civilian fashions are now observed with interest. Some of the women have slit skirts, and their coiffure seems to come in many tints and style. Their use of other cosmetics is evident, and all of these items seem to glare at me, in a nice way. And the men, they seem to be wearing clothes other than the olive drab creations. Besides observing the clothing styles, there's the French architecture and other customs to observe. We have been promised a conducted tour of Paris when we return from Scotland, but now I have a chance to observe more of the daily life of France. One of their accepted customs or way of life, is the use of public outdoor toilets where there seems to be only partial privacy. It's hard for me to accept their presence - but they are handy.

Paris has its subways, and that means of transportation is a must on my list of things to do. The use of subways is new for me, and here they're crowded with people going in every direction. How do you buy a ticket? How do you know where to go or get off? Watch out for your money and belongings! Things could disappear fast around here. I take



time to check my moneybelt. The door of the door of the train closes after I'm literally pushed inside. I'm going nowhere in particular, just riding. Pig Alley, or its French equivalent spelling, is one of the stations the train stops. Some of these districts have a reputation that warns the new traveler to stay away. I crisscross the city of Paris, all underground, and this means of travel is quite an experience.

By some miracle, I end my travels at a location near the Red Cross Club, at the scheduled 1800 hours, and in time for chow. Alright, it's called dinner now instead of chow, but it's a very good evening meal.

Our orders are to be at the Grande Station at 2130 hours, or one hour before train time. I arrive early and decide to make use of the men's room. In a big railway station such as this, there surely must be a restroom.. I find the entrance to a large room that's plainly marked men, or "monsieurs." As I start to enter I notice that there are women as well as men in here, and I make a hasty retreat. After circling the block once, and checking my French book, I again reenter the room. Yes, this is the mens room, and there are women in here also who are cleaning women. They are cleaning the floors and the bowls. Casually I observe their custom. The men use the facilities, and if a woman is cleaning the facility, or around it when it's needed, the woman moves and works to one side for a few moments. And so, life goes on - this is no time to be bashful, soldier.

Our train for Le Havre leaves promptly at 10:30 P.M., and it's another one of those nights where we try and sleep on the train. A person has to be in fairly good shape to start out on one of these vacations. But I do sleep, and we arrive at Le Havre, at 6, in the morning. Trucks are waiting to take us north from this port city, to a small resort town of Etretat, that's also located on the English Channel. We arrive



at 0930, and find out that this location is used as an Army rest center, and a stop-over point for our trip to Scotland. We stack our gear near some barracks, giving us a chance to clean up before breakfast time. And for us, breakfast is early this morning - at 10, instead of the 11 o'clock time that we've been having for the last couple of days.

Before we have finished eating, there's an announcement that we hear over the speakers of the PA system that an orientation will be held here at 1100 hours. And at this prescribed time a Lt. Duniver, takes over the briefing and we are told how we are to behave as soldiers on this trip to Scotland. The point that he seems to emphasize is that we're not supposed to behave the way some soldiers might desire, during our trip to Scotland. "You'll be assigned billets for the two nights that you are here. Also, you'll have a chance to exchange some of your money for English shillings, and pounds. Some new and clean clothing will be issued to you, and you'll be given some additional rations."

We feel half human with such nice treatment. I had an eye on the rocky beach, and I'd like to visit there, but we're kept quite busy cleaning up and getting new supplies, and there's no time - maybe there'll be time after supper. We're getting back to the more normal, or routine Army hours, and supper is served at 1700 hours. I make a notation that our messkits haven't been used yet. We were told to bring them along on this trip, but nobody is complaining about someone else ~~washing~~ the dishes we dirty.

By 8 o'clock I'm free at last to take that long awaited stroll along the beach and touch again the waters of the English Channel. For a brief moment my thoughts are reflected back to the days that we spent along these same waters in England - Lymington with the rhododendrons,



'D' day in England, and our own 'D' day plus 36, at Omaha Beach.

It's peaceful here this evening as I continue to reminisce. There aren't many soldiers here this evening, and just a few French civilians. With such a scarcity of people, it isn't hard to observe a nice looking French woman, who is standing part way up on a cliff, looking out over the water as if she's expecting a ship to appear. She's still there when I sleepily wander back to my billet for the night.

I'm tired, and I'm anxious to try out my new bed, so I retire rather early. I didn't get a full night's sleep on the train, and now that tiredness, coupled with the smell of fresh salt air, seems to be a good inducer of sleep. But First Sergeants seem to have the opposite effect. "Alright, you fellows. It's 0530 hours, reveille, and everybody up. Chow will be at 6."

I'm up, along with most of the fellows, and eating an early breakfast. It's nice to be up early for a full day's loafing. And, except for taking time out for meals, my new residence is on the beach. There're a lot more people here on the beach today, August 4th - and maybe because it's also Saturday would account for the larger crowd. Some are just sunbathing, but there are many who are either wading or swimming in the water. "I would like to join some of them in swimming, but I don't have a suit." I comment, while I'm talking with an MP.

"You have on underwear, don't you?" He asks. "If you do, you won't have a problem. Many of them go swimming in that manner, and it's the accepted apparel."

I believed him, for I'd also heard about the swimming apparel worn down on the French Riviera. But, I stay dressed and content myself watching the others swim. I take off my shoes and go wading, but the rocks



are rough on the toes. Oh well, I can take some pictures, and buy some more at a nearby store.

In the evening, there's time again for me to make one last visit to the beach. On the nearby cliff, the young woman is again looking out over the water. My curiosity gets the best of me, and I ask the MP who is on patrol if he has noticed her.

"Yes," he replies, "she's a regular visitor to that spot. It seems as if she's waiting for someone to return from war, or mourning their death. Everyone leaves her alone to her privacy, and respects her vigil."

Again, it's early to bed and early to rise. The time of 5:30 A.M. comes early when one is sleeping and having romantic dreams. We're served a hearty breakfast at 6, that includes eggs, potatoes, and ham. It's a good thing that we're up early and eat a man type of breakfast. Today is traveling day, and we have to carry our bags to some waiting trucks that are located nearly a mile away. We are due to have our baggage on the trucks by 7 A.M., and we are on time. We have some waiting, as the orders are for the trucks to leave for the port city of Le Havre, at 0800.

There are no dock facilities repaired for us to use at Le Havre, we notice as we arrive at 9:30. We're loaded onto an LTC for a ten minute ride out to our vacation ship, the Motonqueen. We're on board at 10:30, and we're reminded to set our watches back for the 11 o'clock sailing. The war has too much of a traumatic effect to forget events overnight,

if ever. Because of that fact, I think back to the last time that we were on a boat on these same waters, at Omaha Beach. Today's sailing is different. There're no blimps overhead to protect us against strafing



attacks, and we do not hear the bombing or artillery fire today. On this ship we're allowed to walk on the top open deck if we don't mind the breeze. The view today is worth any such discomforts as a breeze, and I plan to spend most of my time up here enjoying that view and making conversation with new acquaintances.

There's a pleasant interruption at 1330 for lunch - but it might also be our supper as it is almost late enough, so, let us compromise and call it chow. Anyway it's good, warm, and it isn't a 'C' ration as we had on the last sea voyage. Our messkits stay packed in our duffle bags, and I believe they just wanted us to carry them for ballast.

Our pleasant sea voyage comes to an end after five hours, when we dock at Southampton, at 1830. Going down the gangplank we expressed feelings that it was too bad that the boat with us on it, couldn't just keep going on to America and home. Maybe the boat wouldn't be strong enough for the stormy seas. Anyway these are just thoughts, and really I for one, feel very happy that we are even reversing the route of our former travels. This port was our debarkation port to France - remember?

