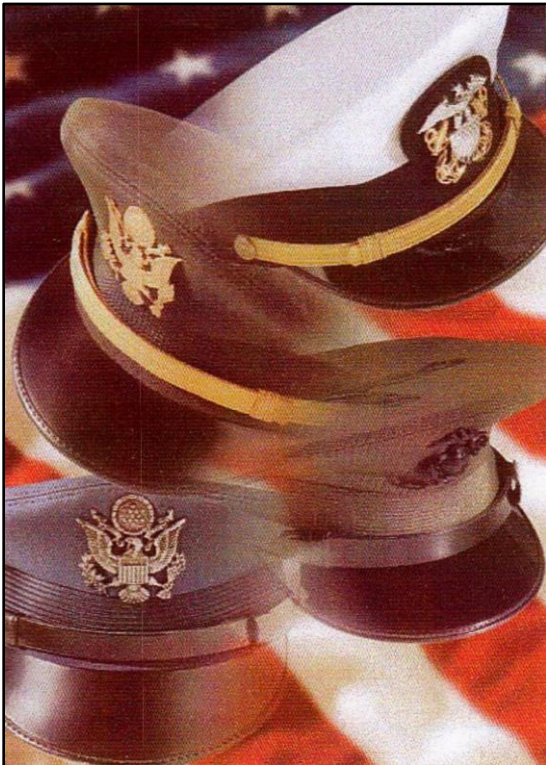


The 65th Infantry Division

Memories of Pfc. Hobert W. Yazell

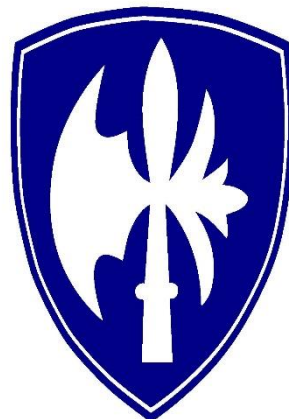
260th Regiment, F Company

Written by his daughter, Debra Yazell Chambers



Articles:

- Shock of War
- 260th On the Move
- Young Soldier in Mauthausen



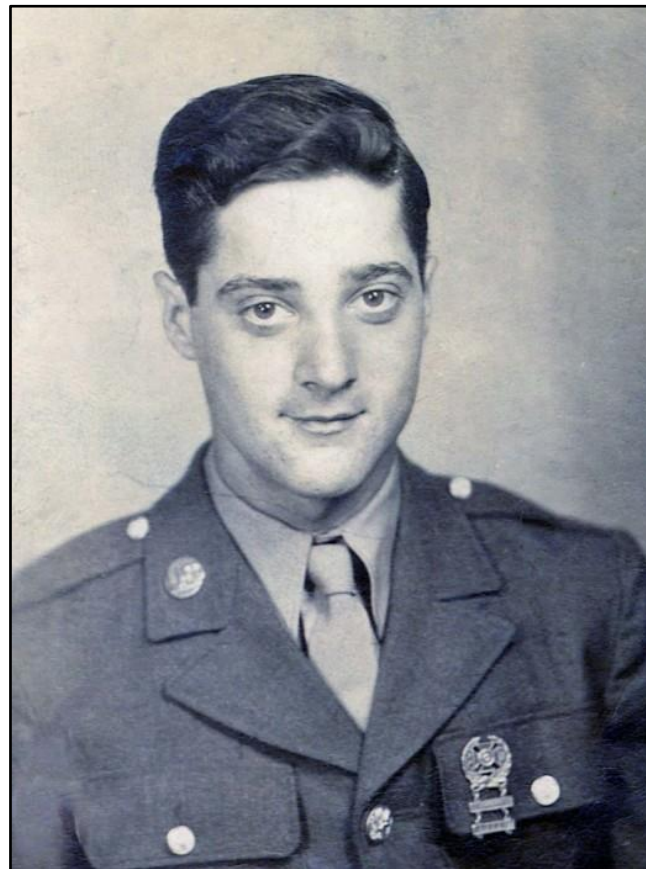


Author's note: For many years, I watched my father fight the nightmares that he wouldn't talk about to anyone. He had wanted to protect us from the images he saw in his dreams. We never knew anything about his role in World War II until we had grandchildren of our own. Because of, or in spite of his experiences in Germany and the Mauthausen Concentration Camp, he became a wonderful husband and father, one who played and experienced life alongside his children. He became a mentor

and roll model, without realizing it, that set the high standards for his children and the generations that followed. We treasured every moment of our time with him.

