

YOU'RE A MEDIC NOW, DOC

Joseph R. Bisaccio, M.D.

July 3, 1943, marked a new era in my life, for this was the first day of my army career on active duty. True, I had been given a commission as 2nd Lt. M.A.C. in Feb. 1942, and I had been made a first Lt.M.C. on the day of my graduation from medical school in June, 1942, but I didn't become a medic until, to use the army way of indicating dates, until 3 July, 1943! It was on a steaming hot Saturday that Art Ruby, Harry Tramer, myself, and I think, Vic Baum, pulled into Carlisle Barracks in Harry's dilapidated old car. Yes, we were definitely in the Army now, but we looked more like props from a worn out old stage show. Anybody could see that we weren't Army material, at least not old Army material, yet we proudly sported 1st Lt. bars on our collars! Yep, the old education was really paying dividends now, God knows how much time, money and energy had gone into making us doctors, but we were going into the Army now as officers instead of buck privates, with a good chance of advancing to at least captain, and that isn't half bad.

Carlisle lasted six weeks, approximately, and then we split up! Vic and I were going to the 65th together. The 65th was a new outfit. It was so new, it wasn't activated yet, but we didn't know that at the time, and we were all venturing guesses at what sort of an outfit it was and how long it would be before it departed overseas. There were various guesses ranging all the way from the statement that it was already on maneuvers and soon to go overseas to the statement it was a brand new outfit which would stay in the states for several months at least. Anyhow on the 12th of Aug. Manny Bizarro, George Bruzzio, George's wife and myself proceeded on our long trek to Camp Shelby in George's Buick. This trip was to take me the farthest I had ever been from home up until that time, but future events were to make the trip seem like a trip around the block.

I had thought that Carlisle was hot. Carlisle was like a refrigerator compared to the steaming flat-lands of Mississippi in general and Camp Shelby in particular. Well, I got there pretty well withered out, and proceeded according to instructions to the Division Surgeon's office. It was there that I first contacted Col. Carle. I reported to him, as I had read in the good old Officer's Guide. He told me to sit down and asked me where I would like to go, med., Bn. or Bn. Aid Station. Having read somewhere that it was a lot safer to be in a Medical Bn. during combat than in a Bn. Aid Station, I bravely chose the Medical Bn. Well, to make a long story short, Col. Carle decided that I should go to the Bn. Aid Station. So, I went. I reported to the 261st Inf., signed in and was told to report to the 261st Dispensary where I was to first meet Major Prempas. Premp, with his hands in his pockets and his inseparable cigar in his mouth, returned my snappy salute-without removing the cigar-and then introduced me to Bob Richards. Bob took me down to the finance office, where I had my financial matters straightened out, and then over to the personnel officer's office where I was straightened out some more. Later on in the day I met the rest of the officers that were to comprise the original 261 Med. Det. There were Vic Baum, who since he had arrived first, was made Executive Officer, Mike Arden, Ralph Autorio, Mort Bryer and myself. Mort and I were made Assistant Bn. Surgeons since we were the last to arrive! This was a blow to me since I could not get a promotion under the old T.O. in my capacity as Asst. Bn. Surgeon. However, this state of affairs was only temporary. Changes in personnel happened fast. The first to leave us was Ralph Autorino, because of an old chip fracture of the astragalus. Where he went to I never did find out. I haven't heard from him since the day he left us. With his departure, I was raised to the position of

the 3rd Bn. Surgeon. Next Mike Ardern left because of some pretty flat feet. From then on the changes happened so fast that I couldn't keep track of them. Vic Baum was transferred some time in Jan. 1944 to an outfit that was soon to go to the Pacific. That incident is a story in itself. Maj. Prempas had just been transferred to a Med.Bn., and Maj. Chipman had taken his place as Regimental Surgeon. Vic Baum was away on a testing team at Camp McCain. Mort Bryer was on the D.S. somewhere, and I was the only M.C., besides the Major, present for duty with the 261st. Suddenly, on a bleak wintry day, the Division Surgeons Office called and stated that an M.C. from the 251st would be transferred to an alerted division, which one I don't recall at the moment, and since I was the only available one, it would have to be me. Well, that was that! My days of playing soldier were over, I thought, and I'd have to be the real McCoy in a short while. Naturally I ate my dinner with a heavy heart that evening. After the meal was over, Maj. Chipman approached me and told me that my name had been withdrawn and Vic Baum was going in my place, since Vic was scheduled to return from McCain in two days. I felt sorry for Vic but I was selfishly happy on my account. I tried to find out how the switch was made, and this apparently is the story. It seems as if Regiment, being represented by Capt. Gerald O'Brien, the then adjutant, was a mite angry because division had called for me by name. Capt. O'Brien, bless him, felt that if division wanted an officer they should tell him the type officer they wanted, and regiment would do the selection by name. So, because regiment felt that its prerogative was being usurped, they decided to spite division by giving them a medical officer other than the one they had asked for by name, and that, unfortunately, turned out to be Vic Baum, who, as yet, was still unavailable, but who would be back in time to make the shipment. Thus my Guardian Angel kept his watchful eye on me. Vic met a misfortune in Guam. He landed there on D Day and on D+7 was evacuated with a rather serious leg injury sustained when a small Jap grenade landed in his slit trench.

My experience in Shelby were a potpourri or sweating it out, hard work, pleasant experiences, and what have you. One incident that I can never forget was when I saw Sgt. Heid who incidentally was one of our best noncoms giving a class. Apparently one of the men in the class committed a faux pas, and Heid really lit into him, speaking in that low tone of his. I decided that he must be the regular arm type of noncom one reads about, who can really chew you in regal style, and who wouldn't mind snapping at officers once in the while, too. I made up my mind then and there that Heid was one man that I was going to leave strictly alone. How wrong I was in my opinion of Heid was only brought out in my later associations with him, when he proved to be the best N.C.O. I had, as well as the most cooperative and most likable. Sweating it out and pater parades were my two nemises at Shelby. There was an amazing turnover of personnel in my regiment, particularly among medical officers, but for some reason which I cannot explain, they always managed to avoid me, for which, I must admit, I am grateful. Heaven knows that on some occasions I did become so darn disgusted at the uncertainty of things, that I wished that they would send me overseas, and thus settle my doubts once and for all. But that day never came to pass. There was such a turnover of medical officers in the detachment, that I cannot recall to this day the names of all the officers that passed through our detachment. Of those that did, Renzulli stands out as the most difficult to forget. His sense of humor was as refreshing as a spring breeze. I'll never forget how he would scoop up all the butter, practically, from the butter dish, then go in for a second helping before you could get your fix. And that day at calisthenics! Old Renz got out there with cigar in mouth and loudly proclaimed that they would go through some strenuous finger exercises. It's difficult to believe that Renz had played football, but he had. That prize remark he made in the mess hall will always stick with me. We had been having a particularly foul week of

poor food, and on one evening in particular, the food hit a new low in edibility. Renz barely touched the food in his plate which in itself was unusual for the rather obese Francis, when he called the table-waiter over and said to him tersely: "Waiter, don't throw this stuff in the edible garbage, for then the pigs would eat; and we would have to eat the pigs."

That was Fran, all right. A fellow couldn't help laughing with him around. I can't forget the idea he had of building a soakage pit beneath the barrack room floor with a funnel through the knothole which he could use at night without getting up and going to the latrine, which was about 35 yards away. This was particularly uncomfortable during the winter months when it became almost unbearably cold at Shelby. Of course his idea never reached fruition. Renz shipped out soon after, as did many other medics, but I kept hanging on.

Finally the day arrived that the 65th Div. was alerted for overseas shipment,. I was scheduled to have a leave, but that was canceled. The preparations that we were going through to get ready to ship overseas were arduous and many an evening hour was consumed getting in shape. Getting our property and equipment in shape was the difficult task, as well as getting the records and immunizations up to date. After working long hours and getting things in shape, they suddenly decided to postpone our little overseas trip. This enabled me to get my leave which had been previously postponed. Believe it or not, this was on postponement that I wasn't in favor of. I figured that if the trip was postponed, it meant we were going to the Pacific, since the Krauts would be just about licked by the beginning of 1945 and that was about the time we were scheduled to leave. I wasn't too happy about that for I had absolutely no desire to fight in the southwest Pacific, where you had to cope with two natural enemies, nature and the Jap. However, that postponement proved a God send, for I am certain that if we had departed on the scheduled date we should have had a part in the Battle of the Bulge, which I understand was no picnic.