Our lunch that we had earlier must have been dinner, for there has been no further mention of eating. Busses are waiting at the dock to take us to the railway depot for another ride on one of their small-looking trains. And, surprise! At the depot we're welcomed with coffee and doughnuts by our faithful Red Cross girls. So, we do eat, after all. "Thank you, miss. That tasted mighty good."

Our train leaves at 1930, and the ride to London is uneventful, as darkness soon overtakes the 3-1/2 hour ride. There's just time for a little shuteye.

It's 11 P.M. when we arrive at the London station. Many repairs have



been made to the depot and yards, but there's still much visible evidence of the heavier bombings. We have a tour leader, and we stay together as a group. At one minute before midnight, we board a subway for a ride to the Red Cross Club building. I'm glad not to have made the trip alone at this late hour. At the Club's desk where we are assigned our rooms for the night, there is this reminder that we are again in civilization: "Warning! Be sure and check your money and other valuables in the safe for the night." I comply with the order before taking the elevator up to my room.

There're several reasons for sleeping in later this Monday morning, August 6th. I was up late last night, we're on furlough, and this isn't an Army Compound with First Sergeants. But there's a good reason or two, for getting up by 8:30. That time is as late as they serve breakfast, and I do want to get in a little London sightseeing.

"You're on free time until our Scotland train leaves tonight at 7:30." Our guide leader informs us as we are starting out. "You may eat your meals here if you wish, however. There is one reminder for your benefit, concerning a trait of the British people. Don't feel offended if they don't take the initiative to speak to you, as it's merely an accepted custom that respects your right for privacy. But I'm sure that it won't be hard for you to strike up a conversation, if you desire."

I team up with a soldier named Dan, for the sightseeing. As was the case in Paris, we first make an underground survey of London, by way of the subway. And as in Paris, London also has certain districts that may be best to avoid, or approach with caution. But we try to go to as many locations as we can, and in doing so we become a part of the mob of daily commuters who always seem to be in a hurry - pushing and



shoving. We surface just long enough at each station to get our bearings for the next jaunt. Hyde Park is the name of the station that we come to at 11 A.M. The district in the bright summer sun looks interesting enough to tempt us into going for a walk.

Walking in the fresh air seems to whet our appetites for an early lunch. A fish and chips special beckons us in with its drifting outside aroma. With a bag of warm food to eat as we walk, we continue our sightseeing near the Thames River. We play no favorites, and visit other districts.

The long walk, with only the light lunch to fortify us, prompts us to return early to the Columbia Red Cross for the evening meal. "Well, at least we can say that we've seen some of London by foot and subway." I remark to Dan while we're eating. "Their respect for privacy didn't bother us any."

"No, we had a nice time, George," he replies. "Of course we were too busy walking to do much talking. Those few that we did talk with were very pleasant."

Our group leaves the Red Cross Club at 7:30 P.M. for our walk to the King Cross Station. Our train for Edinburgh, Scotland leaves the London station promptly at 9:30 P.M. We leave the bright lights of the big city behind, and soon become a part of the dark countryside. Whether we sleep or not, this is our bed for the rest of the night. This is a first-class car with comfortable seats. And that, combined with the reassuring train noises and motion, is all that I need to take me to dreamland.

It's daylight when I awake, and our train is speeding through the Scottish countryside. While it's now cloudy and threatening rain, I'm



happy that I can at least see a few of the smaller towns and some of the hills, before we arrive in Edinburgh.

When we pull into the Edinburgh station at 0745, the weather decides to give us a royal welcome with some rain. This terminal is known as the Waverly Station. With our luggage in hand, we make our way down some splashing streets to our hotel, or Red Cross Club, on Princess Street. Everything and everyone is a little wet - but we're still in a good humor. My first impression of our surroundings is excellent. We are located east of a very wide street, that borders a very beautiful park. On the top of a hill in the same westerly direction, is the outline of a large castle. "That's the Edinburgh Castle." Our leader informs us. "We'll visit there later today."

At this time our attention is directed to the inside of the building that is our home in Bonnie-Scotland for the next fun packed week. This is an older building located in what seems to be the busiest, as well as the prettiest section of the city. The dining hall and kitchen are on the ground floor, while an area for entertaining are located on the floor above. Our room for sleeping are on the next two floors above these. Our attention is directed to the posted regulations regarding the use of the rooms; such as the hours, noise, and visitors.

We had arrived at the Club in time for a late breakfast, and before we can finish eating, our guide outlines part of the schedule for the day. "Our tour of the city will start at 1100 hours. That will give you time to rest and clean up a little before we leave."

Like the rest of the fellows, I take my luggage up to my assigned room. I can have a shower tonight, but right now I'd better shave at least. And with two hours to wait, there's time to write a short letter home.



"Dear Mom, This is a very pretty city, and it seems more like home than any other place that I've been over here in Europe. Looking out of my west window I can see the lovely Princess Street Gardens and the Castle of Edinburgh. Down the street to the south there's a monument, and some Parliament Buildings. I hope that it stops raining by the time we start our tour...."

I finish the letter and arrive downstairs, as our tour leader for the day, George Robertson, is introduced. Sorry as a twenty year old man, he is proud to state that he is in his seventies. "I've a tour planned, but if you have some place special that you would like to visit, be sure and let me know." He informs us first thing.

The rain has stopped, leaving the air fresh-smelling. And we're glad the rain has quit, because we're going to be doing a lot of walking. At every place we visit on our tour, we're introduced and given a brief history of the establishment. The stops on the tour include a newspaper plant, a Courtroom where a trial is in progress, and a church - St. Charles Cathedral, is its name. The highlights of its history and structural design are described. It's a very beautiful church, inviting me to take a picture of it with George Robertson and our group.

The castle is the last stop on his places to visit - and the main one also. It's located across the park and up the hill from where we are now. "Would you like to ride up there on the trolley?" One is going by us now, in the street to the front of us, and Mr. Robertson hails it.

"How much would you charge us to ride up to the castle?" He asks the driver.

"The regular price of three pence," replies the man.



"Three pence is too much," retorts our guide. "One penny would be plenty." He's unable to bargain with the driver - so, we walk up the hill and to the Castle. After hearing their dialog, I wonder if the whole affair might have been staged for our benefit to demonstrate the Scotch thrift. But the results demonstrated common sense rather than thrift, because it wasn't too far to go up the hill, and the walk through the park was beneficial.

There are guards on duty at the castle on the hill. Besides a visit to the Royal Palace, we see the St. Margaret's Chapel, and some other historical edifices. On the darker side of historical display, we see the dungeon and the torture chamber, which includes the place where certain notables and commoners as well, were beheaded. Before us is the instrument of destruction in the cold form of a guillotine. Cannons are spaced around the outside walls, all just a part of the defense of the Crown. Our view from here, like the one we could see from the Salzburg Fortress, is superb. "That 822 foot hill that you see over there is known as King Arthur's Seat." Mr. Robertson informs us as we view the various landmarks. "It's from that hill that he is alleged to have watched his forces defeat the Picts."

Other places are pointed out to us such as the new east portion of the city, and the shipyards. There are the Parliament Buildings, the University, the house of John Knox, and the Robert Louis Stevenson Memorial House. Spires from the many churches and cathedrals dot the landscape. As we are leaving we are told about some of the other monuments. There is one for Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Lord Nelson. Of interest to us, is that there's a statue of Abraham Lincoln erected in honor of the Scotsmen who died while engaging in the American Civil War.



We make our way back down through the paths of the Princess Street Gardens. This is a place of real beauty. Be sure and stay on the paths! Crews are all over the area, pruning, cultivating, and continually changing the beds with new flowers. One large flower arrangement that seems to be a central attraction is a clock. There are real flowers for the hands, numbers, and the background. There is a crew working on that bed now. And yes, the time is correct, as I check my watch.

