THE ETO with HQ. BTRY. 144th FA. Gp.

From Utah Beach to Salzberg Austria

Personal Recollections

of

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It was in the middle of the afternoon on July 16, 1944, that some 60 men and officers of GP. Hq. 144 FA. GP. landed at Utah Beach on the north coast of the Cherbourg Peninsula. The remainder of the Battery, about 40 men and officers had left England on an LST with the units trucks and heavy baggage, and were not to join us until three days later, as we found out.

Due to some oversight on the weatherman's part, it was a fine warm day there in that part of France, a feature that we were to regret later.

As we came into shore from the SS. Prince Henry (an ex-Canadian coastal liner) I noticed many wrecked landing barges on the beach, and other ships whose top works stuck out of the deeper water where they had sunk. On the beach were many LSTs, unloading men and equipment, or, having unloaded were awaiting the high tide to float them off.

We were lucky in not having to wade in, but landed on a floating wharf made of hollow steel square caissons, extending some 100 yards out into the water. I would not have minded a dip so much if I'd known what ordeal was in store for us later, but at the time was quite relieved to see that wharf.

There was no time to be lost and we passed over the wharf, crossed the sand dunes over a bull-dozed road made passable by steel netting laid down and found ourselves looking out over a fairly level semi swampy landscape, some wooded areas here and there or a farm house, still standing. M. Ps. were on hand to direct traffic and above all, to keep it moving, as men and more equipment were coming in all the

time. Area B we were told and so off down the path we started. It paralled the beach and looked more like an unimproved road than a path, and I would hesitate to guess as to the number of men who had passed over that way. We weren't allowed on the road, it was reserved for vehicles.

I might go into details as to what we wore and carried. It was too much of everything. Wool uniforms, topped off with gas proof fatigue clothing, designed to keep liquid gas drops from soaking through, and it kept the sweat from soaking out, as we were beginning to find out. Steel helmets, gas masks (carried, but not worn), arms, ammunition, field jackets, and our packs bulged with rations, toilet articles, raincoats, and the other things deemed necessary for an excursion into the active war zone.

It was hot, and as we walked we oosed perspiration into our ODs, but not through that gas proof clothing. Time passed and we emptied canteens. By this time our route had swung away from the beach and we crossed a swamp, on a narrow raised road, very conscious of the signs, "Mines swept from road only", and the bomb craters visible everywhere. I just knew that there was a mine somewhere along that road with my name on it, if I only stepped from the beaten track an inch.

Eventually, we came to Area B, after having walked 7 miles, which seemed like 27 because of our clothing and heavy packs. There wasn't a man, from Colonel down to the lowliest private but what knew that his initiation into France, while not one of the lead slinging variety, had been a "hot one", and one that nearly wore legs to a nub.

We dined on C rations and made ready to sleep in fox holes, already dug, probably by some of the thousands who had already passed this way. Our vehicles carried all our rolls which left us to sleep in what we wore. Many of us made the mistake of wrapping our raincoats around us,

to regret it later. When we eventually arose, it was to find that our clothing had become wet, from our warm bodies, and the condensing action from the raincoat. C rations again for breakfast, delicacy that we were to become accustomed to as time went by.

Soon after breakfast we were loaded into G. M. trucks and ended up at Sortosville, after traveling some 35 or more miles to end up near the southern side of the Peninsula. On this trip we passed through Valognes and Montebourg, both quite badly wrecked towns. Of course we were all quite busy, looking out over the countryside and thrilling to each new sign of war wreckage, a blasted gun, several smashed and burned trucks or tanks, battered houses, the tangled mass of telephone and electric wires along the road, also the sight of thousands of "Jerrycans" and "Americans" full of gasoline, stacked in the open in various small hedgerow bounded fields.

We found that our group, together with all the corps artillery were to remain in reserve until later and so the period from 17 July to 31 July was spent bivouaced in an apple orchard full of small green apples at Sortosville, a village that I never did see. During this time we were kept busy perfecting communications, going on hikes and becoming oriented.