The troops began leaving Camp Shelby on or about the 8th of December, 1944. I left as train surgeon of the last train on the 30th, which meant we spent New Year's Eve and almost all of New Years on the train. finally, on the 1st of Jan, 1945 we arrived at Camp Shanks, N.Y. We stayed there about a week and managed to get home to see the folks on two occasions for which I was eternally grateful.

At long last came the day for embarking. I was part of the advanced party, so I left on the morning of the 9th of Jan. We trudged down to the railroad station, boarded a train amidst the blair of military trumpets, and departed for the ferry which was to take us across the Hudson to our awaiting boat, which was docked at a pier somewhere in New York Harbor. We arrived at our boat, which happened to be the S.S. Le Jeune, a former German liner which had been interned some where in South America at the beginning of the war. We were cold, and hungry, but the Red Cross came to our rescue by giving us coffee, doughnuts and candy bars. I was indeed grateful to them for their hospitality. After this little snack, we trudged up the gang plank, and were directed to our staterooms by naval and marine personnel. I was lucky enough to have a room on the floor above the main deck, which was large and comfortable, and since, I was the first to enter the room, I naturally chose the softest bed, unselfishly. I was fortunate enough to have four very amiable companions, Capt. Berger, Capt. Dolman, Capt. Clayton and Capt. "Slashem Bashem". I was troop surgeon, although I was only a Capt. and we did have some Major M.C.'s aboard. It was my job to organize sick call, make a schedule of officers for ship inspections, arrange for the immunizations

against Typhus and check the mess sanitation. Despite these apparently numerous jobs, I had plenty of time on my hands which I used reading and bandying the bull with the boys. All in all, the trip was uneventful, except for a few submarine scares which necessitated the throwing of depth charges by the destroyer escorts which were escorting us. I didn't mind it too much, except that the throaty boom of the charges on one night disturbed my slumber. I guess I was too ignorant to be frightened. The navy was very cooperative, and the ship surgeon, a Lt. Commander, whose name I cannot recall at the moment, was a very likable chap. The only important medical events were a case of acute appendicitis which was operated on aboard ship, a case of German measles, a case of scarlet fever, and a case of pneumonia involving one of my own men, Sgt. Lawrence.

Finally we arrived at our destination, Le Havre, France on the 22nd of January, 1945. We docked there some time in the morning, but we didn't debark until later that evening. We could see for the first time what the results of the war were like, in its grim reality. From the ships deck Le Havre looked like ghost city, with many of its buildings gutted! The country side was covered with snow and we envisioned some cold warfare which did not exactly appeal to us. There were some Frenchmen on the shore, and they looked cold and hungry through our field glasses.

At about 6 p.m. we began to disembark. My detachment didn't set foot upon French soil until about 10 p.m. It was a cold night and getting colder all the time. About 12 midnight, we were herded on large open trucks and took off. To say we were crowded is to put it mildly. Sardines live in comparative luxury compared to us. We all had our full field packs on plus a horseshoe roll consisting of our blankets, shelter halves, pins and poles. It was impossible for us to sit down, it was so crowded. Then began one of the most arduous rides of my entire military career. The evening that I spent in that truck was the most uncomfortable I ever spent in combat. I'll never be the same as a result of it. I know that my toes suffered from frost bite, and every time its the least bit cold, both my back and neck ache. We spent 12 hours, riding in that truck, cold, crowded, weighed down with a full pack on my back until I thought it would break the back I mean. The distance, I understand was only 60 kilometers, about 40 miles, and I can't understand to this day why it took us that long to arrive at our destination.

Finally we arrived at Camp Lucky Strike, at about 12 noon of the 23rd of Jan., a day that I shall never forget. We were horrified at the sight! All we could discern, as far as the eye could see were tents, large, small, some just lying on the ground covered with snow, off which, I might add, there was an abundance. As we were approaching the camp, some wandering G.I.'s yelled out: "You'll be sorry". And we were. However, I was happy to get off that truck. I was so happy that we had arrived at our destination, that I gleefully jumped off the back of the truck with my pack on, and I still can't figure out why I didn't break my back and my arches when I did! I assure you that for the next few day it felt as if I had.

At last I was shown to my quarters, a nice tent with a cot and good old mother earth as a carpet. There was no stove, and even if there were, it would have done no good because there was no fuel. This was the beginning of a period I vowed that I would never waste another fit of food or fuel as long as I lived. I don't recall any period of time when I felt so hungry and yet so unable to satisfy my appetite. I used to get so hungry that I practically ate the paper on P.X. rations, and that's not exaggerating one iota. I even decide that I'd try smoking in an attempt to satisfy my appetite, but that only made matters worse, so I gave it up after one disastrous night.

As time went on, things began to improve quite a bit. It started to become warmer, just at about the time they issued us our woolen sleeping bags, the food was improving, and things were in general becoming so satisfactory, that I was almost sorry to leave the place when word came that we were to depart for an assembly nearer the front.

On about the 28th of Feb., we left Camp Lucky Strike. We walked about three miles or so to the town of St. Vall erie en Caux, where we were to board the 40 or 8 trains that were to take us to the outskirts of Vigy. The particular train that we had couldn't hold ten of us even without our baggage, comfortably, but they managed to squeeze 35 of us into it with all our equipment, and baggage. We spent two days and two nights in that train, squeezed so tightly that every time you straightened your leg you kicked someone in the teeth. Finally we arrived near the outskirts of Vigy, near Thienville, and then proceeded by truck to Vigy, France. I was given a beer hall as my dispensary, which wasn't too bad at all, only there wasn't any beer in the place. We didn't stay there very long, for on the fourth of March, Col. Carraway told me that I was to be part of the advanced party that was to go forward on the line to replace the 104th Regt. of the 26th Div.

On the morning of the 5th of March, we proceeded to the town of Waldwisse, the dirty French town where the 104th had its C.P. Throughout the motor trip forward, I had visions of spending the rest of my days of active warfare in fox-holes. I was pleasantly surprised to find that the Regimental C.P. group were all housed fairly comfortably in billets. Waldwisse was the first of the towns that the aid station in combat was to be set up in. It was a dirty little town, which had received its share of bombing and artillery.

The sector that the 261st occupied was comparatively quiet. We were set up along the west bank of the Saar River. This river and the formidable, pill-boxes of the Siegfried line, which I assure you were numerous in this sector, this being the widest belt of the Siegfried line, had apparently caused activity to stagnate in this area. However this state of inactivity was not to last long. It was in this sector, too, that the Krauts were to take their first shots at me. Sgt. Vossmer, my driver, and I were making the rounds of my aid stations one day. ON the road back from the first Bn. Aid Station, we heard three shots whiz by our ears. I ordered the good Sgt. to step on the gas, which he did with a heavy foot indeed. these shots were probably fired by members of a German patrol who manage to get through our lines, something which was happening quite frequently, particularly at night, necessitating stringent blackout regulations. It was S.O.P. that blackout had to be perfect. One day while we were at Waldwisse we suddenly heard the zoom of planes and the strafing sound of machine guns. A few moments later I received a phone call that a American vehicle had been strafed on the outskirts of the town. I quickly seized some equipment, got into my jeep, and took off. Off in a field I saw two G.I.'s one only slightly injured, the other seriously so, who had among other things a penetrating wound of the chest. As I was patching him up, the planes that had done the strafing had circled back and I could plainly see them streaking across the blue sky. I was scared, plenty scared, that they would zoom down and let us have it again, but thank God, they didn't. They let me go on with my work, and we succeeded in evacuating both the casualties to the collecting Co. I was frightened for a second reason. These G.I.'s had run out into an open field, which wasn't a very healthy thing to do, in so far as the Krauts had more mines strewn around than you could shake a stick at, and it would not have been unusual at all for that field to have been mined, but I guess it wasn't since I was able to write this diatribe at a later date.