The tour ends back at our Club, and we thank George Robertson for escorting us on the 3-1/2 hour tour of the city. It was a good way to get things off to a good start.

"I didn't realize that this country had such an old history." Dan comments to me on this aspect of the tour. "The new part of the city was finished in the year of 1800, or not long after we became a nation known as the United States of America. The Romans occupied this city during early history, for 300 years. I thought the area around Austria was the only real old section of the world, before I came here."

"It has a history alright," I reply. "I also think that the Princess Street Gardens is as pretty a spot as I've ever seen. But one thing that I'll remember longer than anything else is the hospitality shown us by our guide, George Robertson."

We end the first day of our Scottish vacation, with a motion picture show at 1800.

Wednesday, August 8th, I start off the day with a downtown window shopping spree. There are many tempting articles to buy, even though some things because of the war are not yet available. Later in the afternoon, at 1700 there's time for a short movie before a scheduled



swim at 1830 hours.

The swimming pools are located on the north side of the city, and involve a short ride on a bus to get there. Yes, there are two pools visited on our trip. We stop at one that seems a little crowded, so we go on to another enclosed pool. While they are inside pools, they utilize the water from the firth or bay that's nearby, so the water is salty. It's a nice pool that looks inviting, but this soldier doesn't have a suit - I remember being in that predicament before. But here I'm not alone as very few of the fellows have a suit for swimming.

Our smart Red Cross Hostess is used to such obstacles, and informs us that we can rent some at the office. "I only hope that they have enough and in the right sizes," she states.

"This is the last suit near your size," the manager announces as he hands it to me.

I take it into the dressing room to try it on. It's a little big alright. Maybe if I don't try too much diving, it'll stay on. First a shower awaits me, and then it's into the pool. The water is cool compared with the air temperature, but once I get wet, it's better to stay submerged in the water..By swimming faster the coolness of the water is not noticed as much. And at long last in what seems like years, I have a chance to swim - it's fun. But, the cold water is not a place to remain for too long of time.

We have showers of fresh water and rinse off the salt. Except for our dog tags we looked like civilians for awhile, and now we change back into our uniforms. "It was invigorating, anyway." Someone remarks when we are once again back in the sunshine. "But it's warm enough



now to make us wish we were back in the water again."

A gang of hungry soldiers, with some pretty Red Cross girls, head back to town. The girls have some games planned for us tonight at 2100. They're sure keeping us busy with their programs and that's nice.

I start off the following morning, Thursday, at 0900, by doing some more shopping. There are lots of things to see in this city. One shop that I notice today is a portrait studio. I decide to have my picture taken, and make an appointment for 1200. It's a full length picture, and for my attire I am decked out with Scottish kilts, blouse, and the works. I wait in the shop for a while following, to receive the finished product. As a Scotsman, maybe I look better as an American soldier, but at least it shows that I was in Scotland.

Later there's a tram ride scheduled for us by the girls, at 1300. Following the ride, we are their guests to enjoy a nice meal at a restaurant overlooking the water of the Firth of Forth. The restaurant is really near another small town called Musclevburgh. It is a candle light affair with music, and some lovely Red Cross hostesses to complete the setting for an equally lovely meal.

That affair should have filled our day - "Our cup runneth over." But there is more planned. At 1830 tonight, a dance is to be held in the entertainment room. Is it formal? Well, almost, it's our formal uniforms and some very pretty dresses for the lasses. And just what am I doing at a dance? I haven't danced a step in my life. Oh well, I can watch the others dance and enjoy the music.

"Really, George," inquires our hostess after she introduces herself. how come your not dancing? We have some nice music, and we don't want



to disappoint our volunteers."

"I don't know how to dance," I reply bluntly.

"That's no excuse," she continues. "They are nice looking girls, and they are equally nice teachers. Come, you can start with me!"

She was a nice teacher, and they all turn out to be nice teachers. They're good sports, anyway, to put up with me stepping on their toes and feet all of the time. It's a first for me, and it's fun. I'm really beginning to enjoy this vacation with each passing moment. "There is to be no dating with our Red Cross Volunteers." A poster reminds us as we are leaving the room.

Those were the rules, but it's hard to regulate love or romance here or back in Austria. And even if these girls wouldn't, or maybe couldn't date, there are others that would. Dan brings an offer of a date for me, around noon on Friday. "I've met a nice Scottish girl," he begins. "She has a girl friend, and I was wondering if you would be interested in meeting her. We could go over to their place after dinner and meet her mother. Then later, maybe we could go swimming - I've got an extra suit."

"Thanks Dan," I reply. "Sure, I'll go. It sounds like fun, and I don't believe that the Red Cross has anything planned for this evening." I wondered about a blind date, but sometimes the unexpected can be exciting - if not rewarding. Anyway, I wouldn't back out now.

We leave for their place soon after dinner. It's about one mile of walking to their home. We exchange introductions in their modest apartment, and then engage in a lengthy conversation interspersed with



the serving of refreshments. There's much to say - where we're from, and what we've been doing.. This is a chance to release some chatter that has welled up inside of us for quite some time. I glance occasionally at my date. I feel that I've the best girl.

It's time to go swimming, and it's dark. "I've never been on a midnight swim before, either." I announce after some of their comments. The girls seem to know their way to the water. Just how deep or clean it is, I don't know, but it is cold. It sounds a little crazy; taking the time to change into a suit, and then changing back into uniform just for a couple of splashes in the water. But who am I kidding? It's fun just being with them and talking. We sit on a log and talk for awhile, and then we start back to town. Going by the playgrounds of a schoolyard we stop for a short while and test out some swings. By now I'm swinging quite high even without the aid of a pushed swing.

We walk the girls back to their home where we say goodnight. There are plans made for another date. It's early in the morning when we return to our Red Cross Hotel. While it's late, I'm not sleepy yet, and I take time to have a shower before going to bed.

It was late to go to bed, and it's late to rise. I miss breakfast, but I really don't care. For awhile, at least, I'm floating on a cloud. There are some dates on the 11th, 12th, and 13th that I don't seem to have time to finish filling out in my book of notes about the trip. There's some other activity going on at the Red Cross Club that I somehow have missed. I've been dating a very pretty, and nice Scottish girl. She seems quite young, but acts mature. But maybe, more than anything, the war has made me feel my age. I wish I had known her earlier, or could remain here to know her longer.



I have the pleasure of seeing her some more, and together we explore the city of Edinburgh. We have dinner with her mother in town. A trolley ride out to the Botanical Gardens is made in the afternoon.

There are several daytime strolls along the parkway by the beach. "You had better tuck your wallet in your pocket better," she warns me at one time in a motherly fashion. "I'm sorry to say that there are people in this district who would be tempted to lift it from you."

It has been fun being with her, and with the others from the Red Cross as well, for the entire week. I had forgotten for a short while about the war, and this - well it was a reward in some ways from the war and being here, even briefly. It's Monday August 13th, and time for good-byes. I get her name and address, as well as her mother's. "I hope that you'll write." She has a very pretty signature.

Later in the evening as our train leaves the Waverly Station at 2120, I glance eagerly out of the window to see if she might be there. But it's late, and there's no one there who resembles her. I've seen other GIs part from new found romance in our travels and I've kidded them about it relating it with the poem by Robert Burns. And now I'm on the parting end myself, and I again think of his poem:

"Ae fond kiss and then we sever;  
Ae farewell, and then forever!  
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,  
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.

Who shall say that fortune grieved him,  
While the star of hope she leaves him!  
Me, nae cheerful twinkle lights me;  
Deep despair around benights me.



I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,  
Nothing could resist my Nancy:  
But to see her was to love her;  
Love but her, and love forever.

It seems like a fitting tribute, and this romantic day-dreaming, coupled with the rhythmic sounds and motion of the train, surrenders to the forces of sleep.