He is almost 82 now, happy and celebrating a truly loving marriage of 60 years.

(Editor's note: This was written a number of years ago. Madeline passed away on October 10, 2017 after 70 years of marriage. Hobert passed away on January 5, 2018 at the age of 92.)



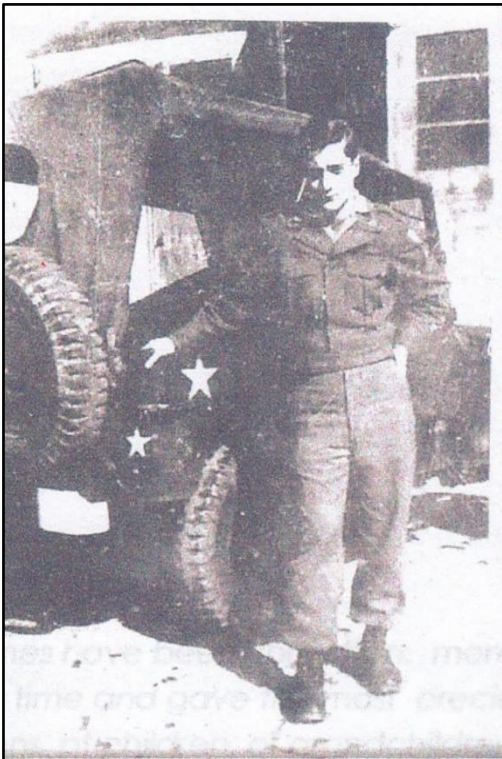
Hobert W. Yazell 260F



Dedicated to the men of the 65th Infantry Division,
who fell at Saarlautern and all the battles that followed.

A unit, a family, a team, a friend, a buddy.

Their stories deserve to be told.



Hobert W. Yazell 260F

The years have passed, names have been forgotten, memories have faded but those who fell before their time and gave the most precious gift of all live on in the freedom of nations, of children, of grandchildren, of all the generations to come. But most especially, in the hearts of the men who fought by their side and called them friend.

Shock of War:

A 260th F Company Soldier at Saarlautern

One of the memories of Hobert Yazell, 260th Regiment, F Company

Written by his daughter, Debra Yazell Chambers

Date: March 1945

Tense but ready; he strained to hear his sergeant's whispered instructions. Keep low, far apart and move fast. It sounded easy enough until you factored in the German machine gun that could possibly be guarding the bridge.

Private First Class Hobert Yazell stared intently across the river searching for any indication of German presence, trying to prepare himself for what he needed to do. Saarlautern, Germany lay on the other side of the bridge, silent and eerie beneath the glow of the American anti-aircraft lights. The 26th Infantry Division had taken the first line of houses, but they were as dark as the rest of the area. Nothing seemed to move through the shadows around the row of buildings located not far from the shore of the Saar River.

This would be the beginning for the 65th Infantry Division. Months of rigorous training had gone into preparing them. This would be their first time in a combat situation and the tension was pouring through the muscles and bone of everyone there. Trying to get the tightness out of his shoulders and neck, Yazell stretched his arms out from his sides. He didn't know what the rest of his Division had to do, but F Company was going to cross this bridge tonight no matter who tried to stop them.

In hushed command, his sergeant directed, "Follow me!"

They hunched over and ran as fast as the adrenalin would allow yet ready to drop down onto the wooden bridge if gun fire started. The sound of their boots pounding against the bridge surface seemed to echo through the night like mortar fire. Yazell tried to soften the noise as much as he could but to keep up the pace in his heavy boots made it difficult. If there was anyone up in the machine gun bunker, they would surely know they were coming. The dark skeleton of the bridge seemed to be endless. When the end of the bridge was finally in sight they put on an extra burst of speed. They moved quickly out of the view of the bunker. To their surprise they met no resistance.

Huddled together, the sergeant motioned them to follow him. The bridge, now behind them, they now crept up to one of the houses. The basement door was being held open by an American soldier. The platoon held and waited while the sergeants discussed the situation.

Apparently, they were replacing the 26th Infantry Division while they went into reserve.

Yazell watched the men of the 26th file out through the basement door. They smiled looking tired and relieved. Little did he know that in two years he would meet one of them again, not only meet, but Yazell would marry his beautiful sister and they would share a lifetime together as best friends and brothers-in-law.

After the 26th had moved out, the men looked around their basement quarters. It was better than the muddy mess they had just left at Camp Lucky Strike, thought Yazell. And the meals might be rations, but at least they wouldn't have to stand in line for one meal, eat it and then get in line for the next. Yazell joined the others to listen to their sergeant's detail assignments.

