

# **SEVEN JEEPS TO VICTORY**



The  
**I & R Platoon**  
HQ Company  
261st Infantry Regiment  
65th Infantry Division

Compiled by Joan Pratt



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*This book is dedicated  
to the men of the  
I&R Platoon  
HQ Company  
261<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment  
65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division*

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cover photo and the story behind it courtesy of Richard Dirkes. The war ended on May 5<sup>th</sup> and the platoon was ordered to cross the Danube at Enns and head east to contact the Russians. For this mission, it was decided that they needed a flag. Because none was available, one was painted on some white fabric and attached to a steel angle iron welded to the front of the jeep.

A special thank you to Louis Lovisa, Richard Dirkes, Bernard Cutler, William Sheehan and Herman Betz for their recollections and insight and of course to my father, Seymour Pratt, for leaving me this story to share.

Thank you to Lisa Nelson for her editing assistance and to my husband, Patrick, for his encouragement.

## PREFACE

In the mid 1960s I remember hearing my father, behind his closed bedroom door, typing. It wasn't until after his death in 1984 that I obtained this manuscript that had taken him hours to type. After reading this story I knew it was something special and I locked it away for safe keeping. With the lives of the "greatest generation" growing shorter, I decided this story needs to be told.

My father had kept in touch with Leo Shafer and I spoke with Leo before his death. He confirmed the details of this story but did not recall who had put the words on paper. I had mailed Leo a copy of the story and he in turn put some of it into his own words in an article published in the *65th Halbert* magazine. I located Louis Lovisa who answered my many questions and put me in contact with the other surviving platoon member, Richard Dirkes, and then Bernard Cutler, a former lieutenant of the 261st Third Platoon. Dick and Bernie shared more details and Dick provided the cover photo. Lou and Dick recalled that at the end of the war the guys had collectively written down their thoughts but neither knew who had assembled the final story. I also spoke with David Sheehan who provided context for this story but he was no longer with the platoon when the story was written. I was unable to locate any other living members of the platoon.

This is a story that I want my family and the families of all those brave men of the I&R to know. My hope is that by publishing their story, the men of the I&R will secure their rightful place in history and their families, friends and everyone who might read their story will know of their brave defense of the United States of America.

Except for better clarity, I have not made any changes in spelling grammar, or punctuation from my original manuscript.



## DEDICATIONS

We dedicate this work to our buddies who have lived and fought with us and who have given their lives that we may leisurely reminisce our moments of sorrow.





IN MEMORY  
TO THOSE WHO GAVE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE:

What can we say that will alter the tragedies of death? Mortal tongues are speechless, mans words are meaningless, all human attempts fail to bring honor to the dead. Our only cause is to recall memories of warm fraternal embraces and of tender words of fidelity, daily deliberation and meditate on these:

“WALLY”

PVT. WALLACE L. HANSEN

Age 20 Died April 8, 1945

2748 42<sup>nd</sup>. Ave. South

Minneapolis, Minn.

“POP”

PFC. Dollas K. Cossaboon

Age 27 Died; May 1, 1945

Cadarville, New Jersey

“CHAPPY”

CPL. Gerard J. De Cicco

Age 20 Died; May 4, 1945

316 So. Valley Street

So. Orange, New Jersey

“EDDIE”

Tec. 5 Edward J. Dowling

Age 22 Died; May 4, 1945

711 East 220 Street

Bronx, New York

Dear God;

There are four empty swellings in our hearts. They belong to Wally and his swing music, To Pop and his roulette wheel, Chappy and his beauty, and Eddie and his accordian. We pray that we can enjoy their comradeship again under thy protecting wing. Amen.



# SEVEN JEEPS TO VICTORY

## PART 1

### “SUNNY SHELBY”

The I&R Platoon of the 261<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was activated on June 15, 1943, but was not formed and in training until January 1, 1944 at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. The original platoon was made up of recruits with three noncoms as cadre. After fourteen weeks of basic training, POR started. By August there were only five of the original group remaining. A record of the original outfit couldn't help but include material on Vernon, Francis, Eddy, and etc., but we are concerned with the remaining five and the conglomeration of Air Cadets, Signalmen, Ack Aack men, and MP's who formed the crews for the seven jeeps to victory.

The life was hard, the training was intensive, the food was poor, and the weather at times unbearable, but such was life from reveille at 5:30 AM till 5:30 retreat, from September until December.

Our training was finished and we packed our equipment for the day we were to move. That day was to be December 29<sup>th</sup>. It was a warm, balmy Mississippi day, the rest of them were just plain hot. Loaded down with full field pack, blankets, overcoats, and rifles we trudged off to the rail siding. This was what we had been sweating, marching, training for, and now at hand was the climax! We load onto the troop train “bitching” because we didn't get a regular Pullman. The train pulled out and that was good bye to Camp Shelby.

As the train proceeded so did the dice and cards, it was a typical GI ride. Books and magazines hid the faces of some and other were content to watch the country rolling past, meditating on our future. The following morning we were in Alabama eating breakfast. Chow was brought to us in our seats. Since the food had to be cooked and served there also had to be KP's. Most of us didn't catch this detail over four times.

The third day of our trip was a pathetic affair as we rolled north along the Atlantic coast line. Not because we were going to POE,

not because the ride was uncomfortable, but because it was New Year's Eve. The conversation along lines something like this, "Last New Year's Eve I was at -- and drunk, having a hell of a good time", but it all added up to "I wish I were home tonight." Of course it is strictly forbidden to have liquor on a military train and of course none of us would ever think of breaking that rule, but as we traveled into North Carolina, where they never heard of the Repeal Act, an ideal situation arose and a few of us were fortunate enough to obtain a drink. Naturally we would not reveal the fact that Bud Shaefer, Gale Young, and Tom Sullivan were the violaters.

It was New Year's as we were coming out of the warmth of the Carolina's into Virginia, thru West Virginia, Washington D.C., whose only permanent residents were the Roosevelts, into Raughley's Delaware, Pennsylvania, by Chappie's home in New Jersey and finally into New York and Camp Shanks.

It was night when we arrived and the snow was falling on the icy streets, but that was just another hazard for the mule pack of the 261<sup>st</sup>. We were met by our advance party, Lou Lovisa, Homer Morgan, and Seymour Pratt. The barracks were warm and the Post Exchange inviting with the coffee there, a very necessary substance with the I&R. The food superb and liquor abundant. The "Vocal Yokel" Herm Betz, "Smokey" Pratt, "Pop" Lindgren, and "Heinrich" Miller spiked the PX cokes in preparation for a pass to the city.

## PART 2

### SHANKS AND OVER

There was the lectures, movies, and more lectures for the benefit of the men going overseas. When we received our brief training in abandoning ship we knew they weren't kidding, the "Flying meat-cleaver" was going overseas. The most frequently heard phrase was "If you need anything speak up now as this will be the last chance to get it." This was about as authentic as Dr. Goebbels DNB.