And if one can sleep while traveling, there's the double reward of getting the needed rest while traveling miles of distance. Like most of the fellows, I've had a very pleasant vacation or furlough, that has filled me with lasting worthwhile memories. Now we are again traveling east on the course of our former route into combat, and some of those memories are again stirred. I've had a brief taste of freedom from the thoughts of war and it's surroundings. It has made me more restless than ever to seek a permanent escape of these shadows. The road down the chuteto home and escape can only be made by way of our return to Bamberg. Sleep and miles traveled, are now my allies.

Our route for returning will be the same as coming here, except in reverse fashion. There'll also be fewer stopovers. We arrive from Edinburgh at our King's Cross Station at 0720, Tuesday. We have breakfast at the Red Cross Club, and later a nice lunch.

We leave the Club in time to go by subway and catch the 2P.M. train at the Waterloo Station for Southampton. After a two hour train ride we arrive at Southampton and continue by bus for a one-hour ride to our camp and bed for tonight. It's a former staging area, but it's more peaceful now. We arrive in time for the serving of a good meal, to be followed later by what we hope to be a good night's sleep.



The time is ten minutes after midnight when we are awakened and on our feet by the deafening noise of every horn or boat whistle in the area trying to out-do one another with volume. The Japs have surrendered! There are tears of joy shed with this news announcing the end of the war. Many of us had relations who were engaged in that Pacific War - I had a brother. We had earlier heard the news about the atomic bombings of the Japanese Islands, and in a way we were expecting something dramatic in the news to break. But it's a very welcome announcement, and one that'll make our trip back to Bamberg just a whole lot lighter and happier. It's hard to get back to sleep, and we talk for some time, to release our tensions.

After breakfast, at 9 A.M. we load on busses again and head for our boat at the dock. It's 12 noon when we go up the gangplank of our ship, the 'Marine Wolf.' "That's a name that sounds like it has a lot of adventure attached to it." Dan exclaims. "And that big ship tied up over there - I believe that's the Queen Mary. Now that's a boat I'd like to be heading back to the good old U.S.A. in."

I take several pictures of the dock and the Queen Mary, while he's talking, and our boat gets under way. "That's a pretty boat, besides being big," I reply. "I believe that we could get back home in about five days with that boat under us. But right now, I'd almost settle for a rowboat - and with our luck, that's probably what we'll get."

Our crossing of the English Channel seems to take a little longer than when we went over. But setting the time ahead this time, might have just added to that illusion. Our arrival time at Le Havre is 2100. The hour is too late to travel to the Rest Center, so we're given billet in a nearby camp for the night. Coffee and doughnuts serve as our



7 A.M. breakfast. The next order of business for the day is another truck ride back to Merville, where we arrive at 1100. The rest center is a very welcome site.

We have time to clean up a little before lunch. With that item taken care of, and we have been given some more rations and instructions, there's still time left in the afternoon for us to stroll along the rocky beach. It's always interesting to watch the forces of the water as they continually pound and work away at the shoreline. Most all of the time in the summer, there's always a crowd of people at the beach, and they must be fascinated in the same manner. Dan makes a comment about the absence of the lone girl on the cliff. To us, as well as others, she has become a legend, and a part of the seascape on this beach. "I don't see her up there this afternoon," he remarks. "She probably doesn't go up there until after work, or the end of the day."

"We won't be here at that time to find out for sure," I reply. "Our trucks leave for Le Havre at 5:45 P.M., so, we'll be long gone."

We continue to talk about many things; about what we'll do when we get back home, and about what impact the end of the war will now have on us. The lights will really be on all over the world now. These thoughts remind me again of the song about the blue-birds flying over the white cliffs of Dover. And I glance up at these cliffs - and I remember the vigil of the lone girl. The lights have come on again, but a lot of heartaches and suffering will continue. We take a last glance at the beach and head back for camp, and an early 4:30 chow-time.

It's 2130, when our trucks arrive at the Le Havre railroad station. The train leaves promptly at 2300 for the overnight ride back to the fabulous city of Paris. If one can't sleep on a train, he's out of



luck. Most of us are either fortunate, or we go to sleep from sheer exhaustion. And there are two more nights of travel back to camp, so, we'd better sleep.

It's Friday morning, August 17, 1945, and we are back in Paris, France. The night's travel has given us rest, and we've covered many miles. Paris is the romantic city on the Seine River. The river winds its way through the heart of the city, and there are thirty-two bridges that span its banks within this area. Paris is accessible by means of bus, and air travel as well as train. There are six main railway lines entering the city, and we entered one from the west side this morning at 8 A.M. We'll leave the city at 8:30, this evening, from a depot on the east side where we had entered at the start of our trip to Scotland.

The Red Cross Club is again our official headquarters for the remainder of the day, to shave, clean up, and get some nourishment. And for today there's an added treat in store for us, as our hostess announces;:

"Following breakfast, two of us will lead your group on a fast tour of the city. Paris has a lot of historic attractions, and we'll try and visit the highlights of these. They'll be sights that you'll long remember. Be prepared to do a lot of walking."

And it is walking that we do on our escorted tour of Paris, with our Red Cross Gals. We're shown many important streets such as the Rue de la Paix, and the Champs Elysees. There are the buildings of the art - the opera, and the Louvre. These visits all take time and many steps. The history, and points of interest are explained to us by our guides. Maybe some of the facts we'll remember and some we won't, but it's all interesting - at least for now. We get to see a museum, a hotel, a Court Building, Napoleon's Tomb, and the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Now



we are walking in some gardens at the base of the Eiffel Tower. I've some film left in my camera for a picture. To get the tower all in the picture, I have to keep backing up. "It's a tall structure of 984 feet, and it was built in 1889 for the World's Fair." Our guide explains to us. "There are 38,000 square feet of floor space in the tower, which was used by four restaurants during the time of the exposition. The tower required 7,000 tons of steel in its construction. Elevators, and spiral staircases, provide access to the different levels. An elevator is located in each column."

Perhaps the climax of our tour, is when we pose for a group picture in front of the Arc de Triomphe. "The pictures should be ready, to give each of you one, by six, or dinner-time tonight," she announces.

The Arc is a point of recognition for all victorious troops. Many of our troop marched through here after the liberation of Paris. Its a fitting place to end this tour on our trip.

The walking has made us tired and hungry - both, we are told, are healthy signs of an American Soldier. The tour has also made the day pass quickly. We receive a print of the group souvenir picture when we arrive back at the Club. As a finale, we gorge ourselves with a nice meal.

It's time for that subway ride to the eastside depot, and our awaiting train. There remains two days and two nights ahead of us in travel. We get the benefits again of traveling while we sleep. Except for making the regular 1/2 hour meal stops, the steel tracks move us steadily along. We arrive in Nancy, France at 0800, Saarburg at 1000, Strassbourg at 1300, and Stuttgart at 2200 hours.



After another night of sleep while traveling, we arrive in Nuremberg, Germany, on Sunday, August 18, at 8 o'clock in the morning. One thing that I did notice on this return trip, is the absence of the female hitchhikers - not that anyone seems to miss them. I guess they just wanted to go west and get out of this country. For the gang of us that are with the 97th Signal Battalion, our trip comes to an end when we reach Bamberg at 1600 hours, Sunday. For those troops stationed at other locations, the train continues on.

This is the same old place that we left just 18 days ago - it hasn't changed any. Yet, it does seem more deserted now, as some of the fellows must still be on their furloughs, and those that are here must be out trying to wear the rest of the shoeleather off of their shoes by walking the river banks. Many of them will be back by dinner time, if they're still here. It seems like we've been away from here longer than we actually were on the trip. That's how vacations go.