On the 17th of March, at about 10 p.m., we left Waldwisse. As a result of some brilliant strategy on the part of Col. Carraway, the Regiment had succeeded in crossing the Saar River, thereby outflanking the City of Saarlautern, and causing the Germans to withdraw from a city which had proved very costly to the 260th Regt. just a short time previous. We left, driving blackout of course, in a motor convoy. This was to be the first of many nocturnal motor movements. We went to Merzig, crossed the bridge which was intact there, and then proceeded to Dupenweiler. This was the first time the Regimental Aid Station was established on German soil. It was the first time too that we evicted a German family from their home to make room for my aid station and my men. The story of my first "rausmittin" is worth telling. When we arrived in Duppenweiler in the early morning hours of the 18th after having traveled all night, Capt. Houghton, the regimental adjutant, pointed out the place that he had chose for my aid station. It was no better than a bombed out barn. I decided that this would never do. So I set out to scour the town myself. I found a very likable house which appealed to me. I knocked on the door. The Krauts played for a while, but I knocked a little harder and shortly a frightened Kraut appeared at the door. I told him in the little German I knew that he would have to leave. He seemed hesitant at first, but persuaded him in short order that I meant business and he caught on. So he moved out with his family, including his old mother of about 85 years old and left the house to me and my men. We had the best house in town that day, much to the amazement of Col. "Gerty" McGowan, who, was under the impression that you had to get the approval of the burgermeister before you could move a German family out of their home. The absurdity of such a situation is to my mind unbelievable. Imagine having to ask the people that you have conquered if they'll please move out of their homes so that you won't have to live in a bombed out barn! I assure you that neither I nor any other Co. commander ever asked any Krauts if they'd please move out. They either got out toute suite or else.

On about the 20th of March, our artillery and cannon Co. softened up the town of Saarwellingen prior to our moving into it. Canno Co. really went to town that day and I had a ringside seat at the performance from the advanced Regt. C.P. the boys from Cannon Co. really did a job, and rightly so, for the previous day they had lost their commanding officer, Lt. Moore, who was killed when the jeep he was riding rode of a tellermine. That case will always remain a mystery to me. Col. Carraway was riding in his jeep and right behind him were riding Lt. Moore, his driver, Col. Cone and Capt. Hardin. Col. Carraway's vehicle passed and directly over the same spot passed Moore's vehicle when suddenly a loud explosion was heard. Lt. Moore and his driver were killed instantly. Capt. Hardin suffered a broken leg and arm, and Col. Cone, his fall having been broken by a puddle of water into which he had landed, merely suffered a mild abrasion of the face and chest, while the jeep was contorted into an irreperable mass of steel. I saw the bodies of Moore and his driver; I wish never had. It was a shame to see a man like Moore dead. He enjoyed living more than any man I ever knew. When Moore was around, there never was a dull moment. He was the life of every party. In addition, he left a wife and child behind him. Such are the fortunes of war. The mere fact that his vehicle was the second to pass over that mine instead of the first, meant the difference between life and death.

We moved into Saarwilligen that day. It was a ghost town. There wasn't a civilian left in it, and there wasn't a single building that was intact. Every building had been hit by cannon and artillery fire. We set up a temporary aid station in one of the buildings that had been only moderately damaged. Fortunately the Krauts had withdrawn sufficiently far so that we did not have

to stay in that town that night. At about 4 p.m., we got into our vehicles and continued westward to the town of Eiweiler. We began seeing for the first time what composed the Siegfried line. Rows of dragon teeth and projecting steel girders could be seen all about us. We were passing through the heart of the highly vaunted Siegfried line and the Germans were scarcely using it for defensive purposes.

The Krauts showed they were past masters at the art of camouflage. I never saw better instances of it than I saw in Eiweiler and vicinity. They actually grew grass and trees on the roofs of the pill-boxes. On several occasions they built a version of a barn around the fortifications and left a wagon, a plow and a pile of manure nearby, but if you investigated a bit further, you found that behind the apparently harmless barn, there was a pill box, with steel and concrete walls three feet thick and embrasures through which deadly weapons could be aimed at any approaching enemy.

We moved into Eiweiler on the afternoon of the 20th of March. We succeeded in getting a pretty good house for our C.P. and aid station. We could have secured an even better one, belonging to a German Captain of the German Army. But it was a little too far away from the Regt. C.P., and it's always a good idea for an aid station to be near a Regt. C.P. if it can help, for its own protection, specially when we received word that the Krauts in some instances were infiltrating back into the pill boxes that they had apparently vacated and were firing on the troops that had bypassed them. As a matter of fact, at night we set up a guard of our own on a two hour shift basis. Also about a hundred yard from the aid station, there was an ack-ack outfit set up, so we were pretty well protected. It was in Eiweiler, too, that some of the G.I.'s liberated some civilian German Vehicles. The G.I.'s were in their glory driving around in some pretty fancy German sedans.

We left Eiweiler on the morning of the 21st. Left on the advanced party with Capt. Houghton. We really traveled that day. I'll bet we traveled about 80 miles, and in combat, that's something. It was a warm day, and the roads were dusty. All along the roads, there were signs of recent combat, with some good Krauts, dead ones, scattered here and there, burning vehicles, and dead horses with their guts hanging out. We finally arrived in Oberbexbach. We really picked a good house for the aid station this time, the best that we had had up until this time. We now began to see increasing number of liberated French, Russians, Poles and some Italian laborers working for the Krauts. I happened to look at myself in the mirror after that tided to Oberbexbach, and my face and neck were coal black. Col. Carraway took one look at me and said that after my appearance following that trip, I shouldn't ever have the nerve to speak to him about personal hygiene and cleanliness. I quickly changed my appearance though, since we had excellent washing facilities in the aid station. We had a rather pleasant stay in Oberbexbach. Service Co. had unearthed a lot of cognac and wine at the location of their C.P. which was an excellent spot, by way of having been a very modernistic coal plant with beaucoup showers, so that we were able to take showers for the first time since entering combat. We uncovered a beautiful radio at this spot, so that we were entertained quite well. AS a matter of fact we took the radio with us, a bit of "liberated" German equipment.

We left Overexbach on the night of 28 March. It was one of our snafued night movements, of which was one of our snafued night movements, of which we were to have many. I don't know how many times the convoy commander took the wrong road, but it was plenty. We finally arrived at our destination at about 3 in the morning. I contacted Capt. Hoschel, who was supposed to have gotten billets for us, but he hadn't. So I set out with my little section awakened some Krauts at the

outskirts of town and chased them out of their home, so that my men and I could get some sleep. There weren't enough beds in the house, so I slept on the floor in my sleeping bag. It wasn't too bad. It could have been worse and it was on other occasions. In the morning, we changed our location.

It was Beibelnheim that was the name of the town, that I had to bust Wynn to a private. I don't believe that I was ever as mad as I was on that occasion, and, although Wynn had done good work previously, I had to bust him. About two hours before I had found Wynn drunk, I had briefed the section as to the nature of the action that we were going to enter into. The plan was that we were to be withdrawn from the 65th Division as such, and attached to the 11th Armored Division. We were supposed to spearhead across the Rhine and then head northeast to the town of Guisen. The medical plan was that all casualties were to be taken on along with us, and dropped along any medical installation that we might reach on the way. It was to be a rapid drive, and there would not be any time for normal rearward evacuation to occur. I would need every one of my men in the best possible shape so that any casualties that might occur would receive the best possible 1st Echelon care, even if it would be impossible to evacuate them rearward until we had reached our objective. However, what does Wynn do but get drunk on me. Not only does he render himself useless, but it required two men to keep him out of my hair, thereby diminishing my effective section strength by three men. I was so damn sore that I saw red, and Wynn was busted for misconduct. Fortunately, our drive with the 11th Armored was called off. Its no fun being in combat with a annoying drunkard.

However the next day we left Beiblenheim. It was the 31st of March, and it was an historic day for the 65th Div. It was on that day that we crossed the Rhine at Mainz, or rather it was that night. I'll never forget that night. We arrived at Mainz without mishap. When we arrived there, we noted that the air was filled with smoke. I thought there must be a fire there. However, I soon saw the reason for that smoke. A chemical outfit was manufacturing the smoke to help conceal our operations from the enemy. There were more vehicles at Mainz than you could shake a stick at. We were literally bumper to bumper. If the enemy had any air strength and could see us, he'd really have had a picnic. Fortunately, no such thing occurred. We finally got the go sign to cross the bridge. We noticed that huge flashlights were being flashed on the river, gun bullets could be heard, and the periodic thunder of distant artillery. We wondered what the heck they had the flashlights on! It would only make it easier for the enemy to spot us. I later learned that those flashlights served a very useful, purpose. Apparently the Krauts sent floating mines downstream. When these mines encountered any obstruction such as a bridge, they would explode, and blow the bridge to smithereens. It was the purpose of these lights to detect such mines. When they were detected, they would be fired at from the shore to detonated them before they struck the bridge.