Yazell had been staring out a window for what seemed like forever and nothing had changed, nothing moved. It was his turn to stand guard. There were no people or animals to look at, just rubble and destruction. There wasn't even enough left for Yazell to imagine what the town had been like before the war. The bombers had done their job on this place. Without taking his attention from the window, he touched the bazooka setting on a table beside him to be ready.

In the silence he heard a noise he was well familiar with. Turning sharply to the left, he peered out through the casement being careful to keep out of view. This was not good. A tank was moving slowly down into the intersection at the end of the street. It halted and began firing at what he thought might be E Company who were located further down the street. The smoke and sound carried to his position.

Yazell automatically grabbed the bazooka to take out the tank's tracks. He had it to his shoulder and a bead on it before he remembered that he was alone. His backup had gone down to the basement where they had been staying this week.

His first gut instinct was to fire anyway but he could not forget what his sergeant had drilled into him: Never fire a bazooka without a backup. His backup would ensure that no one would get behind what was essentially a rocket and be seriously hurt or killed. All this ran through his mind in seconds. But the tank was right there! A battle erupted inside him. Yet he couldn't take the chance, he argued with himself, that his backup or someone else wouldn't suddenly appear behind him when he pulled the trigger. The desire to help grew in direct contrast to his training. He had to help, something inside him demanded it.

The tank robbed him of the choice as it continued to move down another street. Yazell felt like slamming the bazooka down on the table but controlled his frustration and put it back gently. He sank to the floor and leaned against the wall behind him as the feelings of being powerless hit him hard.

Remembering his duty, he dragged himself up and once again took his position at the window. The continual waiting and now missing the opportunity of assisting the other company was igniting the frustration inside him. They had been there for several days and the only thing they had seen was a German machine gunner firing from a second story window across and down the street.

They did of course return fire, Yazell reflected. Some of the guys had found an abandoned German machine gun with ammunition in one of the other buildings and had fixed it. They had all taken turns crawling up onto the roof and harassing the German across the street with their own guns. He smiled slowly as he continued his vigilance.

Night fell early but the American anti-aircraft lights over the city created a sort of bright moonlight that allowed them to see through the darkness. Their platoon was to cross the street with F Company while all the other companies of the 260th moved into their sections.

The scenario was decided. The riflemen would go to the right, along a fence that ran to the buildings across the street. Yazell and his partner would take the machine gun and go to the left then drop down into the ditch that ran down the middle of the street. Cross it and hit the shell blast hole near it and set up the machine gun so they could lay down cover fire.

“Go,” the sergeant commanded.

The sergeant ran alongside the riflemen toward the fence. Machine gun and rifle fire immediately opened up in response. Yazell ran faster than he ever had in the opposite direction, zig-zagging towards the ditch with his partner behind him. They dropped into the ditch with a thud. Scrambling to their feet, hunched over, they ran about fifteen feet to the left before popping up out of the ditch. The two made a zig-zag dash to the shell hole and dove in. They were lucky, the Germans had lost their bead on them when they had gone farther down the ditch before coming up.

Explosions shattered even the sound of gunfire. It was coming from their right. In response, Yazell took a moment to glance toward the fence area while he was hurriedly snapping the machine gun together. He froze. Many of the riflemen of his platoon were lying twisted on the ground. Bullets whistled over his head. He had no time to take it in as they put the machine gun into action, trying desperately to keep the Germans pinned down until the rest of their platoon could escape into the cover of the buildings opposite them.

As Yazell took turns feeding the ammo, he looked over his shoulder towards his friends once again hoping and praying with everything in him to see some sort of movement to prove they were alright. He caught sight of where the Germans must have planted Shu (*a small German anti-personnel mine*) mines along the fence, and it didn't appear that any of the men lying there had survived them. He couldn't stop himself from seeing their faces, etching them into his memory forever. His best friend from Nebraska lay not more than twenty feet from him. Pain ripped through him until he felt like he was on fire. His mind screamed the pain silently. He turned back unable to do anything else and ruthlessly forced himself to focus all his thoughts and energy on what he was doing . . . because he couldn't bare the images that had taken over his mind.

Time seemed to stand still to him yet crossing the street and getting to the enemy position took the rest of the night and most of the next day.

When he finally reached the buildings himself, he heard the news that he was still too much in shock to deal with. They had lost half their platoon and the other light machine gunner from F Company had not made it. Instead of running down the ditch before popping up, he had gone straight across and the Germans had been waiting for him. The losses just kept getting more and more. At least the gunner's partner had survived. With weariness and shock threatening to overtake him, he sharply pushed it all to the back of his mind until he would have time to deal with it. They needed to get as far as they possibly could through

the town before dark.