One amusing incident happened during our stay there, which could have been otherwise. Our battery was flanked on either side by portions of a negro artillery battalion and one night some sentry, fancying that he smelt gas, (in reality it was the smell of freshly mown hay, that becoming damp with dew, drifted down into the camp) sounded the alarm. For some minutes it sounded like the chivairi of all ages, gas alarms, rifle shots, and someone even let go a burst from a 50 caliber machinegun. It was a relief to be protected by those head high hedgerows, you knew the only bullet that could get you would have

to do it coming down. The Colonel was very put out at the display but nothing definite came of it, and no one was court-martialed for unwarranted firing of weapons.

The corp artillery of the XV Corp, all being concentrated along a mile length of road, it's a good thing the enemy was not aware of it. It would have made a nice mixup for some bombings or strafing. Several times the area was visited by German reconnaissance planes during the night, who dropped flares, leading us to expect some sort of action. In this we were happily disappointed and it turned out to be a very peaceful sojourn.

During this time the preliminaries to the Normandy break through were showing up and we knew it was only a question of time, as we followed the S-2's situation map. I guess you would call it under a tension.

Well, finally on July 29, we became combat operational, and on July 31 we moved to Fribehon, a road distance of 40 miles. More hedgerows and less apple trees, but many unexploded German grenades and rocket projectiles lying around, that were finally picked up and piled out of the way. It made us nervous to step on one at night.

Our position here was in "March Bivouac" a condition of no permanence. You may remain for an hour or several days. We remained until Aug. 4. Had to lay some wire to hook up with our battalions and kept busy one way or another. I went through the town of Periers while here and it was a mess. Nothing but piles of stone and rubble, a few of the streets had been bulldozed out to permit passage of vehicles and here and there a civilian would be picking at a pile of rubble, probably searching for someone who was missing.

The night of Aug. 3 while we were busy watching a picture show, March Order was given and we really scrambled. Got everything packed and the convoy pulled out at 12:30. I rode for a time on top of one

of the 2½ ton wire trucks but got cold, so the first halt I burrowed into the radio truck along with four operators, a message center chief and his clerk with the 1st Sgt. and the driver outside. There were enough of us inside that little truck and with out equipment so that we were pleasantly warm anyhow.

Just at daun we passed through Auranches, at the base of the Peninsula, and kept on going. Evidences of some excitement were visible, dead Germans lying here and there along the road and the remains of one of their motorized columns scattered and destroyed.

At 0900 hours we made another march bivouac on a farm belonging to some loyal Breton, who had served France well, to the turn of some dozen children, several of whom kept busy during our few hours stay, carrying pitchers of cider around for us to drink. The girls were built like the fine horses, very stocky and broad of beam. We were supposed to be getting some sleep, some did, but most of us had other matters to attend to, camouflaging to check, maps to work on, radios to check and the dozens of other things necessary to insure readiness.

Sure enough, we were ordered on at 1900 hours and at 2200 hours we arrived near St. Germain, 90 miles from Tribihoer, a position area, wire to lay, a complete installation, which was still being installed at daylight. Seemed like everything went wrong. A pitch black night and a mild case of jitters probably were the cause. Capt. Anderson took it very philosophically and so did we, after a "chewing" meeting.

I guess this place didn't suit, because we moved again during the day, a few miles to another position but did not go into position here. The next, say couple of days, is a blur. I remember a lake, an abandoned quarry where we went into position, laid much wire and then some hedgerows where I had an alcove tunneled into one of them, which resulted in filling my sleeping bag with sand. Too, I remember the AA:

protection we were endowed with. Several multiple gunned half tracks.

Then on Aug. 6, we were at St. Quendes Faits, some 40 road miles from St. Germain. Again things are hazy, but I remember several pauses when we erected camouflage and after a space of minutes it was pulled down and off we went, to go through the same thing a little later. Also a large wood where we relaxed for several hours, a relaxation that was broken only by some rifle fire in the distance and a knowledge that anything could happen. It did, we took off again. Our position here was around an old quarry and smelter of some sort. The quarry was filled with water and many of the boys got a swim. The pull out order caught some of them in the water and they had to rush. A few miles after leaving St. Quen Des Faits we passed through Laval, early in the evening, and made a bivouac on the eastern outskirts of the town. The country here was slightly rolling with some trees here and there. Grain or hay had been groun where we stopped over, in a field, with personal and trucks dispersed around the hedgerow bordering the field. The battery was split up, as our reconaissance was forward someplace and I was acting 1st Sgt. guards to post and all. During the night, some time after midnight, Willie Hansen and I were repairing the big radio transmitter, laid up with a stuck meter needle. We were working inside the blacked out radio truck when all the anti-aircraft guns in the vicinity broke loose, at some plane flying over. There was a battery of 90 mm's not far away and they really shook the ground. Then shell fragments started falling like hail all around the truck. At first we were in mind of crawling out and getting under, but decided it was safer to stay and not run the risk of losing any of the little radio parts scattered around the truck. We must have been lucky as none of the fragments hit our truck. One of our men not far away was not so lucky, a fragmant hunted him out in his fox hole and made a dent in his back, only a miner scratch, however. I got an hour or two sleep