When our turn came to cross the bridge, Sgt. Vossmer, my driver, darn near landed us and our jeep into the river and Rhine. The right front wheel almost slipped into the river. Instead, it landed precariously on the guide along the edge of the runway of the Bailey Bridge. It took us about 15 minutes to set it right, and by that time the rest of the convoy had gone on ahead. We proceeded nevertheless. When we got to the other side of the Rhine, as luck would have it, some tank destroyers got in between us and the rest of the convoy. We decided to follow them. I assure you that if you want to inform the enemy that you're in his territory, follow a tank destroyer. That darn thing began to backfire, spit out sparks that looked like flashes of lightning because of the

intense darkness of the night. In addition, the roar of its motor and the grating sound of its treads, sounded like thunder to our ears. We surely thought that we were going to be ambushed by some Krauts, but we weren't.

Soon we got on the Autobahn, Hitler's super-highway. It's a six lane road, but I assure you that it cannot compare with many of our roads back in the States. We really began going to town on the Autobahn, and we finally caught up with the rest of the convoy. It was a cold night, and we drove on until about 3 in the morning. Then we pulled into an open field, and I caught a few hours of sleep on a litter which I had pulled from our trailer. I was up at the break of dawn. At about 10 in the morning, we got some thrilling news. We were going to spearhead a drive with the 6th Armored Div. Our objective was Kassel that night, and Berlin the next. We could hardly believe that this would be possible, but the C.G. of the 6th Armored said those were his intentions. As we shall see, the Germans and our own high command had other plans for us. As it was, although we were at one time the closest allied army on the Western front to Berlin, higher headquarters changed the direction of our attack and thereby prevented us from taking the coveted prize, Berlin. We began rolling again that day, and once again hit the Autobahn. A couple of Jerry planes had different ideas for us, and they began strafing our convoy. They came over three times, and three times we jumped under the jeep. One time Sgt. Vossmer was lying in some horse dung and he suggested that we move the jeep further down, which I consented to. Luckily, Jerry's aim was pretty poor. I understand that one G.I. was killed as a result of the strafing, and we saw his body covered with a blanket when we took off a little later that day. I evacuated two casualties that day as a result of the strafing, both as a result of tripping when jumping off the 2« ton trucks whenever Jerry came over. The G.I.'s really gave the Kraut planes a reception. There were more 50 caliber machine guns going off whenever the planes returned than you could shake a stick at. Fortunately, the Krauts were weak in air power at this time. The concentration of American vehicles on the Autobahn was enough to wet the appetite of any enemy pilot. There were six lanes of G.I. vehicles on that Autobahn, all just about bumper to bumper. What a field day the Krauts could have had, if they had enough planes.

Shortly after the strafing, we coiled up in a field and remained there until about 6 that night. Then we took off. soon it became dark and it was the darkest damn night you ever saw. As usual, no sooner was the darkness complete, then the head of the convoy began going like a bat out of hell. Soon the vehicles that we were supposed to follow disappeared into thin air. For a while we saw no vehicles, but I told my driver to keep on going. We stepped on the gas, and after about 20 minutes we saw what appeared to be some more G.I. vehicles. I got out of my jeep, and rushed to the nearest of the vehicles, and asked what outfit they were from. They were from Dog Co. of the 1st Bn. How we ever got behind them, don't know. A little further down the road, we turned around, and went back about 10 miles, coiled up in a field and caught a few hours of sleep. I'm damn glad that the 1st Bn. decided to turn around! We were at the gates of Kassel when we turned around. We found out the next day that Kassel was still in the hands of the Germans, that we were sending planes over the city to bombard it, and that some cavalry outfit had entered the city and been cut off by the Germans. What the fate of that outfit was, I never found out. The next morning I found out that the regimental C.P. was about three miles farther back! So I got my men together and we took off. The name of the town was Remsfeld. When I arrived there, Hq. Co. was in a field and Capt. Hoeschel, the C.O. of the Co. didn't know how long we were going to stay there. I told him that I was going to find an aid station in one of the nearby house just in case we were

going to stay there overnight. I didn't relish the idea of spending another cold night outdoors if I didn't have to. I went down the road about 100 yards from the Regt.'l C.P. and "raused" the tenants of a rather nice house. We gave them 30 minutes to leave, which they did. A couple of my boys then prepared a nice hot 10 in 1 ration which was a welcome relief from the C rations that we had been having for the past few days. We remained in Remsfeld for a few days until the 2nd of April as a matter of fact. It was here that Col. Cooper was injured while making a personal reconnaissance for third battalion of which he was C.O. I was notified of his injury and Col. Carraway made me go on a personal investigation to discuss the nature of his wounds. He was wounded quite seriously, having been shot through the chest by a sniper. I understand that he's doing quite well now, a fact for which I am glad, since Col. Cooper was a nice fellow. They detached us from the 6th Armored Div. at this time. The first battalion had a little difficulty in rejoining us. It appears that they were way out on a spearhead of their own with one of the combat commands of the Armored division. They had passed through and taken Mulhausen. The combat command commander was sent word that he was to relinquish the 1st Battalion, but he refused to do so. He did eventually, though. All in all the 6th Armored was very highly pleased with the 261st Infantry. The first Bn. received a personal commendation from the combat commander that they worked with. They tell me that Capt. Pazarnski was the real fire ball of the first Bn. He did a fine job for the outfit, demonstrating exceptionally high qualities of leadership, which netted him both the silver and bronze stars.

We left Remsfeld on the 2nd of April. Just as we were about to leave, we received a bit of strafing from the German air force, which fortunately was ineffective. The next town we hit was Burghofen. They were till firing shots when we entered the town, and we arrived in time to see some of our G.I.'s leading a few Heinies at the point of their rifles from their sniping places. We chose as our aid station a combination beer hall and warehouse. What was in that warehouse made the mouths of some of my gourmand men water, particularly Cpl. Eisminger, my truck driver with the enormous appetite. There was a large wash basket filled with honest to goodness fresh eggs. You can't imagine how much a fresh egg means to a G.I. whose ration consists of K's and C's and dehydrated eggs. My men had all the eggs they wanted that day. We got a little more Kraut strafing that day too. It happened while I was taking care of a subungual hematoma that Maj. - then Capt. - Tilton had suffered when he fell down and the butt of his rifle struck against his fingernails. The strafing sounded mighty close, so he and I hit the floor with a thud. A few minutes later, I finished the job.

We left Burgholen the next day, the 3rd of April. I went forth with the advance party for the town of Eschwege, one of the nicest and apparently most prosperous German towns that I have ever seen. I succeeded in getting two very nice houses for the men. The one in which I resided had belonged to a doctor. It was a beautifully furnished German home. It had a bath tub and I took my first bath in the ETO in Eschwege. We liberated three British officers who had been held prisoners of the Germans since they had captured Crete. They were patients in a German hospital in Eschwege. The Krauts had left the city a couple of hours before we arrived. They had been badly treated by the Germans who walked them from one side of Germany to the other until they were no longer able to carry on and had to be hospitalized! However they stated that the Germans in the hospital had given them excellent care, and they were in good shape and "bloody glad to see" us, as the English put it. We succeeded in liberating several hundred British while we were in Eschwege. We were strafed a few times while we were there, and it was here that I saw our fifty caliber

machine gun bring down a German plane, as well as one of our own. Our boys were shooting at everything that flew, until it became necessary to put out an order that no plane would be fired on unless it strafed the ground troops first. It was in Eschwege that we began to see mass surrenders of the super-men of Hitler. As I was going through Eschwege to check the location of the Collecting Co., I literally saw companies of them being marched back to the temporary prison cages. We had seen them giving up while we were traveling the Autobahn after we had crossed the Rhine, many times unguarded since the rapidly advancing infantry could not be bogged down with prisoners, but not to the extent they were coming in Eschwege.

We stayed in Eschwege until the 6th of April, and then we took off for Katherininberg. We went from the riches of Eschwege to the poverty of a dirty little town. I managed to get us two houses for my men, one of which was a beer hall. From the frequency with which I entered beer halls one would think that I was a drinking man, which is not true at all. The only reason for our entering beer halls is that they were much roomier for an aid station than a house would be. The next day the rest of my section arrived, minus my first Sgt. who had suffered an attack of appendicitis and had to be evacuated the previous evening. I made Sgt. Gabany top kick, and he did a fine job.