After six days of checking and rechecking we were given passes to New York. As it was the first time for a lot of the boy's they expected to see a lot, but because of lack of time we didn't get a chance to see much since most of our time was spent in a bar room. Seymour Pratt, Leo Shafer, and Eddie Santillanes, alias Smokey Bud, and Swampy were touring, "Diamond Jim's" where they met the Queen. Swampy was left holding the bag, up that is. I think this will typify every one's adventure, except "Through the hole Lou," "Laverne's Longing Lover" and Herm Betz, and "Heinrich" Miller who looked up some of their old Bund friends on a car fender near the Cafe Hindenburg. The earliest returnal from pass was 0400 hours. I mean we were living until...

Every thing happened at once. On January 7, 1945 we were alerted for shipment. On the 9<sup>th</sup> after drinking Red Cross coffee and eating doughnuts we trudged up the gangplank. The plank wasn't enough to climb so they had to load 150 pounds of GI junk on our backs to carry up with us, nevertheless we made it. Sully doesn't know why they make the door entrances so wide for when you get down the hatch the steps are so narrow a fly has to s--- before it could get down. Talk about the German concentration camp being crowded, Hitler should have copied his camps after that ship. When we finally arrived at Compartment 2P, (Three decks below the hole) two little runts of lieutenants picked us up and crammed us into canvas bunks, which had enough room to hold a termite, and told us to stay there. I don't know why they told us that for we couldn't move anyway. For the first hour we tried to find a place for our equipment, after that we tried to find a place to put what we had eaten for the last six years. During our stay aboard ship we did

manage to drag ourselves topside a few times. Each time up some of the boys would feed the fish, against their wills of course. Indigestion we think, or maybe just plain seasickness. They say that sea air is healthy for a person but if that is the way a person feels when he is healthy, I'll remain in my present sickly condition. Some of the fellows were healthy enough to cut the ropes that help the bunks up. That bright idea was due to the ingenuity of Dick Dirkes. Everyone ate about thirtythree candy bars between breakfast and supper. A few of the Holy went to Mass. The rest sunned themselves during this time. After prowling around the ship through every hatch, compartment, decks and what have you, we found the name of the ship to be the "Le Juene." She was a converted German passenger liner. Sully claims that if a submarine wanted to sink the ship he would have favored giving the commander the Bronze Star, (if the commander would not have accepted we could have recommended it be given to the chief clerk or commander's cook). It is just as well for the boys that Sully only ate three meals on the trip for the meals weren't balanced and the sea was rough. You know what that means!

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of January we sailed into the port of Le Havre, France. Sully was so glad to get his feet on the ground that he swore then and there that, "If my wife wants to see me again she'll have to come over here to do it."

## PART 3

### FRANCE

The city of Le Havre was the first war torn city we had ever seen and the cold snowy night made the situation worse. We were loaded onto some open cattle trucks that were covered with snow. The trip was over some very hilly country and our trucks got stalled about eight times. Lt. Hanning, Third Bn. motor officer, saved us from what might have been a worse ordeal by kicking the colored driver out and taking over himself. The snow and then the sleet was beating into our faces and I think we all agree that was one of, if not the worse night of our lives. That was our first taste of hardship overseas. After eight hours of riding, about forty five miles, we were dumped at Camp Lucky Strike near St. Valery, Normandy. On the ground were thousands of tents covered with snow which were to be our homes for an indefinite period. The Engineer unit responsible for the construction of the camp had been taken away from this task and had been pushed into a gap in the front in the Battle of the Bulge. So before us lay a former German air field covered with snow and tents yet to be erected. After we were set up, the scavenger patrol was sent out in search of wood. A major issue was the absence of stoves. Every night we would smoke up the tent so bad that the fellows would have to leave the tent, warmed by the open fire, to get fresh air. Our main trouble was with frozen feet. At one time half of the platoon was bed-ridden with symptoms of "trench foot." Thanks to the ability of "schwätze" Lou, Sherman D, and Olsen we were provided with unrequisioned stoves. Food was something else. Two miserable meals per day at the Division mess tent didn't prove enough. Everyone was stealing food where ever possible. Men were raiding garbage cans and chewing on bones. Finally a guard with loaded rifle and bayonet was placed at the kitchens and dumps. Finally we got the opportunity to visit some of the nearby French villages where we bought bread and drank cider or Calvades.

Morale improved with mail and better mess facilities. When the snow finally thawed, the mud came and with the mud, came the wind. It was almost impossible to transport mess gear or food from the mess tent to your own tent without either slipping in the mud or

having wind blow your bread out of the gear. This can be confirmed by Lt. Col. "Gertie" McGowan, a field soldier with a problem. We also owe a vote of thank to Santillanes who prepared some stew for us, we used it as tallow for candles instead. Also to Betz who entertained the Regiment around midnight.

After being here several weeks, orders came for us to move to the outskirts of Dieppe. Some of us made the trip only to clean up an old German and British billet and sleep in our shelter halves for one night. Some of the boys attended a French Mass there, which proved to be very interesting. We returned to Lucky Strike for final preparations to move east, east was to the front.

The platoon was broken down into two groups for the move. The first group left February 26<sup>th</sup> in a 40&8 box car. (This made us eligible for the American Legion.) The ride was crowded and cold. The only thing that Miller remembers about the trip was a shot of "Paul Jones" on his birthday, a fine to reach majority. The second group left on the 27<sup>th</sup> by newly issued jeeps. (The original seven). With driver and assistant they alternated driving until both were asleep. They passed through the scenes of battles famous in World War I, through Metz, and into the village of Virgy, Lorraine. The two groups converged and formed a platoon again in two rooms and an attic. Virgy was where we got everything ship-shape for combat. Everything got a last minute check. Ammunition was issued but we were still "Army of Occupation," according to statements of Dollas Cossaboon. Then on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March an advance detail went forward to the front. I mean this was it! The advance group consisted of Al Rizzo, Ray Minks, George Weightman, and Eddie Santillanes. The following day the rest of the platoon started toward the front and toward victory. Near our destination we first heard our artillery, that was enough for Archie "Combat" Noles. We soon arrived at Buren, Saarland/Germany. It was late evening and we were very well dispersed, expecting to leave our jeeps and walk forward to a "fox hole" or God only knew what. The tension grew tighter. Our jeeps stopped by an untouched group of houses. We dismounted and met the I&R, 104th Infantry, 26<sup>th</sup> Division whom we were relieving. The house was warm with improvised lamps and the "harmless" gang started their orientation. That night Rizzo, Weightman, Minks, Olson, and Lt. Sheehan ran the first patrols. They were heroes in our



eyes. The following morning the I&R of the 104<sup>th</sup> was gone, we were all alone in combat now.