before rolling out and we pulled out again, at 0830. We were following one of the 79 Divs. Combat Teams at this time so took our ques from them.

Just before noon we caught up with our reconnaisance party who had spent the night in a wooded area virtually surrounded by Germans, but the only sufferers were the Germans, as quite a few of them were captured.

After a sketchy meal, eaten in a pouring rain, we pulled out again and at 2200 hours we reached St. George Des Bois, 29 miles from Laval.

Our position area here was in quite rolling country with lots of wooded areas and farm houses scattered here and there. We were dispersed around under apple trees and among some buildings of a large farm.

We had a bathroom set up at one end of a barn, a strip of canvas strung around a tarpaulin stretched on the ground and a barrel of hot water, kept that way by an immersion heater. Hansen and I were taking a bath here, I had finished and was dressed, but he was washing some clothes sitting on the tarp, stark naked, when two old French Women walked up, looked in, turned to each other talking strenuously, then looked in again. Evidently something about Hansen intrigued them. I will say for him that he was quite nonchalant about it.

Between ourselves and our battalions we sent several PW's back to a prisoner cage. In fact several German soldiers were picked up not 100 yards from our bivouac area, where they themselves had been resting. We would have been like sitting ducks if they had only chosen to try some sniping.

We were not in firing position here so the time was spent in readying equipment for the future, washing clothes and resting, but after two days, during which time we enjoyed beautiful weather, we took off again leaving at 1430 hours.

Our move this time took us through Le Mans, the largest place yet, and the populace certainly was turned out to greet the "Yanks".

A tentative position had been picked for our position at the eastern outskirts of the city, centered around a large chateau, and plenty of trees around for aerial protection. The advance party had found an abandoned German full-track light vehicle in good condition and Blaney and his mechanics were busily engaged in painting it O.D. Things seemed to be slightly unsettled but preparations were being made for supper, when suddenly an order for moving out came. It was really a rush, seems that a rumor of a German counterattack was wandering about. We tore out and on up the road for miles, during which time we got quite a thrill. The road we were traveling was one of the main highways between Bordeaux and Paris and at one of the many crossroads we were faced by a huge sign, Paris, 180 Kms. Were we heading for Paris? It was a cheerful thought, but it was all just a thought, because a short time later we took off on a decidedly back road and came to a halt. During this halt the supper meal was handed out, some sort of weak juice mixture, very tasty, and some C ration crackers, jam and so forth. With our moving it was not possible for the cooks to get their stoves going. I left my vehicle and walked some distance up the column for my handout, returned and was just beginning to enjoy my meal when we took off again. I tried for some distance to drink my juice but spilled nearly all of it over my clothes, so poured the rest of it out, and filled up on the dry crackers. Just before dark we occupied position at Chanteloup on the grounds of a large chateau, which was being used as a boys school. It was situated in the midst of a large grove of huge trees. I remember that we in the radio vehicles bedded down by the chateau and the chickens woke us up before what we thought was the right time in the morning. The CP was located in a dugout and everytime I went into it to see about anything the dirt fell down on my neck from the roof, which was too low for me. What with getting some communications snarls straightened out, some codes fixed up and working on the light plant I finally got turned in about 0001 hours.

Blaney showed up just after breakfast the next day in his full-track. He had stayed behind at Le Mans to finish painting it and had to ask everyone along the road whether some big guns had passed that way, to find out his direction. When it got dark he pulled off the road and spent the night in the ditch. Said the thing made so much noise he was afraid the Americans would take him for a Kraut and the Krauts would open up on him thinking he was a tank column moving up. We had to abandon the little beauty there in the grove, it was much too slow to keep up with us, and not a very efficient machine either. I suppose some other outfit grabbed onto it later.