On the eighth of April we had our memorable battle of Struth, a town about 1 and a half miles from Katheinerberg. We were sleeping at about 2 in the morning when we received word that the enemy was counter attacking in force and advised us that we might have to withdraw. We were up in about 5 seconds, and ready for anything in about ten. We had been expecting something like this for a number of days. We had been advancing at a perilous pace, often with our left flank exposed.

We had almost been attacked while we were in Eschwege and I dread to think what might have happened there if the Krauts had decided to attack there. It would have been murderous for us, for at the time that the expected attack was to come off, we only had a handful of troops there since most of them had gone on to Katherininberg and other nearby localities. I understand that it was the aggressive patrol action of Capt. Clayton, and the effect of our artillery that changed the Heinies minds at Struth, although after the battle was over they probably wished that someone had prevented them from making the fateful attack. It was here that the 261st showed that it was composed of first class material. The Krauts had infiltrated the town of Struth the previous night, and had learned the location of the Bn. and Co. C.P.s of the 3rd Bn. they completely surprised I Co. many of whose men they took prisoner, and with the help of their Tiger tanks they had completely surrounded the 3rd Bn. But our boys had just begun to fight. Cannon Co. got word of what was going on. Despite the fact that the Krauts had completely surrounded the 3rd Bn. Lt. Macek sent one of his officers, Lt. Hannum in a radio equipped jeep to third Bn. in order that he might direct Cannon Co.'s fire. How he got through no one knows to this day, but get through he did, despite the fact that 88's, bazookas, and small arms of every description were fired at him. Hannum really did a job. The accuracy with which he directed that Cannon Co. was phenomenal. Cannon Co.'s fire was so heavy that the Krauts had to dig in, it was that murderous. In addition he scored two direct hits on Tiger tanks, and boy that's something with cannon fire. Later Co. B of the 1st Bn. came in to give a hand, charging across open fields with Carraway giving a helping hand. The 260th sent two of its companies to give a hand and the air corps lent us a few P-40s, but they came when the situation was well in hand and just lent the finishing touch to the cleanup job. The

credit for that victory belongs almost entirely to the 3rd Bn. and Cannon Co. They did a wonderful job that will forever burn in the memories of the members of the 261st Infantry. My medics did a grand job too and they were commended for it. As a matter of fact, it was the work that my boys did at Struth that made Col. Carraway put in for my promotion. We had quite a few casualties, around 60, of whom about 8 were killed in action. One of my boys was killed that day, Pfc. Lokavitch. He was mowed down by machine gun fire while he was giving first aid to a wounded soldier. But we were consoled by the fact that the Krauts had at least 25 to 1 of our casualties. We weren't taking many prisoners that day. The blood of our boys was hot and many a Kraut was mowed down in cold blood. These were troops that had been giving our boys some of the same treatment. I'll never forget the talk Col. Carraway gave me after the battle. He called me into his office. He was very tired, and it sounded as if his voice had a tear in it. He said: "Please Doc, do me a favor. There are a bunch of wounded Germans in a field near here. Go and take care of them. We treated them a bit rough today and my conscience is bothering me. Take care of them Doc and I think that I'll feel a lot better in my mind!" The old boy was really saddened by the thought that his boys had not treated the Krauts according to the Geneva Convention. I told him I would take care of the wounded Germans. I got some ambulances from the Collecting Co. and began to evacuate those that needed evacuation, and gave some minor first aid treatment to those that required it. I reported to the Col. that the mission was accomplished. We took a large number of prisoners that day, and as we were carrying them away, German planes strafed them, causing one of the trucks to overturn and injuring a goodly number of their men whom we had to treat. In addition they killed one of our men, a heck of a nice chap in Hq. Co. whose name I cannot recall at the present time. I think it was Pfc. Hanson.

3rd Bn. was not through with Struth. Because the civilians had helped the Krauts in their counterattack, 3rd Bn. decided to wreak vengeance on them. They burned every house in town to the ground. What a conflagration that was! The town was literally covered with a shroud of smoke. Struth was burned to the ground as a fitting punishment for the townsfolk who thought that they could inflict defeat on the Americans. Shortly thereafter the Germans began to refer to the 65th Div. as Patton's SS troops, something which Col. Carraway did not like at all. He believed that if a war had to be fought, that it should be fought according to the rules and not in violation of the rights of the enemy and prisoners of war. The SS were gory soldiers, who believed in a fight to the finish, with complete disregard for the rights of others. Murder, pillage, rape, violation of all decent principles of mankind were what the SS stood for, and Col. Carraway did not like such a stigma on his outfit, and rightly so.

I sent Capt. Cinberg out on the advanced party this time. I didn't leave with the rest of the detachment until the 9th of April. Our next stop was in the town of Herda. Once again we picked a beer hall, and this time we had beer and plenty of it! It was the first beer I had tasted in Germany. It was a very light beer, with a sweetish taste. It couldn't even give me a jag so it must have been very low in alcoholic content. Things were comparatively quiet in Herda. We drank our beer, we saw a few G.I. movies in our movie hall, which, incidentally was part of our aid station, and in general led a peaceful existence for a few days. I forgot to mention that while we were in Katherininberg, Lt. Callahan, my 2nd Battalion Surgeon was wounded. He was going after some Jerry patients that someone told him were nearby when some Krauts ambushed him, caused him to overturn his jeep, and then, while he got up to render first aid to some other G.I.s who had accompanied him, opened up with machine gun fire and mowed him down. It was on this day that

Stacy and Dodge, two of my finest boys, showed the stuff that they were made of and received the Bronze Star for their efforts. Stacy should have gotten the Silver Star, but he didn't. An artillery officer really saved the skins of Callahan and his crew that day. He happened to have a radio along and he happened to know where he was. He radioed for artillery and did so, so accurately that he practically wiped out a German platoon that had ambushed them.

I lost Callahan, and they gave me a replacement before you could say Jackie Robinson, and what ta lulu he was, Capt. Bump. I should have left off the last letter of of his name for that is exactly what he was. But more about him later.

I left Herda on the 9th of April. Our next stop was Catterfeld. This was one time we had something other than a beer hall for an aid station. It was a schoolhouse, believe it or not, and it made a very convenient aid station. There was some excitement the first day we got there. One of the men in the 259th Inf. had accidentally discharged his M-1 and very seriously injured his comrade. I was called at once and patched him up as best I could, but he was in pretty bad shape. Too many accidents of this kind were happening, because of the carelessness of some of the boys. One of my better aid men, after having conducted himself nobly on the battlefield of Struch, accidentally shot himself with a carbine while he was out hunting for some eggs to dull his appetite following that gory battle. Col. Carraway wanted to give him a General Court Martial, but I almost got on my knees and begged him that the most he deserved was a Special, since he was a fine lad and didn't have an ounce of criminal intent in him.

We didn't stay in Catterfeld very long. On the 12th I was on my way again. This time we ended up in Exleben, where we had two houses, one of which was an Apothocary, the upstairs rooms of which were very nicely furnished. While we were at Exleben, bed-check Charlie began to pay us nightly visits. Every evening at about ten, a German plane made his appearance, so we were very careful about blackout regulations.

Two things happened at Exleben stand out in my memory above all others. One as insignificant but funny, the other was pathetic and aroused much anger in me. My driver Barton was one of the biggest egg eaters I've ever seen. He'd think nothing of boiling about a dozen or so eggs, and then eating them during the day. This one day he invited me to have one of his eggs. I refused at first and then I finally consented. Later in the afternoon, I went to my room, I felt a little hungry, so I took the egg thinking I'd have a nice boiled egg. I tapped the egg on the bureau and the characteristic "goo" of raw egg issued forth. I never stopped kidding Barton about how he tried to pull a fast one on me, but he swore that he did not mean to play any trick on me, and if you knew Bart about as well as I do, you'd believe him.

The exasperating event involved Capt. Bump, one of the poorest excuses for a soldier that I have ever seen, barring none. I had been told that Bump was given to excessive drinking. I found him once a bit tight, and I warned him that I would not tolerate anyone getting drunk on duty, and if he violated that order, that I was going to throw the book at him. About two days later, Col, (then Maj.) Richards saw me and told me that Bump had been drinking too heavy, and advised me to have another chat with him. We decided to tell Col. Carraway about it. The Col. decided he would like to see Bump himself and ordered me to get Bump up to see him that afternoon. I immediately contacted my second Bn. Aid Station, and told them to bring Bump to me. When he

reported to me, he could barely stand, he was so drunk. I put him to bed and reported to Col. Carraway that Bump was too drunk to be seen by him. I told the Col. I wanted Bump to be tried by a General Court Martial, to which he agreed.