## PART 4

### SAARLAND

The second day we started to explore the town of Buren. Herm Betz acquired fifty pounds of coffee, donated by a worthy contributor of the war, Herman Goring. Every house was fleeced from attic to cellar. Even the walls were caved in, in the search for hidden panels. Sully found a barrell of cider which previded him with amusement for several days.

Regimental Headquarters was established at Waldwisse, Lorraine/France. With it was our representative Howard Tarshis a member of the Chairborne Infantry. He was later relieved by "Hoof" Holforty after wearing the seat out of nine pairs of pants. Almost every day some one went back there for order, and to serve as an armed escort for the Colonel who inspected the Saar River positions. Ray Minks, Bud Shafer, and Lt. "Red" Sheehan were detailed this unpleasant escapade. These patrolers travelled from early in the morning until very late at night.

There was the town of Rech, occupied by the 1281<sup>st</sup> Engineers that Minks, Shafer and the Lieutenant made several runs into and everyone of them they sweated out. To enter the "Dorf" required a drive of about a half mile in full view of the Jerry pill-boxes. They would never fire on until the boys were in town and then the mortars would come in. It was here that Ray and Bud learned to flatten themselves on a floor. At this town they backed into Kraut mashingewehr's lane of fire without a round being fired at them. Here too they watch cattle kill themselves by stepping on mines planted in the fields. On one trip to a position on the line a cow stepped on a mine in the shoulder of the road a few hundred yards ahead and nicely decapitated itself. Dewey relieved Shafer for a patrol into a town occopied by L Company (Gerlfanger) and received his first dose of artillery and mortors. Dewey, also strangely referred to as "BooBoo" moved a hay bailer in order to obtain cover. The same night at an O.P. town eighty yards from Jerry pill-boxes Dewey let Ray back into a cord of wood. In Dewey's flight he knocked over an ammo box, causing the Wehrmacht to open up on the town. Munn, the "Old man" driver, forgot the pass word

“Chocolate Milk” which came close to getting them shot that night. After darkness road survey was another expedition of Minks and Shafer's.

Our main duty was the connecting patrol between Co. “L” over a blown bridge in Buren by sound powered phone. It was very seldom we contacted them. The only casualty was Archie Noles who was shot 200 yards from our billet by an unseen German twig lying in the road. He recovered almost immediately, but caused his mental condition more agony. We then received another job, a patrol to Co. “B”. The initial patrollers wore socks over their shoes, being cautious no-end. The mental loss was terrific, Dirkes was repatriated to drive for Captain Steward. Our security guard was probably the world's most indispensable, at least they fired a great deal. Herm Betz had been nominated for the job of guarding our President since he is his fanatical supporter anyway. Herm caught an intruder insider our billet, so did Lovisa. Lou fired at Herm first. As a result of his expert marksmanship, Lou shot part of Herm's sleeve off with several bursts from his M3. Then Herm, in order to make certain that the intruder did not escape, fired out the door at George Weightman who immediately if not sooner, took cover. Arnie Olson became perverted with Noles and Dirkes one night and blasted them. Just anything to create a little excitement. As a rule the guard was a very lonely affair until Shafer met the only woman that never talked back to him. She was darling, curvacious, beautiful, and poised; she was a dummy. Since she was a German manikin we limited our fraternization. Sully outfitted this darling girl and she stood guard with the sentries who were chronically afraid of being alone.

In our exploration of the town we discovered more wasted ammo than the 20<sup>th</sup> Corps was authorized. That we brought to our billet which took on the appearance of an ammo dump. Needless to say all the food we found was consumed.

After ten days of coffee drinking and patrol running, we moved out as three groups to operate OP's. George Weightman went to Von Papen's hill, Noles had a group at Gerlfanger, and Olson had another on a hill overlooking Merzig. This lasted one day and the following day we went in to the attack on the Siegfried Line.

This was the 18<sup>th</sup> of March and Seymour Pratt with Lt. Sheehan were the first of the 65<sup>th</sup> in Merzig, after climbing over a blown

bridge. Almost simultaneously the engineers were busy building another. The rest of the platoon was still on the other side of the river operating a relay station to regiment. Pop Lindgren, serving as a lookout for us at the bridge, lost his rifle and equipment there at the hotel and is still hunting them or substitutions. That evening the rest of the platoon went into the 26<sup>th</sup> Division's area and crossed the river there and came down into Merzig to meet Pratt and the lieutenant. The platoon moved out towards Duppenweiler to establish a route over which to guide the regiment and left Pratt and Wally Hansen standing in Merzig. The next morning the platoon, its job of the night done, returned to Merzig to get some sleep. That morning every jeep was "grounded" with flat tires which they had picked up in driving over shrapnel infested streets. The city was in bad shape as a result of bombing and artillery, but it was our first conquered city and we managed to do a little looting of the Eberhart Faber Pencil Co. The platoon was well supplied with pencils. The next thing we remember was Duppenweiler where the 26<sup>th</sup> Div. QMC was located. (We did not spearhead this attack) Everyone looted the clothing that was lying around until the QM put on a guard, but by that time it was too late. Everyone had a change of clothes and extras. Part of the platoon went on to Diffelen that night to establish a billeting bridgehead. We rejoined there the next day but did not remain long. We left our barracks bags at the Hotel Scherer and proceeded to Saarweiligen. Saarweiligen was the worst of all dorfs, orts, stadts, or what have you. There was not one building in the entire town that could be occupied. The road east of Saarweiligen produced our first liberated persons, Russian, Polish, and Bulgarians who had been freed from camps at Neukirchen. Neukirchen was a little too big for us to remain in very long so we moved on to Oberbexbach. Here the Division went into Corps reserve.

The accommodations at Ober Bexbach were fine, we had two houses and everyone had a bed to sleep in. We had our first bath there for quite some time. We cleaned up our equipment and rested most of the time, and at night listened to the radios. Cossaboon and Pratt were one up on us, they had their own radio. After seven days of relaxation we were called out of reserve. Loading our jeeps and trailers we proceeded toward Biblenheim. Two jeeps, one with a

trailer and the last jeep of the convoy, couldn't keep up the speed were lost. They were Mink's jeep and his crew and a jeep "Guided" by Tarshis with two men aboard. Since these men were alone, they stopped for a little wine and a little "Schnapps" and after a while they were seriously drinking the stuff. There were two members of the Temperance Corps there, Howard Tarshis and Chester Janus, who was a displaced person at heart. They were drinking more and more and at St. Marion they hit the jack-pot. The aborigines were bringing wine from every house, and only once did they have to persuade the people to bring wine. They finally got started once more on their way to Biblenheim. Finally they arrived at Biblenheim, where Al Rizzo explained to Lt. Sheehan where they had been by the now famous statement, "I mean Dave you fouled up." During the trip our other trailer had lost a wheel and we had lost most of our gasoline, Herm Betz had loaded all the cans possible into his jeep and continued on. He was asked where the rest of the platoon was and he gave an usual nonchalant reply. At this time we found out that profanity was not part of combat, as per information received from Col. Wm. E. Carraway. Finally the platoon was together again and we billeted ourselves in one large house. A great discovery was made in the basement of this house, a few hundred gallons of wine. That night most of the guys had an exceptionally high morale. The next morning found most of us in exceptional health, more or less.