Sometime during the late afternoon we left Chanteloup heading north again. Near dark we bivouaced in a big wood, expecting to remain there the night. The Germans had been constructing an airport in the open east of the woodwith sheltered parking under the trees, but the rapid advance prevented its completion.

Just after dark, and it was really dark under those trees, word came that we were to move out during the night sometime. We had to guide by feel all the vehicles out to the open where we parked and except for the guards we managed to doze a little until about 0002 hours when Capt. Anderson came back to guide us on up to our new position. On the move up we were nearly run down by one of our huge M-4 prime movers that was going in the opposite direction. Due to the extreme blackness it was only going about 8 miles an hour, so did not make any noise and we did not see or hear it until we were nearly under it. The poor jeep would have been quite ironed out if our driver had not swung out of the way just in time.

We went into position at St. Aignan just before dawn and got most of our outlying wire in before daylight. It was from this position that our battalions first delivered fire on the enemy, firing into the Forest of Perseigne, where a concentration of German tanks and Infantry had

been reported. In four out of the six positions since leaving Tribehou we had had the guns in firing position but had n ot done any firing because of the lack of targets. The Corps Commander desired heavy battalions ready at all possible times because of the unsettled condition of the front. It was with quite a feeling of elation that we heard the firing as previous to this time we thought we were just along for the ride, and were stringing wire for the practice. That feeling was to leave us permanently later on.

All of this country seemed to be partially wooded, nearly all large trees and here and there in some of the cleared spaces were apple orchards. Most of our vehicles were under apple trees here, all green apples yet. The Colonel had a little blow-up this morning, as one of the command car drivers made a miscalculation pulling into a drive and ended up in the ditch. It took the combined efforts of two other cars to snake it out. Not long after, another car slid off into the same place, then the Colonel really went to town, his language dried up the mud and this car came out much easier than the first.

Sometime after noon our reconnaisance party left so we were on pins for some time. Finally I was able to send the trucks out to pick up lines and the rest of the battery departed at 1630 hours. Too many of these moves seem to be at night so it is hard to get an idea of the type of country we pass through. On this move we saw many burning tanks, both ours and theirs, (evidently a big tank fight had gone on not too long before). About 1930 hours we arrived at La Guilloisiere, more of a community than a village, after covering nearly 70 miles. Needless to say it was quite dark, and before we were settled Lt. Lauer and I took off looking for Akes and his truck, also for 79th Div. Artillery. We were out for several hours, missed Akes, but he had found Div. Artillery and got a line in to them so everything was O.K. While we were cruising the countryside some one put on a very good bombing show a mile or so off to our flank. It was not possible to tell whose planes

it was, so every time one flew over us we were still as mice. All of us knew how that vehicle could show up on the white road so were not taking chances. Things got all straightened out and I found my bedroll before morning and "died" in it. This wasn't a bad position, a ditch ran by my apple tree where I slept (when I had a chance) so I didn't have to dig a foxhole. There was some trouble with wire, too many units were moving in and out of the fields and tore up our lines several times. The kitchen crew found a barrel of "spirits" in a cellar and made the acquaintance of Calvados, which was really 180 proof dynamite and a brown mixture resembling cider in everything except the taste and effect.

On the afternoon of the third day of our halt we made ready to move again and about 1500 hours took off for Challet. It was a long move of around 70 miles; the column broke in two when there was a mixup at an intersection after dark. Lt. Lauer and I dropped out to bring in the rest of the battery so did not arrive until near midnight. It was so dark that several of our trucks nearly ran into ditches and banks, especially while passing through wooded places. Everything in the Corps seemed to have been moving up, and we could see burning buildings off in the distance several times. Evidently the "business" could not be too far away. Made you feel squeamish when you couldn't tell what you might run into in the dark.

We drove through a big gate into some woods, and I could see some buildings, thought we were really on an estate. After getting a check on communications and running a few short lines through the woods to various local installations I got my bedroll and entered the large building where Message Center was. Everyone was asleep except a guard outside and the radio and operations personal on duty over at the CP. I couldn't find a bare place in the house so laid my roll out in what I thought was an anteroom off the main entrance. In that I was mistaken,

at daybreak when things started to move I found that I was in the entrance hall, and had slept under a table, a good thing as it had kept the passers-by from walking on me in the dark.