Later Sunday evening, many more of the traveling GIs of the 97th, begin to drift back into camp. There's no news yet about our departure date, but I do learn that some of our officers have been assigned to other units.

"In some ways my return to our Headquarters in Bamberg, reminds me of returning to an empty schoolhouse during summer vacation." I tell Brad the first time that I see him on Monday morning. What time did you get in?"

"A lot of us got back here near midnight," he replies. "I didn't like coming back to this camp, either. If we had some idea of what was going on, it wouldn't seem quite so bad."



"We sure had fun on our trip, though. We went for a boat ride on Lake Lucerne, and we did a lot of hiking - on a glacier even. We saw several of the main cities including Bern - here's a watch that I bought there, and fairly reasonable too.

"And how did your trip go?" he asks.

"I had fun, Brad. I got in some sightseeing and shopping in Paris. We stayed several days at a rest center on the French coast, called Etretat, where you might say that we did some more sightseeing - but it was restful on the beach. We looked around London and took a few more subway rides. Of course Edinburgh, Scotland was our main destination and place of interest." I continue. "I really enjoyed it because, well, maybe in some ways it reminded me more of home. We did a lot of sightseeing and met some very nice people. The Red Cross was wonderful in making all of the arrangements for the complete trip. It's sort of crazy in some ways; I've been too busy working before the war to think of anything like dancing, and I had to pick Edinburgh to make any attempt at learning. Their feet will long remember me, but they were good sports and teachers. Oh, and I met a very nice young Scottish girl and her Mom. It was a first for me - enjoying the company of someone like her.

"I would have liked to have stayed over there a while longer. It was a chance to have several days of freedom away from surroundings of our former battle area. The waiting to go home will now be harder than ever to endure."

"I thought that I was the only one that had such feeling, George," he replies. "There's not even a rumor about the date when we'll be leaving. Although there's no killing involved, I guess that we'll just have to



accept this period as another phase of the war."

The barracks gradually fill with the returning GIs from their vacations, and they all now share the anxiety of waiting. Bud, Roy, Andre and the others, all return. Occasionally another officer or enlisted man will mysteriously leave for home or some other location, but most of us remain. The number of displaced persons working here seems to have increased, although we know that a great many of them have returned to their homes, or moved to other locations, also.

The DPs, and our officers treat us real well, giving us a life of luxury. But the days pass into weeks, and the weeks add up. Blantly we have nothing to do but wait to go home, and it's getting to be torture. The DPs as well have as some of our officers and men, have jobs to do that make life seem worth living. For most of us, our life is one of getting up in the morning, eating, going for a walk, or to a movie, eating again, and then going back to bed at night. We discuss the situation in which we find ourselves. There's a rumor that some field drill is being planned for us. But quite frankly we all wonder how a bunch of home-hungry GIs, who have been through the war with fighting and killing, well, how could they ever be pacified in staying here?

But as September draws to a close, the rumor of possible field drill is squelched with the appearance of an official notice on the bulletin board: "We will be leaving Bamberg, Germany, on October 1st." There's the last minute hustle with the order following, to turn in supplies, and to pick up our laundry. Our guns and ammunition are turned in as we are shipping out - for home? Even the boys who do a lot of gambling wouldn't bet on that issue.

"There's one thing that we do know for sure." Andre brings the news



to me. "Cognac just presented *us* with another litter of pups. There's no cigars being passed out this time, either. She's one thing around here that's dependable. I hear that several of the fellows are trying to get permission to take several of the older pups home with them."

"Well good for her, Andre. She was a fine dog for us to have during the war, for protection as well as companionship." I reply. "I sure hope that she'll get a good home - we'll all miss her."

Not everyone from the 97th Signal Battalion from Bamberg will be leaving. But for those of us that are leaving, Monday morning, October 1, 1945, finds us in a very happy mood. "We should be on the high seas by this time next week!" is the comment that is heard along with other remarks quite often. "It's getting into the fall season now, so it's about time that we were leaving here. It's getting so cool that the frauleins have even stopped swimming in the river." The remarks continue as we load up and pull out of the parking area. About the last thing that we see as we pull out into the street is Cognac, the Company mascot. She'll miss us for a while, but then, she has her work cut out for her taking care of her pups.

Our destination is a small town 40 miles to our south by the name of Zirndorf. It's about 6 miles west of the large city of Nuremberg. The real purpose of stopping here is not known by anyone that I've asked. I only hope, like everyone else, that someone who is in charge somewhere, knows what they're doing. But one positive thing is certain, we've made a start. Although it seems to be a start that reminds me of being moved from a large waiting room of a doctor's office, to a smaller waiting room where we continue to wait for the doctor who will make the examination. In this smaller camp with its quonset huts, we're back to the



to the use of mess kits again, which seems more normal for Army life.

And do you remember Bill who left with some of the other fellows from Salzburg, while we were visiting in the Alps? "It's good to see you, Bill. We thought that you'd be home long before this. What happened?"

"It's a long story, and it's been a long wait, George," he replies. "I've been here ever since leaving Salzburg, except for some time to visit Paris. Somebody has sure fouled up this point system and transportation for us."

Besides meeting Bill, I meet some of the fellows from my old 92nd Signal Battalion. They are planning to go home on a furlough, and then returning to work in communications. "You ought to consider it also." One of them invites. "There's good pay in it for you, and better than the rat race on the outside."

"I've only one main desire at this time," I reply. "and that's to get home and out of the service."

I also meet up with a few fellows that I knew in the 84th Signal Company. From their conversation I learn that they were shipped overseas several months after I was.

And there are some other fellows come across, but thank goodness just a minority, who having no definite plans for the future, welcome all of the delays of our departure. Much of the Army discipline at this stage is very lax, and they work their trades with the unfolding circumstances. Loud speakers from a central wired source, are rented out to the barracks. The fellows will pay willingly for anything that will help pass the time. Stocks of captured German war material are constantly traded



by the experts in this field. They build up small fortunes. Whiskey is sold for a high profit. Some of the fellows make their extra money by selling the services of prostitutes. There're several names tagged on these fellows, but 'pimp' is generally the accepted term.

We have one in our barracks who occupies the bed next to the door, and she sleep with him except when her services are booked with the clientele of this or other barracks. "Someday I have hopes to settle down with some nice man in America," she announces nonchalantly one day near lunch time. As she talks, she is busy giving herself a bath in front of the barracks stove, using a basin of hot water, a rag, and a towel. For her it's a routine procedure without the least thought of modesty. At least she tries to keep herself clean. But already, I'm feeling sorry for that poor husband that she hasn't picked yet.

There are regulations regarding all of these forbidden activities, but who worries about regulations at a time like this? We're going home, remember? And that's what a lot of us believe as our convoy leaves Zirndorf on the morning of October 3rd. We're going west into France, and a boat which we dream of, that will take us home.

At least part of our wishful thinking is correct. We're in France, and in a central location of what appears to be a soul- forsaken wasteland. Our engineers have leveled off the land and erected a beautiful city of tents. For some unknown reason they call it Camp Chicago. There's actually a real city near here, yet out of sight, by the name of Marchais. For identification purposes we're now a part of the 200 Field Artillery Battalion. Someone now has the choice of sending us to either the west or south ports of France, and we should be at



be at this location for not more than a couple of days - we continue to dream. The men have been shuffled around like blowing seeds, but for some good fortune, a small group of us continue to remain together.

Filled with hours of inactivity, the days stretch into weeks. Walking the barren tent-lined streets gets to be monotonous. About the only activity that really flourishes is the game of dice. It's a full scale business that's done out in the open and nearly 24 hours a day. A blanket is stretched tight over some type of board that forms a landing field for the two cubes. Thousands of dollars change hands daily, and more at payday. And don't distract the players, as some could be losing, and in a bad mood.