Archie Noles, Eddie Santillanes, Dewey Hardin were sent out with Lt. Cannon. While traveling on the road to Mainz, Eddie lost control of the jeep. The jeep turned over but only BooBoo was thrown clear. (This proving the law of inertia). Lt. Cannon suffered cuts on the face. Archie and Eddie had to be sent to an evacuation hospital and flown to a base hospital for immediate treatment. This was our first great tragedy. We missed Eddie and his swing and dancing. Archie was missed because less psycho talk went on.

Our expedition to Mainz was in separate units, some of us escorted the Colonel, other were with the battalions. Our regiment had priority over the pontoon bridge at Mainz. There were two divisions that were waiting to cross the Rhine while our regiment was halted outside of Bectolshiem by a traffic clogged road. Chappie, Minks, and Miller were waiting at the bridge at Mainz.

They made a grand slam job of looting a wine cellar. When Howie Tarshis and Pop Lindgren arrived the above characters were on their way. As this undaunted threesome crossed the 1896 foot pontoon bridge they were weaving and bumping. This was the night of March 29<sup>th</sup>. When Minks jeep crossed it meant that the entire regiment was across. Their jeep then passed up all the vehicles on the darkened road and joined the platoon as the forward point again. The Germans “Die Wache am Rhine” was beaten. Our first mission after crossing the river was to make contact with the Third Cavalry on our flank. Leaving three jeeps in a town to act as road guides, Herm and Al went to the other side of Holceim to do the job. With daylight came the job of guiding units to positions and following the Colonel who was traveling in circles. Although it was raining and we were cold and hungry we forgot our troubles when we met Lt. Arnold who was also a road guide. Lt. Arnold is capable of making Buchenwalk appear as a comedy. His main trouble that day was he didn't know what unit he was supposed to guide.

It was that night that the regiment was made into a combat team and attached to the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Combat Comand “B”. We were now prepared to race up the “Reichs Autobahn.” As we proceeded up the super highway we were broken down into missions and the only time the platoon was together was when we stopped to sleep once in awhile. The platoon did find a by-pass around a blown bridge which enabled the team to move forward, always forward. We were moving so fast that Corps couldn't keep us supplied with maps, so Herm Betz was sent back to get maps for the team. That night was spent on the outskirts of a small town, sleeping along side of our jeeps. We awoke the next morning to find Herm had returned during the night and had slept inside a house about fifty yards from us. That day we entered this town Steinbach, and fell asleep after eating all of the farmer's “aier.” The air activity was the most we had seen since entering Germany and the German's of Remsfeld knew it, we stayed there from March 31<sup>st</sup> to April 2<sup>nd</sup> because the whole combat team was without fuel. Here we were sent out to find 1100 American PW's who were being marched back from the front by the SS. This proved to be another false alarm. After trying to travel on foot trails with jeeps and having an imaginary air raid in the woods, we stuck three jeeps in the mud. We finally found the town where they were

supposed to be, no PW's. It was here we had our first dealing with Lt. Haase. Little did we know that later he was to become our platoon leader. We did accomplish something by liberating some French PW's who seemed mighty happy to see us. Remsfeld was good for chow. Since it was Easter time the Hausfrau baked us a cake. DiCicco, Minks, Miller and Joe Peroddi were lost on a mission to contact the Third Cavalry somewhere on our flank. The whole platoon had been on the mission but Minks driving the rear jeep had suffered a flat tire and since they were well to the rear as rear guard, no one noticed that they had dropped out. They waited for someone to bring a spare, but when it was learned that they were missing, Lt. Sheehan had forbidden anyone to retrace our route because darkness was coming and that wasn't wise for two lone jeeps to be out without help at night. By this time the lost boys patience had expired and they had returned, on a flat tire, to the town where the contact with the Third had been made. Firing was still going on in the town and that was no place for a crippled jeep to be, so they pulled out. Along side the road they spotted a trailer and investigated. They discovered the contents of four bottles of "Sekt," a German champagne, and some wine. They took this and a tire, and continued on their attempt to get back to our area. The tire gave out and they billeted themselves in a town with the Third. They drank their precious loot and it produced the usual effects. The next morning they bugged a wheel and tire off of the Third, who had so generously given us a jeep not two weeks before. They again set out and rejoined the platoon in high time with high heads. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April we continued with the attack up the autobahn. We had an overnight stay at Burghofen which was uneventful. Things were running smoothly with little resistance from the rapidly surrendering Wehrmacht. We were traveling as part of the main convoy which intermittently stopped while little hold-up sectors were being cleared. At one halt we dispersed, which covered several miles of highway, just as a Jerry plane dropped a bomb nearby. Several GI's were wounded, but the confusion was terrific even Lt. Col. McGowen was disturbed. Naturally when things settled down again the Colonel walked up to our vehicles, which were parked bumper to bumper, and immediately placed the bombing on us. Of course the other four or five hundred vehicles didn't have anything to do with it, but the I&R

was always present when the blame for something was passed out. It was that day that we were called upon to do some road work and to flush out a couple of towns, which brings up some unforgettable incidents.

After getting our usual briefing, "Get in your jeeps and let's go," we took off and reconnoitered a road which led us to a Tuberculosis hospital. This looked like a big deal and we deployed tactfully, armed to the teeth. We went through the hospital and picked up three Germans who were patients there. That fact meant nothing to us so we took them prisoner. Unfortunately it rained that day and we almost lost our prisoners. It was quite an accomplishment. We reported to the Colonel and were assigned another recon job, that of exploring the subsidiary roads. This was done immediately and on our return we ran across a Captain that wanted us to go into some woods and fire upon, some Germans from a work battalion that were there yesterday. Lt. Sheehan gladly obliged which consumed the time during which the Colonel was waiting for our report. What a "chewing" that was.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April we entered Eschwege. We raced around town like conquerors. It was there that we dropped the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored and we were again on our own, which meant that from then on we would have no tanks in front of us. DiCicco, Minks and Miller were detailed to flush a hospital for weapons and to count the wounded. It proved to be a very profitable deal for we picked up fourteen pistoles. We then became very pistol conscious. Olson picked our billets and naturally they were "prima." Our day was not nearly complete for we dropped our baggage and went out on a recon. There was still fighting going on in the vicinity. Al won't forget that jaunt for he took cover in a latrine Lou had just created. The 88's had their days. Back in Eschwege we issued ourselves fur jackets that the Germans used on the Russian front. That night we were sent out to contact Second Battalion which was theoretically at Wanfried.