I took Bump to my room and put him to bed on a litter. The next morning he was in pretty good shape. I told him that he was to stay in the quarters, and that he was in arrest in quarters. I went to the aid station to do my work and returned in about two hours to find him drunker than ever. Apparently he had gone through the drug shop and found some alcoholic tinctures and had drunk them. I was so mad I was fit to be tied. I had to give him some caffeine sodium benzoate to revive him he was so snowed under. The next morning, he developed a fever, and on examination he revealed a bilateral pneumonia, and peripheral neuritis. His getting sick prevented him from getting his General Court which he so rightly deserved.

Bump had been sent to me by Col. Carle, the Div. Surgeon, when Callahan was injured. Carle knew the type of man that he was, but he sent him to me anyhow, a typical example of Carle's work. He didn't care about anybody else but his own personal welfare and how to get rid of anyone that be the bane of his existence, regardless of how adversely it might affect someone else. I told Col. Carle at a later date that I considered that he had played a very dirty trick on me, but rank prevented me from telling him a few other things that I would have taken great pleasure in telling him.

On the 17th of April we began a motor march that just about capped the cake. As usual, we started a short time before nightfall, and as usual, we just inched along while it was still quite light, but no sooner did it get dark, then the lead vehicle of the convoy took off "like a bat out of hell" to use a mild Army expression. We entered the town of Coburn, and there were about three different roads one could take to get out, but the vehicle ahead of us disappeared into the night, and the M.P. pointed out the wrong road. We went about five miles farther on, and then came to a fork in the road, and no signs to indicate the road to take. I stopped, I looked around. Soon another vehicle came up to mine-I happened to be riding in my weasel that night-and it happened to have in it a Lieutenant from an Engineer outfit that was attached to ours. He had a jeep, it was decided that he return to the town of Colburn where we had lost the convoy, and find out from the M.P.'s where the convoy had gone. He came back in a half hour with the news that we had taken the wrong road. We had to turn the convoy around, consisting of about four 2½ ton trucks in addition to our own vehicles. The road was narrow, and it wasn't safe to use the fields to turn around in because of the danger of mines, so the vehicles had to find another road farther down to facilitate the turning around. At about this time, bed check Charlie was paying us one of his frequent nocturnal visits. We tried our best to make as little noise as possible to avoid attracting the attention of the German plane, but the sputtering of motors seemed magnified in the stillness of the night. Fortunately, we were not attacked by the hovering plane.

We arrived back in Colburn and set out on what we hoped was the right road. We had lost the tail of the convoy, and we were just praying that we were going in the right direction. We proceeded thus until about 4 in the morning, then we came upon some G.I.s. We stumbled into a Gasthaus nearby and found that it was occupied by the C.P. of the 869th F.A., the artillery outfit that was supporting our regiment. I knew the Executive Officer well, and he told me that we should not proceed any further that evening, if we valued our lives. He suggested we coil our vehicles in a

nearby field and set out to find out regiment the next morning, since they were situated just across the river, but could not be reached except by a circuitous route since the bridge had been blown out by the retreating Jerries. Fortunately, there were some empty buildings nearby where we could sleep. We were told to be sure to maintain a guard since there were roving bands of SS troops throughout the area who might make us regret it if we didn't. So, we set up a guard, I assure you.

I lay down on the floor of the building that I had selected and slept for a few hours. At the break of day, the Engineer Lt. and I set out in his jeep to find our regiment. We found it without difficulty located in the dingy little town of Mursbach. I went back later that day and got the rest of my men. We were so hungry; so we had a nice luscious K ration.

Nothing of interest happened at Mursbach, where we remained until the 20th of April. On this day, I sent Capt. Taniguchi, one of my dental officers on the advanced party. He had always been saying that we weren't getting the best accommodations for him that we should. So I decided to send him on the advanced party to see how well he could do. He set out for the town of Offenhausen, our objective. We arrived a few hours after the advanced party. The town was a dingy one. As we entered the house that Taniguchi had chosen for us, an unpleasant odor accosted our nostrils. We went about opening all the doors to discover where the odor emanated from. We finally opened one. It was pitch dark inside this room, and there we were barely able to make out the faint outlines of Bessie the cow. There was no entrance into the room except through the same door that all of us had to enter to get to our rooms. We never stopped tormenting Taniguchi after that. We told him that we had never gotten a house for him where animals were brought through the front door. He didn't mention the fact that he wasn't getting good enough accommodations after that.

Nothing much happened while we were at Offenhausen, outside of a few strafings by the Germans, and the fact that Col. Carraway wanted to give one of my men a General Court Martial which I talked him out of. However it was while we were here that there was uncovered the town of Ohrdruf, the first of the German horror camps, the first concrete evidence that we had of the brutal Teutonic mind, where mass murders of the so-called enemies of the state were carried on. We saw emaciated bodies stacked like cord wood there, sprinkled with lime, a futile attempt to destroy the evidence of their brutality before the Allies arrived. We saw furnaces where bodies were burned, and pits where emaciated bodies were buried. We saw emaciated bodies such as we had never seen before. People starved and worked. When they could work no more because of their marked emaciation, they were killed. That was how the super race conducted itself. Had we not seen it we would have dubbed it futile allied propaganda. But it was there before our very eyes, and we had to believe that which we considered no human being capable of.

We remained at Offenhausen until the 22nd of the month, when we advanced to the town of Berg. It was here that I got Capt. Chamovitz as a replacement for Capt. Bump. He was a good man. I sent him down to the 2nd Bn. and took Cinberg back to Regtl. Aid Station.

We remained at Berg one day and then moved into Neumarkt. The 259th Regiment had recently passed through there. The Heinies had put up a stiff fight, and when we arrived there was nothing much going on outside of a little sniper fire here and there. It was here, however that some

of our boys were injured when they were fooling around in the ammunition dump at the outskirts of town which accidentally went off.

On the 24th of the month, we moved into the town of Hemau. Once again we moved into a biergarten. It was a very large place and my men had plenty of room. Once again, I was able to take a bath and feel like a man again. While we were there, happened to treat a Frenchman who was brought here soon after the collapse of France. He was a butcher by trade and the Germans had put him to work at his trade. He had been treated kindly by his masters, he said. He was given a small wage plus his room and board, and he was not at all dissatisfied. However, he said, that he would be glad to get back to France again. There was another Frenchman who had been living in this house. He too had been treated kindly by his German mistress. He had to leave when we arrived to take over, but he asked me if he could remove some articles that belonged to his German mistress. Because he was French, I permitted him to do so, despite the fact that we had given the Germans about an hour to remove their necessary articles before we moved in.

It was while we were at Hemau that preparations were made for our greatest offensive, the crossing of the Danube, our costliest operation. On the 25th of April, Col. Carraway had a meeting of the company commanders in an isolated village the name of which I cannot recall at the present time, except that it was about three miles from Kapfelberg, the site at which we were to cross the Danube. All roads to our meeting place were either blocked or mined so we had to find our way across fields and improvised paths to our meeting place. We finally arrived there about 12 in the afternoon. The vehicles were hidden, the immortal jeep having been used to get us there, and the meeting was held in an abandoned barn. The plan as outlined by the colonel was briefly this. The 261st Regiment was to cross the river at Kapfelber which was southwest of the city of Regensburg, one of the big cities in this section of the country. The 260th regiment was to cross the river farther north, on our left flank. The 71st Division was to cross the river northeast of the city; both divisions were then to make flanking attacks on the city of Regensburg thus enmeshing it in a Giant Claw. The first battalion of our regiment was to cross the river first, press on to Abbach and then swing its attack north. The third battalion was to cross the river next, and the 2nd Bn. was to be in reserve. The initial crossing was to be at 2 in the morning, without the benefit of an artillery barrage in an attempt to catch the enemy unprepared. It was decided that the regimental aid station with me in command was to set up on the town of Kappfelberg, as close to the site of the crossing as possible, at midnight. At about four in the afternoon, after I had returned to Heamu to pickup the rest of my men and lead them to our assembly area, I made a personal reconnaissance of the town. It was situated on a hill, protected at first from observation from the opposite bank by several buildings, particularly the village church. Just behind the church the road extended to the right and left. About 50 yards on either side of the church there was protection from observation from the opposite bank of the river, then the buildings ceased abruptly, and anybody on the opposite bank of the river could just about look down your gullet. The enemy were expecting us to cross here, because you could see them digging in on the other side.