But as the weeks pass without any hope of immediate departure, everyone is understandably in a bad mood and not just the dice players. Some of the fellows in our unit who seem to possess some influence, have written to several Congressmen, but without apparent success. "However, what could they expect?" we comment. "It was these fellows who fouled up the point system to start with on all fronts." And the chant is taken up; "When are we going home?" This period of waiting wouldn't be as bad if we had something definite to look to in the form of a set date. Of course, a better location would also help our morale. We are all greatly disappointed.

Entertainment is provided for our enjoyment. There are movies, and live shows with comedians and actors. With the live shows, the troops vent their pent-up feelings on the actors with insulting remarks and boos. The actors try to do their best, but the fellows resort to entertaining themselves by tossing scores of air-filled rubbers into the air of the theater. I realize the feelings of the fellows, but why take it



out on the actors? It makes one ashamed to be a part of them at such times.

The days of weary waiting pass by. It's November 14th, and heavy frost covers the tents and ground in the morning. Winter is coming on, but there's a ray of hope for us. Maybe the letters to the Congressmen didn't do any good, and maybe our prayers had more positive effect. The news is that we're moving out!

Joinville, France, is a town that we fought our way through during the war, and we're here again briefly on November 15th. Our hopes are again built up. With the news that we might be getting closer to our embarkation point, there's another activity that's taking place on a larger scale. "Have you seen my Eisenhower jacket?" someone asks. "I hung it up on the line just ten minutes ago."

We've been in the habit of airing out our bedding and clothing during the war. Such a habit now demands the constant vigil with a club. A couple of minutes is all that it takes for clothing and bedding to be heading for the black market. Such items are much more valuable than cash or francs, as one who is a little careless will learn. Sometimes it's the French who will steal the articles, but more often it's other GIs who steal them to trade for other goods, or to sell them.

We've been taking pictures of the camps along our paths of travel. As I am taking a picture of our place at Joinville, Andre makes a helpful suggestion: "We've both been taking pictures, George. Maybe we can trade some of them when we get home. Between the two of us there ought to be at least one good one for our records."

"Thank you, Andre," I reply. "I've got your address. For some crazy,



hopeful reason I've been taking a picture as soon as we arrive at an area or new camp, thinking that we might be moving out the next day. I won't say that I've grown more patient, but rather I think that I've just learned to accept disappointments."

Someone must have rolled the dice right this time. It's August 19th, and we're heading south. At least this narrows the questions of where and when we'll sail, down to just the single question of "when?" It's nice to see some parts of France that we haven't seen before. Our route takes us along the Rhone River and valley, past the industrial cities of Rhone and Lyon. Further along south, there's richer agricultural land with many fine vineyards. It's truly a beautiful valley, even at this late time of the year. Our camp, for the night at least, is the Calais Staging Area, somewhere near Marseilles, France. Still being hopeful GIs, we take some pictures of the camp after we had finished dinner. And we're just being hopeful, as there's no news at all about the availability of a boat - even a rowboat.

Some of the fellows not content with the poor results from writing to their Congressmen, have resorted to writing to the news media. If it doesn't produce any transportation for us, we can now at least say that we made the headlines. "Troops near riot over failure to obtain transportation home." Yes, that's us, and we all shared the same feelings.

Just the knowledge that we're being heard is encouraging to us. And whether or not the publicity had anything to do with it, on November 24th, we receive the welcome news that a boat will soon be available for us. We'll have to wait a few days for them to clean it up and fumigate it, then it'll have to be aired out. The boat was being used



to transport French troops to one of their wars in Africa. It's good news to learn that we'll have a boat of some sort, but the idea that we've been having to sweat it out while our boats were being made available for them, and such use, just didn't set too well with us. Regardless of such reasons for our delays, there's now a noisy, and joyful celebration in our camp - *sailing* home at last. Somehow Brad, Bill, Andre, myself, and a few others, have managed to stay together during this last stage of the battle. We have a late gab-fest to talk over some of our adventures.

And it's time to write a very important letter home to Mom. Airmail should beat our boat, even if our boat should be a fast one.

On November 26, 1945 we're busy taking pictures as our trucks leave the Calais Staging Area. There're more pictures taken when we reach Marseilles, and board our boat, the Samuel Ashe, U.S.A.T. I take another picture of the dock, and another as the tugs pull us away from the dock. There are a few moments of quiet reflections as we leave the shore and the harbour. There are mixed emotions of a lot of memories, some bad, but some good. I've had many friends during the war, as well as on some of our trips following. Somehow, it's still quite hard for for me to grasp the realization that, at last, I'm going home.

The waters of the Mediteranean are calm as a lake as we plow west. Unlike leaving New York, and going to the war, now, no one is seasick. As one result of this, there are long chow lines. This boat's known as a Liberty Ship, it's life expectancy is considered to be quite short, and it's speed of travel is slower than most ships. But it's a boat, and if we don't hit too many or hard of storms, maybe it'll hold up until we can reach America.



I spend much of my time on top deck with the gang during the daylight hours. This seems to a desired place to be for everyone on such voyages as this. Maybe it's partly because it isn't quite as depressing as staying down in the darker hold of the ship. Some of the fellows have learned the trick of tying their dirty clothes to a long rope and letting them dangle in the water along side of the ship. Maybe it's a good way to wash them, but they would still have the task of removing the salt from the clothes, but they could have an idea for that also.

The porpoises and flying fish find no fault with our boat as they play games of leap frog, in the waters around us. "There's part of the African coast, over there," someone points out. And later on: "That must be Spain, on our right. I can even make out a town."

It's to be on the deck in the evening when the stars are out. I guide the ship by them - in my own way. And at such quiet, peaceful times I feel a closeness to God, and I thank Him for His protection, and pray for His continued protection during the rest of our voyage home. The other fellows on deck must have shared some of the same thoughts.

"There's something very different and comforting about this ocean trip." Andre remarks. "We have full running lights on now - there's no black-out. We're at peace!"

We have piped music to our bunk area in the hold, and the music is sometimes interrupted to bring us an announcement. "For your information, we will be passing the Rock of Gibraltar at 0430. If it isn't foggy, you'll have a chance to see it."

I wanted to see the Rock, and I make a point to try and wake up and



get a glimpse of it. At the prescribed time, I'm sound asleep. But shortly afterwards I manage to wake up enough to grope my way up to top side. It's cool and dark. Also it's foggy, and some of the fog looks like it could be the rock - but I'm not sure. One thing is certain - we have entered the open seas, and the rougher water is making itself felt. The chow lines grow shorter as the fellows grow sicker.

On December 3rd, someone is really sick on our ship. Appendicitis is the cause of the excitement. Another ship with medical facilities has been alerted previously, and is now standing by to make the transfer of the soldier. It's a rescue on the high seas, and I take a picture of the ship. The rescue mission is completed successfully and we're on more sailing west.

There's a chart on the wall near the messhall, or galley, that shows our location and distance for each day of travel. We're now halfway across the Atlantic, and the music of the BBC, with the friendly chimes of Big Ben on the hour, fade from the ships radios. Now we are entertained by the music from our own American networks, and we hear some of the latest hits. But I'll miss some of the symphonic music that we heard on occasions. The fellows are feeling better at this time, and the chow lines are again long. On the 9th of December, we hit a storm, and the chow lines grow shorter. I'm feeling brave and I go on deck to take a picture of the storm. At one moment we are on top of a mountainous wave, and the next instant we're in a low valley. Our ship quivers as we hit the waves head on, and the propeller throbs as the stern of the ship is carried out of the water. I escape once again to the safety of our hold.