On our way to Wanfried we stopped at a crossroad to pick up one of the many surrendering "soldat" and placed him on the hood of the lieutenant's jeep. Upon arrival at Wanfried we discovered that the bridge was blown and that the Second Battalion had not yet arrived. We set up positions and fired at the Germans who held the town. Giving this up as useless we proceeded to return and on our way



back we passed a wooded area where a machine gun opened up on us. Every jeep was going its maximum speed. Minks' jeep now carrying the prisoner on the hood, seemed to be the gunners choice. Everyone was crouched down and the prisoner was lying across the hood holding on for dear life. The only casualty was Minks' rifle which was wounded in the stock. This bullet missed both Chappie and Ray by inches. This was a close shave indeed but we continued on another route to Wanfried. Driving perhaps thirty kilometers we contacted the Second Battalion at the outskirts of the other side of Wanfried. The Germans were still holding the town with casualties on both sides.

Meanwhile complete darkness had come, along with it came a heavy rain. Our return trip was a "bitch." It was a monotonous five hour battle for the drivers, driving in a pitch black night over muddy lanes in the never ceasing rain. The "Psycho's," Herm and Lou, will long remember this for it was one more step toward psycho-neurosis after their jeep turned over and became stuck in the mud. When we returned we found our billet occupied by negro truck drivers, who had completely ramsacked our house. After chasing them out we continued to loot the house the next day. The only product of our efforts was about fifty packages of cigarettes, German that is, which we took for the benefit of "Moochers."

Our stay at Eschwege was nice after that first day except for enemy air activity. We managed to eat rather well, although it was much easier to get food in a farming town than in a city. A little thing like that never bothered the I&R for they would eat irregardless of where they were. There is a very secret password among the Germans to identify needy comrades. Just say this password, "Haben sie aier." Simple enough but so effective.

Our last mission while at Eschwege was to contact the First Battalion, who had attacked so far the Colonel didn't know where they were. Quite near Muhlhausen we passed through a Battalion of the 260<sup>th</sup> Infantry which was dispersed from their vehicles and taken cover in the woods. Their machine guns rattling lead at something in the sky (probably birds). We didn't stop and we learned later that Lt. Sheehan hadn't seen the forty four German planes circling above us. We continued on into the outskirts of Mulhausen and halted because Jerry planes wanted to meet us at closer range. Here we saw one of

the biggest dog-fights we had ever seen, between P-47's, who came to our rescue, and Jerry ME 109's. It was really something to see, for those pilots were using everything they knew to out maneuver each other. An ME 109 was shot down, but soon a P-47 came smoking out of the sky also. The pilots of both doomed ships bailed out but the American pilot's chute didn't open. After this air battle was over, we then noticed other GI's at a nearby warehouse so we investigated. Yes indeed we investigated. The warehouse had been a supply dump of the German Army. We simultaneously got out of our jeeps and entered the warehouse in mass, for there was LIQUOR there. At the request of Lt. Sheehan we took food instead of liquor. Two boxes of chicken noodle soup, one can of pickles and twenty cases of Palomino & Vergaro Brandy. We had carried equipment for months in all kinds of conditions and we invariably complained, but this was the first time that we didn't mind carrying "Equipment." In fact we would have carried more if we could have thrown out more GI equipment. When the word got around that the I&R had liquor we were no doubt the most popular unit in the regiment. In proof of our popularity you could have asked the Company Officers, the Communications Platoon, the Cooks, the Regimental Staff and numerous others. We hated to leave this lovely warehouse, even Janus was enjoying himself talking to some Polish girls, but we had to go. Later we contacted the First Battalion in Muhlhausen and moved to the new CP location at Katherineburg.

The next day was not spent as well as the previous one. The Germans made a counter attack at Struth. All morning long our jeeps were transporting rifle squads to stem the defenses. That morning about eight the Germans reconquered Struth. We had to pull back to reorganize, and then with the aid of our tactical air force we counterattacked. By noon we had retaken the town, with many casualties on both sides. The Germans quit with very few of their attacking Battalion left, all nine of their tanks burning. That afternoon we inspected the rubbles of the town, the dead were still strewn in the streets and in the fields. The 86<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Recon Squadron who had been in the town that morning took a bad beating. We found that their M8's still had a little salvage. Here we took two fifty caliber machine guns, one thirty caliber and several small arms. Also one wind-shield that for some reason wasn't

broken, for the jeep Pratt had been driving since Eddie Santillanes turned it over. The German dead were being taken out by the truck load. Later that afternoon we were being given the job of guarding a convoy of PW's that had been taken earlier that day, back to the area, with little anxiety figuring this was a job for the MP Platoon. Olson and two of his jeeps were sent on this job. They didn't have the convoy out over a couple of miles when three Jerry planes came into strafe and drop the bombs. One of these, a five hundred pounder, dropped in a nearby woods, fortunately it was a dud. The other a two hundred pounder, hit behind the jeep with Weightman, Cossaboon and Wally Hansen. The concussion turned the jeep over with its occupants in it. George and Pop were recovered, shaken up but uninjured. It was life's end for Wally. We certainly missed him with a song and a smile on his face. Things had really happened in the past few days and everyone was on edge. Fortunately the Division was placed in Corps reserve which took us to Herda/am Werra which was considerably south of Katherinesburg.

It was here at Herda that Lt. Haase took over the platoon. However the night before the lieutenant took over, we were called out from a tremendous feast and a good start on the liquor to investigate SS activities in the woods on the out skirts of the town. We reported to Captain Steward at dusk and about an hour later on the advice of one of Janus's friends, a Pollack, as you might have surmised. We parked our jeeps and then with the aid (?) of the MPs, IPWs, S2s and everything else but the WPA proceeded for the scene of the misdemeanouring SS. Quite suddenly we remembered we needed a vehicle guard, but Al had already taken care of that himself. The rest of us tactfully proceeded taking all advantages of cover and concealment. After crawling over the crest of a hill we were greeted by the silhouette of a farm house that harbored these fanatics. In accordance with Infantry tactics we dispersed our fire and set up a machine gun covering three quarters of the routes of escape. The dismal silent night was broken by the weird howl of a German police dog, which was undoubtedly a maneater. Then the IPW hollered in German that the occupants were surrounded and might just as well surrender. There was no reply. Captain Steward then gave the order to fire. For a full five minutes we poured lead into this evil den. The dog no longer barked, silence reigned, then

skillfully a extremely dangerous patrol was sent to throw a hand grenade into the near by barn from which we could hear movement. The progress of the patrol was slow because they were crawling and creeping. Finally the goal was reached and the tension was broken by Sgt. Janus, a hero in every mans eyes, who lunged forward and tossed the grenade. Our job was accomplished. We heard the inhabitants of the barn moan and kick as the shrapnel penetrated their flesh. We knew then that we had inflicted some casualties. This in the absence of the IPW, Miller hollered out in German to surrender and come out with their hands high. There were people stirring in the house, suddenly a voice rang out of the darkness, "Do you want all of us?" So instantaneously we replied yes. We were about to capture scores of the elite SS Corps. Tensely we waited and finally a door swung open to reveal an old man with a lantern high above his head. Following him were two middle aged "hausfraus," one ancient male and five children, (their fighting capacity was never determined). Apparently there was something wrong here for they didn't quite fit our expectations. The casualties turned out to be a cow and perhaps a horse. Strange as it may seem the gallant Pole had misinformed us. We returned to our billet thoroughly disgusted.