After this brief reconnaissance, I returned to our assembly area to await the approach of midnight. At about ten in the evening, I received a call from the third battalion that the third Vn. Surgeon had not arrived as yet, and that the third Bn. Medical Section had been lost, which would not have been very difficult considering the out of the way location of our assembly area. I reported this to Col. Carraway, and told him that if Capt. Whitten did not show up before the 3rd Bn. had to

cross the line of departure, I would take a small group of my men and act as the 33rd Bn. Surgeon, crossing the river with them. He approved of the plan, but fortunately at about 11:30 that evening the third Bn. Section showed up.

At midnight, I set out with my aid station group for Kappfelberg. The infantry could be seen marching toward Kappfelberg. The moon was bright and it was a poor night to make an assault boat crossing. I felt sure that the enemy could see our preparations beneath that moon light, since they were occupying a very advantageous position in the cliffs and hills on the opposite side of the river, from which vantage point they could look down our throats, so it seemed. It seemed asinine that no artillery barrage was to precede the assault. It was impossible to surprise the enemy on such a night. On reaching Kappfelberg, I spotted my aid station, right behind the village church. I asked a couple of infantry boys to flush the house out with me. It was a good spot for the aid station, close to the river bank, yet protected from direct enemy observation. In addition it had an excellent cellar which could be used for treatment of casualties in case the enemy artillery and mortar barrage became too hot. We looked through all the rooms, awakened the occupants and told them to get out of the house, which they did very frightened and very hurriedly. We set up the aid station in a matter of minutes and then waited.

At 2 A.M. of the 26th of April, the first assault boats of the first battalion set out across the Danube. The first wave got across without opposition. The second wave caught hell, and the Jerries opened up with machine guns, Burp guns, mortars and the dreaded 88s. When the enemy had spotted us, they began to put up a tough battle. All during the night and all the next day, the battle raged, with the Krauts putting up a tough battle. 150 casualties passed through our aid stations that day. Our medics and the collecting company supporting us did a fine job. I had both my jeep and weasel carrying casualties from the river bank to my aid station or to the collecting company, which was about a mile behind us. 88s were exploding around us. A piece of shrapnel grazed the forehead of my supply sergeant, Schell, but it was only minor. Another piece penetrated the rear end of my jeep, but I didn't realize it until we saw a puddle of grease where the jeep was standing; so we had to use the weasel alone to evacuate casualties from the river bank. The cry came for more litter bearers, and blankets and litters, which we sent across via the assault boats. I went down to the river bank where the assault boats were returning with casualties, and delivered some blankets and litters to be taken across to the other side where they were urgently needed. I took a good look for the first time at the so-called blue Danube, and it was nothing but a sickly grayish green and not blue at all. Strauss must have been color blind when he wrote his song.

On the morning of the 27th, the attack was going well. Our first objective of Abbach had been taken and a pontoon bridge had been thrown up across the Danube about 2 miles farther up the Danube. All attempts to put one up at Kappfelberg had been disastrous, the Jerries laying in their 88s every time it was attempted and thus accounting for heavy casualties. I had to leave the jeep behind because of the damaged rear end. I left Barton behind with it. He was to rejoin me when the jeep was repaired.

After crossing the river via the pontoon bridge on the morning of the 27th, we proceeded toward Abbach, and then swung north toward Regensberg our prize. The Krauts had given us a stiff battle, and we figured that they would really give us trouble at the gates of Regensberg, a truly

large and beautiful city. The 71st had crossed the river and they were cracking down on the city from the north.

Word reached our division that the Germans had pulled out of Regensburg, and that the city was in the hands of a retired German general who wished to surrender the city. We hoped and prayed that this was true, since this would save many lives. General Copeland, our assistant Division Commander, and the C.O. of the 260th Reg., Col. Duncan, entered the town to accept the surrender of the town. It became the prize of the 65th Division.

We were told that we had done a fine job. Col. Carraway was told that our regiment could establish our headquarters there, and rest up for a couple of days. Just about the time that we had our billets all picked out, and nice one they were too, we were told that Division and Corps were to move in so that we had to move farther south to set up defensive positions. So, tired and grimy from the toils of war, we set out again that afternoon. We proceeded to the slovenly town of Bergweinting, about ten miles outside of Regensburg, where we set up in a rather nice large house that had been used as an old woman's home. It was here that I spent my 27th birthday. Somehow the men learned that it was my birthday. It may be that I dropped a word here and there to indicate that it was my birthday. The men surprised me by preparing a darn good 10 in 1 ration. It was a pleasure after eating K's for a rather long while. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was here that Barton rejoined me. They plugged the shrapnel hole in the rear end of the jeep. with a bolt and it was all right again.

We remained in Bergweinting until the 1st of May. Then I set out on an advanced party with Barton and Sgt. Lawrence. We established our aid station in a drug store on the main street. It was the most beautiful drug store that I had ever seen in Germany or anywhere in Europe, for that matter. It was very modernistic and scrupulously clean. The rooms in the remainder of the house were the best that I had ever seen in Germany, with beautiful and luxurious furniture. It belonged to one of the high Nazis of the town of Osterhausen, which is the name of the place we went to. It was by all odds the best place I had set up my C.P. in. There were four movie projectors in the place, two fine movie cameras and an excellent microscope. But my honesty prevented me from taking any of it, though I must admit that I did appropriate a fine pencil from the place. Certainly, I could have claimed any of the above things as part of the spoils of war, since they belonged to the worst breed of mankind, a Nazi, but I didn't. A member of C.I.C. detachment came along, and took the cameras though, saying they were for the signal corps, which I didn't believe. The family of this Nazis were surprised we treated them as well as we did, permitting them to get the articles they needed.

When I told one of them that she could take her bicycle if she wished, she began to cry. I suppose she thought we were going to treat them as cruelly as they had treated the people that they had conquered.

Unfortunately, we only remained in this house overnight. The Krauts, a little in advance of us were putting up a bit of a fight. They had ambushed some of our G.I.s, including one of the finest company commanders that I knew, Capt. Oliver Stone. He was pretty badly injured and was eventually evacuated back to the States, from reports I later received. Another Co. Commander was also injured on this day, Capt. Williams, but he was able to rejoin us later since his injuries had

been minor. In addition, the Krauts had knocked out several of our vehicles with direct Panzerfaust fire. Yes indeed, we had the Krauts reeling, but they weren't licked yet. I had more close calls during the final days of combat than I had had in the preceding two months.

I forgot to mention that we discovered a wonderful combination radio-phonograph in our house at Osterhausen. We also found some records, one of which was Franklin D. Roosevelt Jones, which we played about ten times, particularly because Barton liked it so much and was surprised to hear it way out here in Germany in the midst of combat.

On the second of May, we set out to Passau. A few miles from our destination, the Krauts began to get rambunctious again, throwing 88 and mortar fire at us. We stopped at the town of Heining and i set up my aid station in a little peasant home with the Danube practically at my back door. We were told to expect a counterattack from our right flank. The Krauts aim was fortunately poor. Though they were throwing air-burst 88s at us, they were exploding high over the river Danube, and were causing little damage. We meanwhile, were pouring plenty of artillery into them with several batteries of 105s right at my front door. We managed to push into the outskirts of Passau, but bands of SS troops were holding up our progress. There was one German sniper in particular who was playing havoc with our boys. I think we eventually got him. Our anti-tank Company got a couple of German Tiger Tanks in Passau with bazooka fire. They got direct hits from behind. Capt. Woods, the A-T Co. C.O., did some experimenting with these Tigers after he had captured them. At about a 50 yard range, he found it impossible to penetrate the armor of the Tiger's front and sides, even with direct hits, although direct hits in the rear would penetrate them. However, Panzerfaust hits would penetrate our tanks on all sides, indicating that German tanks were better protected than our own, and that the Panzerfaust, though perhaps not as accurate as our bazooka, was a more powerful weapon.