When they went after the German machine gunner, they found he and the rest of them were gone. Only the shell casings were left to indicate he was ever there.

F Company was ordered to fall back into the houses they had originally started from. The Germans, they were told, usually counter attacked and they wanted to be ready. After setting up their defenses, they were able to doze in exhaustion. The expected attack hadn't come.

The next morning, they moved unhindered across the blood-soaked street. They knew the medics had come and gone but none of them could stand to look where the other members of their company had fallen the morning before. It didn't feel right moving on without them and with so few of them left but they had no choice. They had to secure Saarlautern and the Siegfried Line.

F Company moved through what was left of the town that day. It was hard to figure out which were streets, and which were buildings; the towering piles of bricks and rubble were everywhere. It appeared as if every building in Saarlautern had fallen over, crashing into the streets.

Climbing over the unstable wreckage and debris was slow going. Their platoon searched every structure that was even partially left standing. They encountered a few hidden snipers that took advantage of the piles of rubble to suddenly appear and shoot at them. But mostly, all that was remaining were German soldiers waving a white flag because they had run out of ammunition.

On the outskirts of the town, they found concrete barriers the sergeant called "pill boxes". They were set up to allow a machine gunner to stand behind the safety of the concrete and fire through a hole making it almost impossible for the Americans to fire back and hit anything. Apparently since they had broken through the Siegfried Line in Saarlautern, the Germans must have retreated because the pill boxes were empty. As it was nearly nightfall by the time they checked them all, their sergeant ordered them to dig a foxhole and to wait until morning before continuing the chase.

Yazell crawled into his foxhole, tired and sore, before covering it with his raincoat to keep some of the icy wind out. He was nineteen and felt like an old man. As he sat there alone, he was unable to stop his mind from recreating the scene of yesterday over and over. He wearily gave up the fight. He couldn't say the shock had worn off but the reality of where he was and what had happened set in.

He was not a new recruit. Yazell had been going through training for a year. He had done basic training at Camp Cross, did anti-tank training at Fort Knox with the 10th Armor and anti-tank, mortar, and infantry training at Fort Benning with the 71st Infantry Division. He had then been sent to Camp Shelby, Mississippi to join the 65th Infantry Division, 260th Regiment, F Company to be trained as their lightweight machine gunner.

All along he had known what he would be facing. At least he thought he had. He shook his head sadly. All the training and words in the world couldn't prepare anyone for actual combat. As he sat, huddled in a hole, struggling to keep warm, he tried to

come to terms with his feelings.

Yazell and his fellow soldiers had been a team and could have worked in any situation together. A part of him refused to believe that it could be over so fast. His buddies . . . his friends were gone. Friends he had spent seven months of every hour of every day with. Friends he'd joked and laughed with only moments before they were gone. That was one of the hard parts. The hardest to accept. Not knowing what was coming. No warning that it would be their last time together. His internal self-preservation told him that in the months to come he would not be able to allow himself to get that close again. The pain was too deep, too raw.

Even though he would have to be up at the crack of dawn and with physical exhaustion, he continued to lie awake; grieving for them, for their companionship, their support, and for the pain their families would soon have to endure.

The reality was that any one of them could be gone in the blink of an eye and all that would be left was the pain that was now ripping through his chest. He knew he would remember them his entire life and never stop regretting their loss.

260th F Company on the Move:

How More than 50 Unknown Women were Liberated.

*One of the memories of Pfc. Hobert Yazell,
260th F Company written for him by his daughter,
Debra Yazell Chambers*

Date: April 25, 1945

No man moved. None dared. Each sat tense and ready. They had rapidly become used to the sudden ripping sound of bullets coming out of the darkness to take away one more of their number. One more friend.

The moonless night of April 25, 1945 was full of black shadows. The blackest of all lay beneath them in the swift currents of the hostile Danube River they were crossing. The boat glided through the cold water with only the sound of paddles breaking through the silence. Fifty feet. Thirty feet. Ten feet. The prow of the boat thumped against the river's shore. The sound seemed to hit the silence like an explosion. Every man held position for a moment expecting a reaction that didn't come.

They tried uselessly to peer through the black night, while scrambling to gain firm ground beneath their muddy boots. No resistance greeted them, but their experience kept them on guard. It had been their vigilance that kept them alive.