## THE NEW DEAL

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of April Lt. Sheehan was unceremoniously relieved, and Lt. William P. Haase assumed his duties. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of April we again packed and entered Bavaria, the most dismal place in the world save Massachusetts. Our destination was Catterfeld, spring had just come to the Sud Deutsches Reich and the woods were full of good fraternizing material. Here we selected a "Gasthaus" full of beer for our billet. Lt. Haase put us wise to the fact that "Aier" wasn't the only thing the Germans had that we could eat. That night we have our first chichen for dinner. The painsacking memories we all have from this town was the "GIs" and we had 'em! Next on the list was Elxleben. When we think of Elxleben we can't help but remember Lt. Arnold's fond love, a darling Russian girl who slightly resembled a cow. Here several of us journeyed to Erfurt to requisition a trailer. I think if you would look up Lovisa's service record his MOS will also include requisitioner exceptional, known to civilians as "Thief." Here we were reenforced with Bob Gunier, Courtney Wynn, Esquire, and Dave (one of ten) Yates. Wynn fulfilled the medical end of our business, Yates took over the 50 Cal. and Gunier tried to take over the Brandy. Our next "Belegwohnung" was more tragic than any of Shakespeares works, the town was called Mursbach, it was on the border of Thuringen and Bayern, but that isn't important. Here Al proved that "Draw or I'll blast you," was more than just a threat. Betz found an excellent drinking partner in a wayward Pollack. This condition was probably the direct result of being brokenhearted, which was caused by an uncouth Frenchman named Dirkes. The nicest thing in the town was the beautiful church that was perched on the hill, another beautiful thing was the churchgoer that lived at Olson billet. Laws were made to be broken anyways. After bidding farewell to this town we went to Offenhausen. Offenhausen had a spectacular feature we nicknamed the "Shape." She lived on and off with boy's most of the time. Al would come in and chase her out, then the whole gang would walk out too. Wynn proved himself a distinguished character actor that day by imitating a pig wallowing in the mud. Don't know what he was imitating when he rolled in the manure. Almost every day we were eating chicken through the courtesy of the German Fowl

Growers Association of which of course we were all a member. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April we landed at Berg, picked a house and left Lindgren and Tarshis on guard, then the S1 needed the billet more than we did, so we found another billet, for some technical reason we had to abandon this, finally we established ourselves in a barn of a house. During this week we were used mostly as guides and connecting units. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April we were hot on our way to Neumarkt, our artillery had field day here. We were crazy for loot, stole everything from flashlights to flour. One of our little tricks was to tell the people the reason we selected their house was because they were associated with the SS. Emmediately they would deny or repent and usually ended up with a woman crying. Our billets here were strictly beacoup, but just for over night. On the 24<sup>th</sup> we found ourselves at Hemau after much difficulty crossing a blown bridge and flushing a town in about five minutes. Young tried an unsuccessful amphibious landing which resulted in much work removing his jeep from the deep mud. When we arrive at Hemau the Colonel assigned us to take the nearby town of Painten which was some five or six Kms. away. This was really virgin territory. We were capturing more watches and more pistols. You could tell the number of prisoners by the number of watches we obtained that day. We were the task force that took Painten, blasting away to scare the civilians and give ourselves self confidence. We took several Oberfeldwebels there and liberated an American prisoner of war, who was captured in the bulge. We were still chasing those 1100 American Kriegagefangenen that were marching back. Guided the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. into Painten and reconnoitered the following town of Waldorf, where John Jacob Aster was born, but before we reach the town we were stopped by two road blocks and the presence of German's with a will to fight. Al had already liberated two watches along with two German officers. We set up a defensive positions and Al prevented a Kraut from ambushing Morgan and Pratt. He slapped him but good. Then Al, Bill, Chappie, Gunier and Janus went on the road block and got civilian assistance in reducing the road block. We ordered all the civilians out with their wagons and cattle to work on this impediment. Al spotted some German guns dug in on a hill. We were now caught between the German army and the road block. Finally the block was reduced and Lt. Hasse came up to us, Lou radioed the positions back to the

Artillery. The blasting took place and we had a front seat. The tanks passed us up and drove to the Danube. Franz Schubert might have thought the Danube was blue and beautiful but to us it was just another river where we operated another OP. From the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> we operated this sleep taxing affair spotting German guns and positions and even report when the Germans ate. Listened to Lt. Colonels blow their tops about how they would blast those Germans and how easily we would cross the river. These same officers put their guns in position and the Germans simply knocked them out. On the 25<sup>th</sup> after an unsuccessful artillery fire the riflemen charged the river. The same guns we had reported the previous day were now killing our men. After many casualties the resistance was reduced. Then Lt. Hasse guided several special agents to a place where the river could be crossed, for this gallant action Col. Carraway was awarded the Coeur de Guerre.

## THE DANUBE

We crossed the Danube on the ponton bridge in the 260<sup>th</sup> area at 0200 on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April. It was a very black night. After we crossed, Major Tommy Terrific Tappan ordered us to remain in the parking area in order to win the war. Olson tried to stay in a house but only succeeded in bringing coffee to the platoon who slept on the ground that night. The rest of the platoon looked on as we ate and drank, a look that only a tired soldier can express. We were awakened a couple of hours later by the big 4.2 Chemical mortars. We were soon off again, this time to find a route around the town of Abbach. We were finally forced to go thru the town with the snipers still playing with hot lead. Forward we went with a long list of check points on our maps and uncertainty on our minds. Where were the Germans? It was raining real hard but not enough to extinguish the burning German vehicles nor to drown the stench of rotten horse flesh that littered the roads. The first enemy that we met were strolling down the road to Regensburg fully armed. At fifty yards they stopped, so did we. Up went their hands, except one who reached for his weapon. Lt. Haase stopped him. In the first town PWs informed us that the enemy occupied the woods all along the road. At check point No. 5 we surprised and dispersed about 25 Germans that were digging in a machine gun. Farther up this exciting road we flushed a few more out of a farm house. Another thirty or so came tramping out of the woods.