We now seem to be in one storm after another. Our ship is now off the



Virginia coast and we hit the tail-end of a hurricane. We had attempted to try and go out of our way to miss it. "All troops will remain below decks!" Comes the stern warnings over the PA. The doors to our hold is slammed shut as our boat starts to toss in the rough seas. Later, it seems like the end has come to our ship as we roll dangerously to a low angle on one side. Packs, bags, garbage cans, and any other loose article, plunge to one side with the tilt. "The ships steering has lost it's automatic control, but we hope to have it working manually shortly." Comes the announcement of explanation. They work fast and we're soon righted. There're some short and fast prayers being made also - at least by me.

The storm continues throughout the rest of the day and into the night, but gradually it weakens. Our travel score for the previous day *we lost* quite a few miles. But we're lucky to be afloat. We have a leak in one of the holds, and the Coast Guard has been standing by us for a possible rescue. Ironically, we have also been standing by another ship that has had one of it's holds flooded - another Liberty Ship?

Today is December 13th, and Thursday, as we near the coast of the United States and cooler waters. During the night a cold draft comes down an open doorway from the outside, and I awake with a sore throat. But it's an awakening to some good news too. "We'll soon be approaching New York Harbour. Be sure and have your gear together for an orderly debarkation."

Everyone has been ready with or without the announcement, this is the reward for getting through the war and the months of waiting for transportation home. Everyone is now crowded on the top decks for a view of the harbour and the Statue of Liberty. We enter the Narrows,



after first stopping to pick up the harbour pilot. Our docking will likely be along the East River on Manhattan. And since the Statue of Liberty is farther west of the waters between Manhattan and Staten Island, we probably won't see it, or it will appear quite small. But there's another and closer treat in store for us. A small welcome ship filled with live girls singing popular music has arrived to escort us in. The girls and the music get our undivided attention. There're many songs reflecting over the calm waters of the harbour and river, but one of them seems to be a favorite of mine, and also fitting for the occasion: "Going to take a sentimental journey home," are a part of the words sung. Everyone should be shouting, but we're mostly quiet, and there are even a few shed tears of uncontrolled emotion. And there is time for a simple "Thank you God."

Red Cross Girls are standing by with coffee and doughnuts as we step lively down the gangplank onto the dock and American soil. Besides coffee, they have a large number of cartons of milk to meet the overwhelming number of requests. "What does it taste like - this fresh cows milk?" They fill us in with some of the news also. There's a strike of some sorts going on in New York City. The news sounds normal we're back home, and in New York now.

"You fellows made front page news!" They announce eagerly to us. "The Coast Guard was standing by your ship. We're glad that you made it safely to port."

As they mention it, I recall walking around the large rope that controlled our steering, as we made our way off of the ship.

A convoy of trucks are waiting for us, and we are escorted through the busy streets of New York City, with red lights flashing, and



the wail of the sirens from the police cars.

We are at a well-organized Army Camp at the end of our spectacular brief ride. We'll be here for several days for some preliminary work before we're given transportation to our regional discharge centers. There's time for a few more goodbyes before we are sent to different locations at the camp.. This is a big camp known as Kilmer, and there are many locations to go to, with a lot of space between. We're also back in the land of saluting with the "yes, Sir." Most of the officers seem to be young graduates. But really, if we stay out of their way,

they treat us pretty good. It's wonderful to be back in the good U.S.A. again. The fresh vegetables, salads, and real fresh milk are truly appreciated. And the beds aren't so bad either., but I still feel like I'm on a boat rocking with the waves.

But we're back in the land of reality and First Sergeants again also. "Alright you guys, it's 0530, everybody up!"

Shortly after breakfast, I locate a Western Union office at Camp to send a telegram home. Today is Saturday, December 15th, and the time is 9:44 A.M. our time. Mom should get the message by 8:00 A.M. Pacific time, letting her know that I made it back safely. "From Camp Kilmer, New Jersey: Arrived in USA yesterday. Next stop Fort Lewis, Love: Sgt George L. Sanford. "

We begin our processing immediately at the Camp, by taking brief physicals. And they are brief - I guess they figure if we stood the two years in Europe and the boat trip back here, then we must be in good shape. Anyway there're no big complaints made by us at this stage, we just want to get home.



We are provided a complete clean uniform to wear home, while the other clothing we have is to be turned in. "You have your choice of taking home an overcoat or a raincoat, soldier. What will it be?" - I keep the raincoat. Later I purchase a small luggage bag to replace my barracks bag, and I'm beginning to feel more like a civilian.

The next day we are given instructions concerning our transportation to our nearest discharge center. Those of us living in the northwest will be going to the Fort Lewis location. The officer goes into more detail with his announcements. "Those of you who live nearly across the United States will be flown to the nearest centers. Others that are living closer will be shipped by rail. Are there any questions?"

"I don't care to travel by air, sir. Do I have to?"

"Soldier," the officer replies. "You are still in the Army, and you will travel by the means that we designate, and you don't have a choice."

The officer has answered the question that I might have asked. I keep quiet. There's a well-grounded fear of the C-47 planes. These planes are known as the work-horses of the Army, and there have been several of them crash lately. One of them crashed just two days ago, and all of the returning veterans were killed. Of course that occurred in a mid-west blizzard - but this is winter weather all over the country, and unpredictable. One encouraging thought is that seasoned commercial airline pilots will be flying us.

I told Mom in the telegram that the next stop would be Fort Lewis, but I didn't say what day. And the days at our Camp slip by. It's near Christmastime and there are decorations in some of the barracks and



some colored outside lights. There're no blackouts now, the lights are on here again as well as the rest of the rest of the world. Christmas carols and songs fill the air.

On Thursday evening, December 20th, near midnight, we are in our C-47 transport, waiting near the end of the runway for clearance to take off. The motors speed up and we lift off in the crisp winter air over New York and New Jersey. The street lights with the Christmas decorations cast a dazzling reflection of the colored lights in the snow below us. Gradually we leave the glow of the city, seeing only the lights of one or two moving, toylike autos on the highway. Now, we're alone in the dark night, with just the constant drone of our motors. All things seem peaceful, and again I offer a prayer to God on this Christmas season, for his protection on our new journey.

No, I'm unable to sleep, there's too much anxiety and excitement. But I do get some rest while daydreaming about endless things. If I need more excuses for being unable to sleep, I could blame it on the seats. They are bench-like affairs of webbing fastened to each side of the plane - ten on each side. They resemble seating installed for carrying troops making parachute jumps. All we need is to have a parachute.

It's still dark when we circle the Detroit field and land for refueling. The operation takes about fifteen minutes, and we're again airborne. "Something is wrong!" one of the fellows comments. "We're not gaining altitude, but just circling around these smokestacks. It's sort of scary."

He's right, and our plane makes a large circle and gets clearance for relanding at the airfield. "The landing wheels refused to raise up,"



comes a later report after some minor repairs are made. "We should do alright now."

This try, we gain altitude and head west. With about the same amount of air time that it took to come from New York to Detroit, we now reach the city of Minneapolis for a waiting breakfast.

It's a good breakfast, but there's no time to sit around and talk, for we have a schedule to meet. We sign our names on the breakfast check so that the government can pay them the bill later. The idea of just signing our name and letting Uncle pay for it, would be a good one to continue with, but there's the catch to it that we would have to remain in the service. "Clear to take off!" is the word that comes from the tower that interrupts my thoughts. As the plane gains altitude fast, I wonder if my stomach will remember to stay down. "Warnings of snow-storms ahead." The pilots receive the reports. There may be possible delays.

We are now over the state of North Dakota, and we land at Bismarck for refueling and a weather check. "You have clearance to Miles City," and we are again airborne.

The hills and valley are deep and treacherous around our landing field at Miles City, Montana. There's an hour delay at the airport while we wait for clearance from ahead at Billings.