The unit examined the bushes and trees adjacent to the river's edge. When they were sure it was clear they moved toward their sergeant for orders. They were not the same platoon that joined him at Camp Shelby. Half their number had fallen at Saarlautern and a few others had fallen since, but each original member and replacement deeply respected their sergeant. He had proven himself their anchor in this crazy place. Their sergeant was always either by their side or in the lead in every situation. He might yell in their faces for doing something stupid, but he would also protect each one of them with his life.

The sergeant ordered them to go single file and to keep their eye on the soldier in front of them. He adjusted his glasses and took the lead up the steep embankment. As usual, 19-year-old Pfc. Hobert Yazell from Kentucky, an original member and assigned as the light machine gunner, brought up the rear.

He kept the soldier in sight, as instructed, but at the top of the riverbank he halted. Yazell quietly finished his ascent. When he drew abreast of the other guy all he could see was his silhouette in the black shadows.

"I've lost them," he said in hushed tones. "I didn't see where they went."

Yazell searched their surroundings and found they were on the edge of a small village. The village laid to the right and open fields lay to the left. In front of them, were a few houses and a taller single floor structure. Yazell couldn't find any trace of their platoon. Nothing was moving. His instincts were telling him that without their platoon they had two choices. Either stumble around looking for them in the dark or find shelter until daybreak. Since stumbling around might land them in the hands of the

enemy it would have to be shelter. He looked over the larger building more carefully. There were no lights or sounds coming from it. It appeared deserted.

“Let’s take cover in the larger building until dawn. Hopefully then we will be able to locate our platoon,” Yazell said. As quietly as possible, the two men made their way to the building entrance.

The building was made of brick with large wooden doors. Pushing one open they crept inside cautiously. Their combined flashlights showed a long hallway with a wall at the end and about ten doors on each side. Yazell motioned for the other soldier to follow him down the hallway to the wall, keeping their rifles ready. From this position he knew it would be difficult for anyone to get behind them. Without a word, using only motions to speak for them, they started toward the doors slowly.

With the flashlight in his right hand and his carbine ready in his left, Yazell motioned for the other guy to open the first door. It appeared to be an empty office. Listening for any sounds, they searched it and moved onto the next and the next.

Halfway down the hall, just as they were getting close to it, a door opened. Prepared for anything, the two men jumped into firing stance. To their surprise, a middle aged woman moved into the glare of their flashlights. She was dressed as most of the German women they had seen. In her hand was a large ring of keys, reflecting the light.

She stood there silently staring at them. Yazell could not tell if she was a threat or not so he motioned her forward to the next door and she obeyed. She stayed just ahead of them as they were searching the rest of the rooms, still without a word.

As they approached the end of the pitch black hallway, they were startled to hear banging accompanied by screams coming from ahead. Despite the screams and their automatic inclination to run to help whoever was screaming, they knew they had to secure the building first. When it was completed, they approached a tiny hallway that led down several steps to a wood door. The screams became louder, the banging harder. The other soldier stood behind him while Yazell examined the door and noted the large padlock.

“Open it,” Yazell ordered. He didn’t know if the woman understood English or not, but she did as instructed, using the keys in her hand.

The door burst open as soon as the padlock was removed. Several women toppled out. The relief and happiness showed in their faces as they recognized them as American soldiers. As they moved into the hall, other women were pouring out the basement entrance. The women appeared to be well dressed, between the ages of 16 and 25. More and more filed out and Yazell guessed there must be at least 50 to 75 women. When the hall filled, they moved into a room across the hallway.

Shocked, Yazell watched as they moved past him. For some unknown reason, the Germans had been holding these women prisoners. He had been expecting just about anything when they entered the building, but this?

He followed them into a lounge area and watched while they lit candles. They

seemed familiar with the room. After studying the lounge in the faint light and the young women, it was clear why the Germans were holding them.

Yazell sat on the edge of a chair near the door, holding his rifle ready. He remembered the woman they found and looked for her in the room. In all the shocking events he had forgotten her. She was standing alone, still silent, while the other women were moving about chattering happily in their own languages. He could smell the brewing coffee and looked forward to a cup of it. After all this, he needed it.

The door opened suddenly and Yazell found himself pointing his gun at an American Colonel. "What's going on here, Soldier?" he ordered.

Jumping to his feet, he lowered his weapon and saluted. Yazell explained how they were separated from their platoon after crossing the Danube and ended with what they had encountered in this building. Yazell figured the man must be the 260th Colonel but he had never come into contact with him before, so he wasn't sure. "What is your name, Soldier?" the Colonel asked.

"Private Hobert Yazell, Sir."