Olson took the prisoners to the rear. After much dispute with the courageous Reconns we proceeded on blasting ahead. Later this day we led the Old Man into the Division objective the city of Regensburg. The garrison there had surrendered. Our average for the day was 5 killed, 5 wounded, from 50 to 75 prisoners, and for us no casualties. Things looked pretty good, a big town, plenty of hootch, but as usual the town was a little too large for the 261<sup>st</sup>, so after looting a little wine we moved on into Ober Traubing. We had a better than excellent meal there of calf that Ollie had found all slaughtered. That night Col. William E. Carraway expressed his sincere appreciation to the platoon when he said, "The work of the I&R has been the most outstanding and spectacular incident of the current fighting." We felt pretty proud of ourselves and along with a



bottle of Haig & Haig had a fine celebration. Little did we realize what was in store for us.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> Al wounded himself cleaning a pistol. Sgt. Janus took over the Platoon Sgt. job. Lou acquired another trailer and we took off in fine shape. That night we lead the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn. into a town where there was supposed to be a riot. (Some DP hit another and a German). It was a false alarm but we lost a full nights sleep over it. Early the next morning we reconnoitered the route to our new CP Osterhofen, then split into two patrols preceding the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Bns. Up near Heining the patrol with the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn met an ambush. The Germans fired 20 milimeters, machineguns, rifles and threw hand grenades. This ambush was a success, it cost Dollas Cossaboon his life. Both Olson and Morgan were wounded, Sullivan, Pratt and Shafer covered their withdrawal to a nearby house endangering their own lives. Pratt continued to pour lead at the ambushers until everyone was in the house. Later he was awarded the Bronze Star for this act. Finally the tanks came up and knocked the 20 mm out. We proceeded toward the city of Passau, we were stopped cold there. The other patrol picked up a few pistols and made their contact. We stayed near Heining that night, here we met our first young hostess that enjoyed having the soldiers take over her house. The following morning we made a haul of two cases of canned sardines. Spent the day looking for Krauts and uneventfully took a whole company of Germans prisoners. Then had a parley with a German SS Major who claimed to be direct representative of Heinrich Himmler. The enemy was surrendering without much fight, without negotiations, at least so we thought. Early the next morning without forewarning we traveled to Scharding to cross the Inns River. We did have the dubious honor of having the highest crossing priority in the whole Corp.

## AUSTRIA

As we crossed the Inns River we left Germany and entered Austria, the first American jeeps in Ober Donau, and in Neuhaus. Now we developed a new slogan, "On to Linz" or meet the Russians. As usual we were travelling at maximum rate of speed, the jeeps wouldn't go any faster. The best way to describe this action is to enumerate the results. Captured an unknown quantity of officers, prevented two explosive laden bridges from being blown, captured two German ordinance groups totalling 18 trucks, five towns, a Hungarian Flight General with his staff and planes to boot, one bus load of fully armed infantrymen headed to stall us off, one small ordinance repair depot, three SS Feldwebels headed for the Russian front. To top the day off, we shuttled a large number of the 261<sup>st</sup> to forward positions. This was accomplished by using trucks and buses captured earlier in the day.

We set ourselves up in Waizenkirchen for the night to prevent the Germans from sneaking back and blowing the bridges. While touring the square we took over a supply depot and by surprise captured two electric trains coming from Linz. More and more prisoners, in fact we had to put the Polish PW on guard to handle all of them. After we were relieved of guarding the bridges early the following morning we started to advance to Linz. It was cold and the fog was thicker than pea soup. We were travelling as fast as the weather would allow which was too fast for that morning. As we swung around a corner there was the rear elements of the German forces on the Russian front. The trainees fled to the woods, but the SS troopers in their armoured vehicles did not move. We told them the war was over and to lay down their weapons, some of them did. Others opened up and with a 20 millimeter that hit the third jeep, Chappie DeCicco and Eddie Dowling were killed. Francis Raughley and Courtney Wynn were wounded. Everyone else was taken prisoner, except the first two jeeps. It was up to Lt. Haase and the men in these jeeps now. The rest of the patrol were put under guard and forced to walk toward the Russian front. As the two jeeps entered the town of Eferding they were obstructed by a convoy of German infantry going to the Eastern front. They were immediately off the trucks and in a defensive position with machine guns and all.

The Lt. talked to a German SS officer and told him the war was over and wanted to see his C.O. Thank God he was obliging. For now we were all captives of the 2<sup>nd</sup> SS Panzer Division, Gross Deutschland famous for handling prisoners in the Battle of the Bulge. First stop was the Company C.P. They weren't a high enough echelon, so they were directed to the Regimental C.P. where they met Oberst Sennig Der Kommandant. Unfortunately he had received no orders to surrender, so they told him they were direct representatives of General Patton with the mission of negotiating. He mentioned a previous American bluff but they finally convinced him we were in good faith. His Executive Officer had no faith in the story and continued to laugh. A wooden legged German Major was sent back to our lines with Lt. Haase to negotiate. These negotiations failed, fortunately we persuaded them to make a fifty-fifty prisoner exchange. Every man was returned to our lines and released, except Raughley and Wynn who were in the hospital at Eferding. After the transfer took place, our big "Long Toms" opened up on the German C.P.s. We lost all of our jeeps but two, so immediately Service Company gave us new ones.

## LINZ AND THE END

The next day we followed the regiment through the city of Wels and stopped outside the city of Linz. Here we took the Linz Airport with no trouble at all. After taking the airport we were detached from the convoy and sent forward to take a bridge over the Traun River on the other side of Linz. We sped across the Austrian landscape and finally got to the entrance to the bridge. There was a road block and explosives attached to the bridge. We first had to take a Panzerfaust Team guarding the approach. Lt. Haase with several men to cover him moved under the bridge and neutralized the explosives. The remaining men meanwhile guarded the bridge from a counterattack. We doubt that the Heines knew we were there though, for they continued to send messengers over the bridge which we continued to capture. Finally a negotiating team came over to our side and after much discussion took our Colonel Carraway to Enns to converse with their C.O. The Germans here surrendered and we moved into the town of Enns that night.

The following morning we reconnoitered the road to the Mauthausen Ferry, where we were ambushed by six machine guns. Thank heaven the NCO didn't give the word to fire. Instead he surrendered. They had had enough and so had we. We returned to Enns and the war was over. The next day we crossed the Enns River and set up a CP to meet the Russians, here we got the biggest catch of pistols of all. We did not meet the Russians, they didn't show up, but we were the farthest East of any outfit regardless of size on the Western Front. Did meet General von Brunea and then we returned to Enns, for everything was over. But this time Oberst Lasar was a PW and we were living the life of a king in his great big house.