When we arrive at Billings, it is dark and snowing lightly - and cold. It's also dinner time, and we're hungry. It's a good meal that we have at the airport, and again we sign we sign for the check. There'll be a delay for our flight. The weather has closed in up ahead and we are grounded. We wait at the airport, sitting inside for awhile, and then walking around outside in the cold and snow for a change. All of



us could use some sleep, but there appears to be no chance for that luxury. It's 3 o'clock in the morning when we finally receive the clearance to Butte.

The engines are cold, and the fuel pots under the engines are lit to warm up the oil. We enter the plane while the flames are still burning. The engines cough and smoke for awhile, and then they take over on their own. In my make-believe way, I help the plane to lift up in the cold morning air. We continue to gain higher altitude as we near the Rocky Mountains and the divide. Looking down through the morning light, we can see the ribbons of highways with the ant-like cars. And there's a tiny train following the path of a twisty river bank. Butte, Montana, is on the top of the Divide, and we need the altitude to approach it. Gradually the distance between us and the ground shrinks. We can now see the outlines of the trees and the rocks, and we appear to be dangerously close as we cross the divide, circling for our landing at Butte. The runway is lined up and we touch down - then there's an explosion from below causing us to swerve slightly, but we manage to recover and carry out a forward, straight path while the brakes and flaps slow us to a stop. "We've had a blowout!" comes the speculative remark. "The pilot sure did a good job of getting us out of that situation."

"We'll be staying here overnight," comes a later verdict. "A new tire will have to be shipped in from Seattle."

Some taxis are provided for our short trip to town, and we check in at the best hotel. Three nice meals are ours for the signing of the checks during the day. We walk around the city for awhile, and I could enjoy it more if I wasn't so tired and sleepy. Sleep does come to me later in a very nice bed. But it isn't as relaxing, or as sound of



sleep, as it should be, for I'm too tired and worked up with excitement. But with the coming of morning, I'm at least more rested.

We sign our individual checks for our rooms and breakfast, and then we get some transportation back to the airport. Our plane has been repaired, and we take off without incident. We are high, and climbing higher going over the tall snow-clad peaks of the rest of Montana, Idaho, and then, over Washington. We have good visibility and high thin cloudiness. We're favored with a tail wind and we're making fast time, in a ride that feels like we're floating. We cross the Cascades, on our decent to touch down at the Seattle airport.

Army busses are at the port, and one of them is assigned to take us to the Port. We are assigned to barracks for overnight sleep, and meals are provided. The next morning an officer gives us our instructions.

"You'll be given a twenty-four hour pass, and you'll report back here tomorrow to complete the paperwork for your discharge."

"Tomorrow is Christmas. Do we have to report back here tomorrow, Sir?" One of the gang inquires.

"Tomorrow is just another day for us," he replies. "Those are your orders, I would advise you to be on time."

I wanted to get out of service just as fast as anyone else, but I ~~who~~ thought over several times about the remark that he had made saying that tomorrow was just another day. For most of us who were in combat, we had waited through a lot of anxious moments to accept tomorrow as just another day. Our priorities in service put the returning home to our loved ones at the head of the list. Getting officially out of service could wait until a brief reunion of some type had been made. In his



Christmas message last year, General Patch stated that it was his wish and desire that all servicemen spend the next Christmas home with their loved ones and families. And, for all of us, tomorrow is a very special day. But, for now, we're still in the Army and orders are meant to be carried out. To fulfill this order, I had to make the right connection for the bus and do 300 miles of travel to get home and back in the 24 hour period. But I'm determined to go home, and I hope and pray that I'll be back on time.

It feels strange buying an interurban ticket to Seattle for myself. There's no help to be had from the Army now. As I start out my steps are a little wobbly and I feel like I'm in a daze. Memories drift back to me about things that I'd forgotten about. And there's the ride to Yakima, and the meeting with my brother Harold and his wife. He's out of the service and married now. My other brother Champ, and his wife with their three children come over for the happy occasion. And then there's Mom! She seem a little thinner, and doesn't look too well. There are some hearty hugs and kisses - with a few tears. There's much to say and talk over, and time passes swiftly. Later when we're alone, she mentions her cough.

"I just can't seem to get rid of it," she comments. "It seems so persistent, I've had it for some time - since over in Seattle visiting with my brother."

As she mentions her illness, I reflect back to my thoughts in service, and the comparing the war and man caused suffering with the other so called natural suffering of man through such illness. Man should help prevent suffering and not cause it. There is one type we can accept easier than the other. But I wonder, as others seem to feel, that she



is but another one of the indirect casualties of the war.

I'm home! and I've many things to be thankful and happy for. I have a home cooked meal, and later my own bed to rest and sleep on. But, I'm still in a daze, like awakening from a long, long sleep. And resting on my bed later, before going to sleep for the night, I think over the events that have happened since I've been away. I'm home now, and I'll have to start a new life or way of living. There're no First Sergeants here, but there'll be others who'll demand that their orders be carried out. Mom has been sick for some time and this is the first that I've heard about it, although I've sometimes wondered about her health. Yes, I know that soldiers aren't always told such things, to worry them - they have enough things to take care of, and maintain their morale, so it's just as well.

I have a night's sleep, and it's Christmas morning! I have much to thank God for this day He has given us. I'm home and I'm laisurely enjoying a nice breakfast at home. And then with a start like awakening from a dream, to face reality, I look at the clock and realize what time it is. I'm supposed to be back at the Fort by noon, and I'm late now to catch the bus. They can't do any more than shoot me. I can't make it back at this time, and I'll have to accept that fact. For a while longer it'll be Christmas and I'll be home. I take a few moments to talk and pass out a few presents that I brought along. I'll catch the first bus back to Seattle.

And on the bus ride back to the Fort, I think about Mom's condition, and My own, too. I'm not sure about the condition of my own health.

How had the war affected me? Maybe only time would tell. I'd been warned about the effects of my exposure to war. But right now I have to realize that I've a greater responsibility in looking after



Mom - I'm the only one left at home. These thoughts, with the dread that I'm now AWOL, keeps turning around in my mind as the bus heads westward.

It's December 26th, before I can report to the assigned discharge center. Thoughts about being late are foremost in my mind as I enter the room. This is my first such encounter or experience in the Army. Five minutes or a day wouldn't matter - I'd still be late. And this is the Lieutenant's first observation as he picks up my records. "You're late soldier," he reprimands. "you know that I could have you Court Martialled for such an offence?"

"Yes, Sir." I reply. "I know I'm late. There's no excuse for me to have missed the bus-even though it was Christmas. I realize what you could do - but I don't believe you will."

He pauses for a moment thinking out loud; "It was Christmas yesterday - I'd forgotten." And then he admits; "No you're right, I wouldn't." With that remark, he drops the subject and proceeds to work on the papers. Several questions are asked as he continues his work. "You have four battle stars - you were in the ETO"

The answers are affirmative. He completes the papers and hands them to me to check over. "Be sure they're right," he cautions.

I check over the papers, and notice first thing that there's no mention in any form of the infiltration course injury, and I pause for a while to study this.

"Is something wrong?" he inquires.

I reflect on things fast. It would probably take as much as six more



months of service to make such a correction. If conditions should get worse, then it'll just have to be that way. I'm needed at home, and I want out. In these brief fast reflections, I recall the Sergeants promise back in the 92nd Signal Battalion. "Wait until after the war, soldier, you'll have plenty time then to get justice." Yes, that's it, therewould be plenty of time later.

"No, everythings alright," I reply to the Lieutenant's question. "Where do I sign?"

I complete the signing of the papers and he hands me a copy. "Good luck to you George," he responds. "You are now a civilian. Have a Happy New year."

"Thank.you, Sir," I answer. "Thanks for everything. And a very Happy New Year to you, also."