Capt. Chamovitz set up his aid station in the outskirts of Passau. I believe that Co. F was going to try to cross the Inn river on the night of the second of May. i rode into Passau that night to discuss the Medieval plan with him. However, the Inn river was too rapid and they had to abandon the plan. I forgot to mention the fact that early in the afternoon of the second, Col. Carraway was in conference with some German officials, who said that they would permit us to enter Passau unopposed if we would allow the Germans to get across the river Inn, so they could continue their fight against the Russians. This plan was strongly opposed by the Colonel who decided fight the Germans, and not give them a chance to retreat so that they might better oppose the Russians. The Russians were our allies, and we meant to deal fairly with them. At about the middle of the afternoon, I got a call that a number of men of the 260th Reg. had been injured after being caught in an ambush. I made preparations in my aid station to receive them. We didn't have an ambulance available to pick them up in, so I sent a 2« ton truck to them with four of my litter bearers to pick them up. When they arrived at the spot where the men had been injured, the men had already been evacuated by one of the 260th Bn. Aid Stations. Then later I went into Passau to arrange plans with Capt. Chamovitz for the crossing of the river Inns but the plan was abandoned when it was observed that the current was too strong to permit the crossing by boat. I slept soundly that night, but how I don't know to this day, what with the Kraut shells exploding all around us, and with our own artillery right at my back door.

The next morning we boarded our trucks again, and set out for Neuhaus, south of Passau, where the engineers were to build a bridge. This was to be a momentous day for Neuhaus marks the boundary between Germany and Austria. The bridge was to be completed at ten in the morning. When we arrived at Neuhaus at ten, the bridge was still not completed. We coiled up in a field there high on a ridge completely exposed. I immediately began to look around for a foxhole just in case the Jerries decided to drop a few shells on us and found one, so that I did not have to dig one. I then decided to go down to Regimental headquarters to see what was in the wind. I learned then that the bridge would not be complete before evening, and that they intended to start a ferry service across the river Inn to enable some of the Key personnel to get across without delay. I told them that I would like to cross on the ferry. I went down to the "ferry" which consisted of two rowboats with outboard motors attached, and a platform spread across between them. Those damn motors were always going wrong, and then the strong current would drag the ferry far down stream. I was about tenth in the ferry line. I remained there until darkness and I still had not gone beyond 5th place. I reported the incident to headquarters and they advised me to rejoin my unit in Neuhaus until the next morning when the bridge was supposed to be finished. This I did, but before doing so, I went to my first Bn. Aid station to see how they were getting along. They were doing all right, except that either an 88 or short round of one of our artillery shells had scored a direct hit on the roof of the building they were in. Fortunately they were in a sturdy building, and although it demolished the top floor, no one was hurt.

The next morning, with my jeep loaded with essential medical supplies, I took off with Barton, and two of my other men. The bridge had been completed, but my regiment was not to cross until somewhat later in the day, but it got out that I should be with the advance party of the Regiment, so I got special permission to cross before most of the Regiment. We crossed the bridge, and in the middle, I told the men that we were now entering Austria. We had passed through France and Germany, and now we began our trek through Austria. That was on the morning of the fourth of May. Barton sure put out his wings that day. As I think back on it, I was very foolish. No one knew where we were going for certain. I knew that the mission of the Regiment was to head for the direction of Linz where we were to meet the Russians. The intoxicating news that we were to meet the Russians robbed me of some of my common sense. We sped on and on, passing vehicles on the road. Heavens knows that we were setting ourselves up for a perfect ambush. Barton really had his wings out that day. After traveling for about two hours, we finally came up to some other vehicles of my Regiment. We got word that our I and R platoon had been ambushed and had been taken captive by the Germans. About an hour later, about two in the afternoon, I finally caught up with the advance Regimental C.P. located in Peuerbach. I learned there that the entire I and R platoon of Regimental Hq. Co. had been captured by SS elements. Among them was Wynn, the man whom I had transferred to Hq. Co. In addition, a platoon of C Co. had also been taken prisoners. It was our fault. We were so elated and flushed with impending victory that we were charging ahead without taking the usual precautions. The I and R platoon had one the same thing, but the Krauts were waiting for them. They didn't have a chance.

We had taken quite a few Germans prisoners, and we had these Krauts with us. Col. Carraway conceived the idea of exchanging prisoners with the Krauts and a good part of the afternoon of the 4th of May was spent in making arrangements for this historic swap. Finally we exchanged prisoners on a man for man basis and our lads were free once again, after having spent several hectic hours in the hands of SS troops when their fate hung in the balance. Those hours

must have been trying ones, especially when the men knew that in SS hands your life wasn't worth a damn. I spoke to some of the men after this experience, and they were frightened. Luckily, I had picked a dry goods store as my C.P and there were quite a few woolen blankets in the shop. The men who had been captured had their equipment taken from them, including their blankets, so I gave out Kraut blankets to them. In addition, we handed out some socks, handkerchiefs and underwear.

We pulled out of Peurbach the next morning, the 5th of May. We headed for Linz and as we were nearing our destination, people were lining the roads, throwing lilacs and other types of flowers on the passing victorious vehicles. Austrians were also bringing out jars of some fluid, probably cider or schnapps. I don't know definitely what it was, since I didn't have any, but some of the lads seemed to be enjoying it. About three miles from Linz, we stopped. I didn't know why we had, but I later heard that the Krauts were throwing some 88s in our direction. As far as I am concerned, that's reason enough. Sure enough, they were soon landing in our laps. I had Barton bring my jeep and trailer close to one of the houses, headed toward collecting company, ready to take off should any casualties occur. We took refuge in a cellar as the shells kept coming closer and more frequent. Amazingly enough, no one was hurt. After about 20 minutes of shelling, it stopped. Then Kraut prisoners began coming in. We set up a temporary enclosure nearby. The way the Krauts were giving up, there was no doubt that the European conflict was soon to be over. I'll never forget the expression on the face of a Kraut corporal as he was approaching our PW enclosure. At first he didn't see it. When he did, he pointed toward it, his face lit up like a torch as a broad smile spread across his face, and he approached it with a light fast step. He was glad to become a PW. he figured that the game was up.

We got word that a German general wanted to surrender his whole army, but he would not surrender to anyone but a general. We searched high and low for our Division C.O. Maj. General Reinhart. We couldn't find him. Whether or not Gen. Reinhart ever got to see the German general who wanted to surrender his army, I never did find out.

As the afternoon dragged on, it began to drizzle. The Regimental advanced party had now gone on ahead. I decided to take off after them. I headed toward Linz. We made for the big square in the center of town. A bunch of our vehicles collected in the square. We were all trying to find the Regimental C.P. but couldn't. Finally Maj. Tilton, the S-4, decided to take off on a one man jeep patrol to find the Colonel. I told him that I would wait for him in the square. Meanwhile the day dragged on, and the rain continued to drench us. Some of our men were going in and out of the hotels in the area and coming out with bottles of wine. They were already behaving like proud but stupid conquerors. The beginnings of fraternization could be seen, and the war wasn't even over yet. That's Americans for you, fine fighters in war, easy victims in peace.

We remained in the square waiting for Tilton till about 11 that night. An amazing thing happened that night. While everything was blacked out, suddenly all the lights in the square went on, and it looked like Coney Island to us, especially after we had had nothing but total darkness at night for the past two months. We were worried about it. We certainly made fine targets for any enterprising Krauts. However, the lights went out in about five minutes; that made me very happy. In time of battle give me total blackness at night.

At about midnight, we set out with Maj. Tilton for the Regimental C.P. We found it about 6 miles outside Linz proper toward Enns. We were cold and wet, and after reporting to the Col., I set out to find a house for me and my men. It was a heck of a time to find a home, one in the morning. We found one to our liking. We knocked on the door, and a frightened woman came to the door with her husband. He must have had Parkinsonism, for he was trembling. We looked around the house, asked him if he had any weapons, which he handed over to us, and then told the people that they had to leave. They were reluctant to do so, but they did, and we settled down to a well deserved evening of sleep. The next morning we left for our last objective the city of Enns. Once again, the Germans had propositioned us, telling us that they would let us have the city if we permitted them to withdraw and fight the Russians. Our answer was the usual no. We entered Enns on the 6th of May without much of a struggle. However the Krauts continued to shell Enns sporadically and one shell landed too close for comfort, the concussion partially knocking me off my seat in my C.P. The shelling served one food purpose. It discouraged Division from setting up their C.P. in Enns. They wanted to take over the Regimental C.P. but when they saw some of the windows broken from the shrapnel of closely exploding shells, they changed their minds and decide to remain in Linz.

At 11.A.M. on the 7th the shooting stopped. However peace was not officially declared until 0001, 9 May, 1945. It was later on the 9th or 10th of the Month that Col. Carraway met the Russian Commander of that sector right in front of my C.P. We had joined forces and VICTORY was OURS.