"What is your outfit?" the Colonel inquired further.

"260th, F Company, Sir."

The Colonel looked around again. "They're in the next town about five miles down the road," he gestured to the road outside. "I'll take it from here. You better move out, Private."

Responding to the order as fast as possible, Yazell moved through the doors and into bright sunshine. The night had slipped away. Yazell felt exhausted having operated on adrenalin all night. The coffee would have been nice he thought and shrugged. Well, five miles wouldn't take long and then he would be back with his company. That would mean a lot.

Yazell found his platoon with the rest of F Company, sitting in the street of the next town, waiting for orders. His sergeant was happy to see him in one piece. He had been reported MIA and a telegram would reach his mother in a few weeks. It would be another six months before she would learn he had been found.

As he sat beside the other men of F Company, the sleepless night caught up with him. As he drifted off to sleep, he remembered the other soldier had not come back with him. What had happened to him? It would be a mystery to him his entire life.

"Fall in!" The order broke through his need for sleep. F Company moved in scattered formation down the road out of town and started up a hillside. Yazell kept to the ditch as he'd been taught.

About halfway up, they dove for the ground under machine gun and mortar fire. They were right on target. He could hear the bullets flying over his head. The machine gun fire was going long but the mortar wasn't. The ditch was deep enough that Yazell was able to get up and move towards the enemy's position. F Company returned fire but couldn't get a good shot. They were pinned down.

Their sergeant yelled, "Get the spotter!" He motioned, sending several riflemen into the woods. He called in their position and requested air assistance.

Three rounds of mortar fire hit before stopping. A few minutes later, the riflemen returned with a prisoner. The spotter could no longer radio their positions. As Yazell watched from his position close to the top of the hill, two thunderbolts appeared. They dove and fired at the enemy position on the next ridge. As one completed his dive the next one started his. He thanked God for those pilots.

As they stood up, the sergeant was once again on the radio calling for medics this time. It appeared they had lost their First Lieutenant Lambert and one of the other platoon's sergeants. It didn't look good. Lieutenant Bonesteel had been hit as well but hopefully, Yazell thought, he would survive. As he watched them being carried down the hill on stretchers, he heard his sergeant shout.

"Fall in!"

Once again, the 65th was on the move. No matter what heavy losses they sustained, dwindling supplies they endured, miles they had to walk, atrocities they witnessed or number of enemies they encountered, they would continue. They were part of Patton's Third Army. They had a job to do and they wouldn't stop until it was done.

Young American Soldiers

Faced with the Horrors of Mauthausen

*One of the memories of Pfc. Hobert Yazell, 260th F Company
Written by his daughter, Debra Yazell Chambers*

Mauthausen

Even the name is still enough to bring back the reoccurring nightmares of what he had seen the summer of 1945. He spent a lifetime trying to hold the appalling images at bay. As the years passed, the nightmares lessened. It took time but eventually days then weeks and finally years had spared him waking up in a cold sweat, his heart pounding.

Nineteen-year-old, Pfc. Hobert Yazell entered the concentration camp with the 260th Company a few days after World War II had ended. They had come not as conquering heroes but as caring protectors.

They had been to another concentration camp a few weeks earlier to liberate it, and even though Yazell had been the first to jump off the tank he was riding and open the gate to enter Ohrdruf, he did not explore the camp. A British Airman POW had met him at the gate and presented Yazell with a German mouser rifle he had taken from a German soldier. The airman wanted to give it to the first American to enter the camp.

In later years, Yazell had been thankful that the airman had been so excited he had dragged him off to look at a pig he wanted to roast in celebration. Thanks to him and their need to leave less than an hour later, the place would not live in his dreams. Not so with Mauthausen. He had lived and breathed it from early May to the beginning of September in 1945.

The responsibility of safeguarding the doctors, nurses, and displaced persons in the Mauthausen Concentration Camp had fallen on the 260th Company. Part of their function there entailed keeping any further reprisals from happening, taking the displaced persons, known to the soldiers as DPs, to their home countries and keeping the captured German SS Troops imprisoned there. Even guarding the army bus, that ran to and from Linz, had come under their protection. It was a huge responsibility and they had done their best to meet it.

The stench of Mauthausen had hit them first. Everywhere they turned it was there, hovering over them, around them—it was impossible to escape. Yazell could not even begin to relate the overpowering odor to anything he had ever known. It had seemed to permeate itself into everything. The smell was part of the remaining remnants of the carnage that had been committed in the camp. There had been times when all he could think of was just one breath of fresh air. While standing his post, he had watched the DPs, and he knew they must have dreamed of this too.