The next morning a sniper in some building a few hundred yards away made things a bit interesting, but he was soon routed out by infantry patrols and some of our "eager beavers". There was a brick wall surrounding this place that we were in, but he (the sniper) persisted in glancing a bullet through the gate now and then. Later on, while I was in the house that I had slept in we were startled by the sound of planes and just had time to see three ME-109's bank down and swing past our position. That was all we saw because a glance was all we needed before we ducked behind the walls. I guess it wasn't us they were after because no shots were fired as they passed over but strafed some units in a field a short distance away from us. Maybe this was a good thing, the kitchen crew under "Wally" Olerup were soon busy digging some good deep foxholes, something that they had heretofore thought unnecessary. One of our battalions was also strafed while at this position and several injured.

This area, almost midway between Chartres and Druex is one of the fine grain producing parts of France and farmers were busy hauling and stacking their crops. The wagons for the most part were long two-wheeled carts pulled by two and three horses in tandem.

There was quite a lot of wire work in this position as the lines were long and one of the battalions had to displace forward on the night of Aug. 16. I missed dinner while out on some of this work and tried to make up for it by sampling some of the green hued carrots, but it didn't work, was really afraid to eat it without washing because of the high organic content of the soil.

On the night of Aug. 17 and about 2100 hours we displaced forward some nine miles to La Boullay Thierry, where our position was on

the grounds of what had quite a large estate. I didn't find out about all this until the next day as it was much too dark and I much too busy to sightsee, that night. Before I had a chance to look around I was off on a hunt for 79th Div. Arty. who had moved and we had to change over our old line to them. Back from that chore I was locating a place for the portable generator where it would be out of the way. A hedge seemed to offer a good place, I intended placing it just over it, so the hedge would serve to quiet the noise. Started to step over (it was a low hedge) but changed my mind and tossed a handful of gravel over first. It hit bottom some time later. (I put the generator elsewhere). The next morning I found that the hedge bordered a thirty-foot deep and wide moat that surrounded the chateau. Several crossed the rickety drawbridge and examined the old place. It had been a grand place in its time but evidently had been abandoned for some years. During the day a goat fell into the moat (probably overcome because of the turn of events) and disturbed the general peace by blatting every few seconds. It was unhurt though and could find its way up if it only looked around so none of us went down after it.

We were expecting movement orders during the day (Aug. 18) so couldn't relax, and we finally pulled out to a rendevous about five, from where we watched hundreds of vehicles move on up, finally our turn came and we took off. Was it ever dark? I remember, Engbritson walking through a town ahead of his truck calling for the routemarker, about 2300 hours. The column got split again due to a MP misdirecting a portion of it and again Lt. Lauer and I retraced part of the route to pick up the threads. Saw several burning villages in the distance. Things are looking up. Must be a war on someplace close. Too close!: Arrived at La Petit Tertre at midnight 34 miles from the last position. Position area was scattered around and about a farm yard, my horse under an apple tree, and a foxhole dug in the outskirts of a manure pile.

It was the only place soft enough that I could get a shovel to work in. One night while here it rained, fortunately I had anticipated it and erected my puptent, but the ground was hard and when it rained the ground wouldn't hold the stakes. I woke up with my tent wrapped around me and my bedroll. Pvt. Arroyo provided the comedy relief here by taking off for some shelter when a Kraut plane flew over while he was still in bed. He and his bed landed in a duck pond. Talk about a muddy mess! He was it.

We moved up to Rue de la Vallee, on the Seine River on the 21st. Someone made a mistake this time, we were moved and had our wire in by dark. At least it was in, but one battalion line went out at dark. The trucks were out so I went out on it. A hectic night was ahead, but I didn't know it. This particular line was laid across country and in the dark nearly impossible to follow. Near midnight, after fixing a bad break in it, we came to a road crossing where some dozen lines crossed, just beyond was a potato patch, with all my wires and everyone elses, churned up together, wrapped around truck wheels and buried in the foot-deep mud. Some trucks had slipped off the road and in the business of getting them out, the wrecker had completely ruined all the wire lines crossing the potato patch. Luckily we were near the battalion CP and I got a crew and some wire out from there. It was really a mess. Mud stuck over the wire, dark as pitch and trying to hurry. I got back to the outfit at 0006 hrs., but the line was in. The rub was that the Colonel had wanted to register that battalion at midnight and was quite put out because he couldn't get them by wire.