## POST WAR ACTIVITIES

With the complete surrender of the German armies we had nothing to do, now that our guns were silent and our positions stagnant in our minds, we gently turned from killing men to killing game. We formed the first Military Hunting Club in Ober Donau with Lt. "Buck" Haase presiding. Sully and the Lt. had to join the local butchers union. Al did most of the cheffing, but eventually turned the job over to Frau "Mutter" Lasar. With the aid of Hedy LaMarr's second cousin, Marie, Frau Lasar took over all of our domestic problems. The I&R was never satisfied to be idle for weeks at a time, so we organized a soft ball game under the direction of "Dizzy" Shafer. As time passed by we were all supplied with several replacements of which only one remained Ray Summy. His only important comments concerned the cheeps in Chermany. In compliance with WD order 23 44 5 WZTGOPY Lt. Haase gave us amphibious training, then volleyball became the thing. Dick took to the swimming pool, Pop Lindgren took to the Lake and Dewey to the showers. We were running a 24 hour patrol around the PWE, then a road block, and then a patrol and road block. We soon learned it wasn't wise to fool with the local aborigines and his possessions as Jailbirds Haase, Rizzo and Dirkes will verify. Herm and Lou pulled a master stroke to obtain six cases of coffee from the 808 Tank Btn, for drinking coffee was one of the big pastimes. We visited the Abbey at St. Florian which is the oldest Abbey of its kind. Viewed the hard bed that Napoleon, Marie Antonetee and Charles IV slept (not together of course). Watched Father Boull conduct High Mass with the able assistance of "Deacon" Miller. Some of us got to visit Berchtesgaden, Paris and London.

Opened up a Saddle Club exclusive for the platoon, which passed away many an idle hour. Obtained saddles and horses for a spot of coffee and some ham and eggs. To give the horses a little rest we started a ping pong tournament, but it didn't last. Now that the fraternization law had been lifted, the men were no longer around the house, but have found new fields to wander in. Lost Lt. Haase and aquired Lt. Robert E. Morton. Moved our C.P. from the house on the hill to the Kaserne and only one room. But still our hearts and minds are at the house on the hill. Soon the 26<sup>th</sup> Div. will relieve us

as we relieved them back in the little town of Buren some months ago. This means we will all be heading home soon, with hopes that we will be able to get together again some day, some where, and talk over the good old days.

## MY THANKS TO THESE

One sunny February morn in “unmentionable” France, I was issued a new green object known as the Willys J-B 4X4 truck, but, better known among us as the “cheep”. This frolicking conveyance was a peppy thing indeed since it had just recently been constructed by our valiant defense workers in that forgotten country overseas, the USA. This proud beauty received the tag number of Headquarters Twenty.

There came the eventful day when we were to leave our wonderful lean to shelters and join our less fortunate comrades who had traveled by 40 and 8-s to a reserve sector of the front. My assistant driver, T/5 Eddie Dowling and I loaded our worldly possessions into this mobile affair and shoved off in a large convoy. This humming bird gave us no mechanical trouble on our trip but many times we had to pull out of the column so that Eddie might answer the “call of the wild.” Our travelling accomodations were not exactly first class Pullman, but, after a cool two nights and two days, we arrived at our destination.

Here once more we applied our diligent efforts to readying our mode of transportation for the unknown tasks ahead. We spent one day placing those long remembered sand bags under our feet. After a couple of nights here I was informed by Lt. Sheehan that I was to be prepared to leave the next day as an advance party to relieve the Twenty Sixth Division at the Saar River. The next afternoon I hooked my jeep to a trailer that had been acquired on a midnite requisition by a member of the platoon, hailing from Kansas, whose initials are Gale Young. Into this I loaded everything imaginable including Al Rizzo, Eddie Santillanes and myself and shoved off. To this point I was proud of my quiet speedy demon on wheels, but alas there came those motor patrols at night in which the driver was left alone with the vehicle. Have you ever heard a faithful Westclox ticking away in the night, well magnify that several times and you have an idea of how “ole twenty” sounded to me on that deserted road while just waiting.

I was told to drive a jeep mounting a fifty caliber machine gun to serve as an armed escort to Col. “Wild Bill” Carraway. The occupants were to be Lt. “Feets” Sheehan and a gunner. That was

the end of my relationship with “ole twenty.” Headquarters seventeen now became my pride and joy. The gunner became “Ack-Ack” Shafer. We placed a pillow on the gas can upon which he placed his “arsch” for unauthorized comfort. “Old seventeen” covered many a mile of the Saarland from dawn until the wee hours of the morning. After a few days Shafer took on the appearance of a Texas cow-poke. The “old man” got quite a kick out of watching Shafer go thru his act in endeavoring to stay with that pitching hunk of steel. Number seventeen was made of good stuff for she survived Jerry mortars and artillery and crept down roads into towns eighty yards from the muzzles of the guns in the pillboxes on the Jerries side of the river with out every coughing or belching.

A day before we crossed the Saar I was relieved of that job and now I was the possessor of still another jeep. This was the bastard of the outfit having been acquired slyly from the staff of the regiment and bore no regimental number. The paid passengers aboard this black market item were Cpl. “Chappy” De Cicco, Pfc “Kraut” Miller, and Pfc “Swampy” Santillanes. With this item we guided the regiment thru Merzig. I seemed fated not to hold any one jeep for any length of time and I was soon relieved of this illegal item and assigned to HQ. nineteen. Into the “cheep” with me, came “Chappy” DeCicco and “Kraut” Miller. With her we guided the regiment over the Rhine and joined the platoon in leading the regiment in that mad dash up the autobahn toward Leipzig. Those were the days when we would have three flat tires a day and sweat out the gasoline supply. She was always ready to go though. Outside of Eschwege while carrying a prisoner on the hood we were caught by machine gun fire and although my rifle in the rack on the windshield suffered a direct hit, number nineteen came thru in good shape.

She was still with us when captured that fateful day at Efferding and was one of the two left with the platoon afterwards and is still “my possession.”

She traveled approximately five thousand miles across war torn Europe in all kinds of weather and conditions and never once failed her duty.

Thus in due respect to them all may their passengers and I say “Thanks.”

Attributed to Ray Minks



Some members  
of the 261st I&R Platoon

Betz, Herman "Herm/Vocal Yokel"  
Cossaboon, Dollas "Pop"  
DiCicco, Gerard "Chappy"  
Dirkes, Richard "Dick"  
Dowling, Edward "Eddie"  
Gunier, Robert "Bob"  
Haase, William P. Lt. "Buck"  
Hansen, Wallace "Wally"  
Hardin, Dewey "BooBoo"  
Holforty, Clifford W. "Hoof"  
Janus, Chester  
Lindgren, Robert "Pop"  
Lovisa, Louis R. "Lou"  
Miller, Wilson "Bill/Deacon/Heinrich/Kraut"  
Minks, Raymond "Ray"  
Morgan, Homer  
Munn, Fred "the old man"  
Noles, Archie "Combat"  
Olson, Arnold "Arnie"  
Peroddi, Joe  
Pratt, Seymour "Smokey"  
Raughley, Francis  
Rizzo, Adam R. "Al"  
Santillanes, Ed "Swampy/Smokey Bud"  
Shafer, Leo B. "Bud/Dizzy/Ack-ack"  
Sheehan, David Lt. "Feets/Red"  
Sullivan, Thomas "Sully"  
Summy, Raymond  
Tarshis, Howard "Tarsh"  
Weightman, George  
Wynn, Courtney  
Yates, Dave  
Young, Gale