Their sergeant had taken the platoon on a tour of the camp soon after they arrived. He wanted them to know where everything was located and what they were up against. One of the first rooms they checked held a wall of hair that had to have come from thousands or

even a hundred thousand prisoners. There was so much crammed into that room, it would have been impossible to guess. At the time, he and his buddies couldn't imagine what the Germans had intended doing with it. When they later found out it was for boot linings, they couldn't believe it.

Continuing on, their group came to another building. When the sergeant of their platoon opened the door, they had peered reluctantly into the dark room. It had a different odor spilling out. It reeked of some unknown chemical. They all grimaced in distaste at the scent, glancing at each other to see if their buddies had the same reaction.

After a few tentative steps inside the darkened interior, they glanced around and then hastily made for the door. Some of the men were shaking their heads in revulsion, some had their eyes tightly clenched, making retching sounds, and others just couldn't react. All of them stood there for long moments in the bright sunshine, shocked into absolute silence.

Draped on the walls, stretched tight to dry, had been human skin. No fanfare, no warning, just as if it were a natural occurrence. As if that was not enough to absorb, there were normal, everyday items lying on a table. They shouldn't have drawn more than a glance except they had. Sweat glistened across Yazell's face, in his effort to gain some control of his heaving stomach. He had seen a lampshade and some kind of cover. Things he had seen every day of his life. But they were different. These had drawn his attention because the items were made out of human skin.

What kind of monsters were they? his reeling mind had questioned. Where was the justice in this? There was no easy answer, no rules to base such behavior on. They were just too senseless, too extreme for any understanding. In the innocence of their upbringing, they had never come into contact with such horrifying disregard for life. Yazell felt that no true justice less than that of God's could suffice for such an atrocious crime.

As they continued their tour, painfully drained both mentally and emotionally, the silence endured. They became much more cautious when opening doors, afraid of what more was in store for them.

They were led through a room that appeared to be used as group showers. The sergeant pointed it out, but they had already seen where the pipes had been connected to something other than water. One of the guys commented on a peep hole located in the door.

Fresh anger had flooded through him, to think of any man getting enjoyment from watching defenseless people die. How many innocent men, women and children had gone through here? Yazell had felt helpless in his inability to change what had taken place here. As the powerless fury continued to build, he had momentarily wished that their Division could have stopped this terror sooner. It would have eased his anger to have fought them down to the last man.

They moved on toward the furnaces, every man silent and buried in their own

feelings of inadequacy. They each knew there were more horrors to witness. More pain to digest. What was waiting for them there would be in their nightmares for a very long time. Perhaps forever. As much as they didn't want this horrendous nightmare to become a part of who they were, it was too late. No one could have entered those gates and left unscathed.

There were three furnaces with tall chimneys. The bricks blackened from use. Bodies were stacked everywhere. With no regard for humanity, decency or caring the Germans had flung the naked dead bodies into piles lying on top of each other in varying degrees of decomposition.

Yazell tried to ignore the assault on his senses. How terrifying would life be to know that sooner or later your body would just go to make the pile taller, your limbs and torso slowly combining with others, all modesty and self-respect gone. Or even worse, Yazell thought, to see a loved one lying here day after day. To witness their disintegration as if their very lives had meant nothing at all.

He had backed away from the gruesome sight. Yazell felt a shudder rise from deep inside his body that had spread to his very soul. The atrocities done to these people were so foreign to him he was unable to handle it any longer. His friends must have felt the same because they too moved hastily away.

The battle weary soldiers had felt the burn of tears that day. Yazell included. Relief swept over him when his tour was over. He had not wanted to take such unimaginable horrors home to live in his dreams but no matter how hard he fought them; over the years they ran rampant many times since leaving Mauthausen.

Home became a large canvas tent located near the hospital tents and the tents of the nurses and doctors inside the concentration camp. The medical staff were there to help the DPs survive malnutrition, mistreatment and the diseases that had come from being exposed to unburied bodies and bug infestations.

While at Mauthausen, he noticed a trench being dug down an open field by another command. Yazell had decided upon F Company's arrival that it must be some kind of parade ground used by the Germans. The trench was dug just slightly short of center and ran the length of the field.

Yazell had been standing a good distance away, but it appeared to him, that some of the German SS soldiers were being made to place the decomposing bodies into plastic bags and others were placing them in the deep trench shoulder to shoulder. Without counting, he knew the number had to be in the thousands.