Our position here was on a heavily wooded slope leading down to the Seine valley, with the river about two miles away. The city of Mantes-Gassicourt was four miles away to the east, and we could see portions of it from where we were. It rained much of the time and it was quite sloppy.

During our stay of 8 days here the troops crossed the Seine backed up by the fire from all our heavy guns, and we saw quite a lot of enemy air action while they were trying to knock out the two bridges crossing the river. Due to the terrain they would come in high over us and dive to the river, with all the guns in the country seeming to shoot at them. A goodly number kept on going right into the ground and river too, due to that same shooting. There we sat practically in a grand stand seat for all the show. A couple of planes shot short and dropped some rockets near us but they were duds and didn't go boom.

We started picking up wire about noon on the 29th and in a pouring rain left the Seine valley, arriving at Brechamps, 31 miles back about 1600 hours. It was quite a relief to find that we were not operational, so there was no wire to put in. The traditional apple tree was my home again, and I really had my pup tent tied down this time. Before I did very much about looking over our new position, I had to dig into my duffle bag and get on some dry clothes, it had poured on the trip down and riding on top of the wire truck my raincoat only funneled the water down onto myself.

The whole village seemed to have turned out to watch us, and when we lined up for chow, it was hard to tell where we started and finished, the French civilians nearly lined up too. Wally (our mess sgt.) did some good trading here by passing off some of the C rations for some very welcome fresh vegetables, including some real Irish potatoes, not the dehydrated variety.

We were here for about 30 hours and during that time our area was the parade ground for dozens of children, one very neatly dressed little one (at least she was that way in the morning) became quite dirty by late afternoon and carried a can nearly full of second hand chewing gum. Everytime someone would give her a new stick she would chew it for a while, then put it in the can and if a new stick were not forthcoming

she dug out a used lump from the can and reworked it. Another pretty little one came walking up to everyone gravely indicating for them to bend over, upon which she kissed them on both cheeks. I guess she made quite a haul of candy, gum and such things by the time she had covered the place. There had been a P-38 shot down here sometime before the Americans arrived and the plane crashed in the graveyard. It was a complete wreck, partly burning, and the pilot was buried in the yard by the French. There were fresh flowers there when we walked down to see it all.

There was quite a bit of talk and wonder as to why we had pulled back and remained unoperational. The general idea was that Patton did not need the heavy artillery and did need the gas. Of course we were no longer needed on the Seine as our work had been taken over by the artillery of the XIX Corps and we were to move eastward. The night of August 31 we pulled out of Brechamps at 0005 hours for Gevry, 106 miles to the east.

It was a beautiful night when we left, but after a few hours it clouded over and just before dawn it started a drizzly cold rain. At dawn we were in Fontainbleau, but saw only a very little of the residential area. The houses were all big ones, resembling hotels mpre than a residence.

A few miles beyond the city we crossed the Seine, over a pontoon bridge about 100 yards in length. It was a pretty scene, the banks of the river all covered by green grass, and the trees green, hard to realize that it was torn by war. Not far beyond the crossing, the scene changed, many of the trees had been torn by shellfire or blasted for roadblocks, evidently the Germans had put up a little local action around here.

We arrived at Gevry at 0930 hours, setting up puptents scattered along under rows of apple trees bordering some pasture lots. The situation for us was still "not operational", however, we had to lay single lines to each one of our battalions, operate a switchboard and so on. Then the news broke; all vehicles were grounded?? The allowance was only a gallon

a day per vehicle so our radio vehicles were shut off and all radios checked out. Patton was in need of all gasoline for his armour, so we were to sit and wait until they ran into something that needed heavy pounding. All the corps artillery was sitting there in a few square miles, only some 50 kilometers southeast of Paris and no gasoline.

Things were pretty quiet at first, but after the first day or so, the vehicles were all cleaned up, equipment checked over again, reville formations, athletics and various other occupations kept us busy. The reville formations were not scheduled at first, but the skipper went looking for a driver one morning about 1000 hours and found him in bed yet. So; reville.