As horrible as it seemed, he had no doubt that number would go up. More DPs continued to die despite the medical care and attention they were receiving since the doctors and nurses arrival. He was told that their bodies had suffered deprivation for too long for them to recover. It made him sad to think that some of those who had celebrated their liberation were not able to live long enough to leave Mauthausen.

The DPs that had been able to recover and would survive still wondered aimlessly around the camp, staying mostly to themselves. They seemed to be waiting like silent

sentinels as the other DPs were either healed or buried.

Yazell remembered that when F Company had first arrived the DPs seemed to move from place to place as quickly as they could manage and avoided open areas. He figured that it was probably because that was what they had been insidiously trained to do. They had spent months or even years knowing that if they were caught out in the open, they might be shot. Even though they knew the Americans were there to help them, preservation habits would take a long time to change, if they ever did. Yazell's heart ached for them.

Their spirits were not entirely broken though. Many reprisals had taken place but most of them were done before F Company had arrived. From what he had been told, the dogs who were trained to tear them apart were the first to go.

He knew the tension had been really tight between some of the DPs. If they could have gotten a hold of those that had been used to report on others by the German SS Troops in trade for better food and clothing, they would have killed them.

Usually, guard duty for Yazell had meant safeguarding the medical staff and gently returning any DPs that had wandered away from their hospital beds. He had also stood guard on the trucks while he and another soldier had taken the DPs across the Russian lines, usually into Czechoslovakia, so they could begin their journeys home.

During his time there, it had been harder and harder to cross the border. They had to have paperwork not only for themselves but for every DP they carried. The Russian checkpoints kept them sitting around while they argued about allowing them to pass. After very lengthy waiting periods and a lot of frustration, they would finally allow them through. The driver would then take them to a designated area where the DPs could be left to make their way home whether it was in Czechoslovakia or in another Russian controlled country.

Yazell had often wondered what these terribly abused people, whose lives were totally shattered, would find when they finally arrived home. He wanted to assume that the Russians would help them but Yazell knew that in those times of destroyed cities and homeless refugees it was a lot to assume. He was never given the opportunity to find out if the DPs made it home or if they had been able to put the pieces of their lives back together. He had only been able to hope and pray for them.

At one point, some of his Company had found an SS soldier beaten to death inside the camp. They assumed that he had tried to escape, and the DPs caught him. The burial detail buried him with other reprisal victims. The DPs had watched their movements very closely and would have been in an uproar if the Americans buried any one of them with the DPs who had died at the hands of the Germans.

In late June of that year, Yazell remembered seeing a body mounted on the camp's outer fence. He hadn't known then who the man was or what he had done to get there. His mind was already overloaded with Mauthausen images, so he didn't question it. Yazell later heard that the man had been the Commandant of the entire Mauthausen concentration camps.

Walking through the camp in his off hours, Yazell had sat down on the edge of the

rock quarry to watch what was happening below. The German SS Troops were busting rocks under the supervision of an American sergeant who had continually snapped a whip at his side. Yazell had heard about the whip before this and had known that it originally belonged to the German Commandant. He carried it everywhere he went and used the whip on the DPs.

Looking around the quarry, he saw the stone steps that led to the top of the ridge and thought about what he had been told of its recent history. Many prisoners, including American POWS died there as well, out of cruelty. He tried not to think about the brutality of pushing helpless people, carrying heavy stones, down the steps or over the cliff edge.

As much as possible, he and two buddies, a Native American and a Polish American from New York who could speak the language, left the camp, and explored the nearby villages.

They would pass the time talking to the villagers, who claimed to know nothing about what had gone on at Mauthausen during the years it had been in operation. To the soldiers it was obvious that they had known but had been too afraid to say anything in case they would end up there themselves. The villagers were friendly, and the soldiers needed to get away from the horrors of the camp—it helped to keep them sane.

When all the tents were down and loaded, the DPs dispatched to their hometowns and the German SS soldiers taken away, F Company moved to nearby houses. The sergeant, who had been with them from Camp Shelby, held a meeting on a hillside behind the houses. He informed them that they would be there for another week before moving out. Despite their desire to leave as soon as possible, they provided security for the area until they were ordered to move on.

The day he left Mauthausen, Yazell had thought about the overwhelming atrocities he'd seen there that summer. Many of which, he could not even pretend to comprehend. Many had ripped away the innocence with which he viewed the world beyond his home. It opened his eyes to what could happen when the evil of a few men went unchecked by the world. He would pay dearly for the insight with years of nightmares and a continuous battle to forget the horrors that others had suffered in that place. He said a final goodbye to what he considered the truest hellhole of all and promised himself he would never be back.