I forgot to mention that on this last move of ours while we were traveling in complete blackout, we met several big trucks heading west, with headlights on. They were some of Patton's gas trucks going back for more. It was quite a thrill to see something with lights again for a change.

One afternoon there was a special services show over at one of the battalions and we were more or less sent to see it. Had to hike some couple of miles as it turned out to be at one of their gun batteries instead of at Headquarters. Guess we needed the exercise though. Once too, we were visited by one of the Red Cross Clubmobiles and filled up on nice doughnuts and coffee.

Someone must have unbent, or stole some gasoline, because we were permitted to send a truck to Paris, twice, two or three days apart. We drew lots for the men and as usual I had my good luck and drew blanks, both times. Then the time came that we were to send a third truck, and I surely would have had a chance this time, as about two-thirds of the men had gone. However just after the authorization for the Paris truck came in, we received orders alerting us for movement.

So it was that after 8 days of relaxation, we took off, leaving Gevry

at 0800 hours on September 8. It was a fine morning, still dark when we left and at daun it started to cloud up and we rode tha last three hours of the trip in a pouring rain, jeep tops down and getting soaked through, water even running down into my shoes. When we arrived at Brienne le Chateau 90 miles further east, at 1130 hours it had stopped raining, and the sun was shining nicely.

We found ourselves in the midst of luxury. The place had been a French ammunition dump, then taken over by the Germans, who had built several nice residences, probably for high officers, or non-coms. There had been a large building across the road housing communications equipment, that the FFI had destroyed a few days before. All of us had quarters in these houses and could have made quite a good deal of it, electric lights, running water, sit-down toilets that flushed, but most of the furniture was stoves and bare floor. I moved some nice dry grass in for a mattress making ready for a real stay as the colonel intimated that we were probably due for quite a rest again.

There were some portable fire pumps on the place and cisterns full of water, so the trucks were all washed again, buildings thoroughly cleaned, and it seemed like we were in for another seige of garrison life.

This had been one of the largest ammunition dumps in France, before the war, but much of the machinery had been dismantled, the machine shop destroyed by the French and some of the sheds stacked high with empty fuse cases. Scattered around over the hundreds of acres of the dump were piles of ammunition, all French, and stacked on the floor of a lake were hundreds of bundles of some kind of explosives, strips of substance similar to thin tree bark. We were never able to find exactly what it was. In a large building we found a complete display of all types of ammunition from all countries and of all calibers, from 22 shorts up to huge cannon projectiles nearly six feet long. There were hundreds of, probably thousands of them, all labeled and in sections, each country's

loads in their own section. There was even one of the U. S. Bazooka projectiles, whether placed there by Germans or French we had no way of telling, though probably Germans on their trip down towards Chaumont, as our Bazooka had not been out when France fell.

In spite of the expectation of a long stay here, at 1400 on September 10 we moved out again. It was quite a blow, we had been expecting too much of the place I guess.

This move was made in nice weather, in fact too nice as the dirt roads we eventually hit were very dusty, country was rolling, and we passed through lots of small wooded patches. The civilian populace had lost much of its earlier enthusiasm, and did not crowd the streets of the towns as they did back in our Normandy days.

At 1600 we arrived at Fays, only a hamlet in size. Our CP was in an old house populated by two ancient French people, quite aged, and some very antique furniture. We were operational again so the installations had to go in in the usual hurry. I bedded down in a prune orchard for a change. Pigs had been rooting under my tree so the ground was soft. The fruit was ripe and I nearly ruined my appetite for the next several days, by eating prunes at any and every chance. People kept me quite busy while here. We had a new battalion and they needed a lot of dope handed on and depleted our reserve of wire by some ten miles. The next day we were supposed to move out at five PM for another jaunt. Everything was in readiness when Simpson saw a nice young tom turkey with his head under his wing asleep near the big radio truck. He, being of a foraging nature and a native Iowan could vision barbecued turkey at our next stop. So he grabbed the turk and stuffed him in a sack inside the truck. Then things started to go wrong. Our departure was delayed and during the delay the French woman called in her chickens and turkeys, guess she was suspicious because she counted them all. One seemed to be missing, even several recounts and a con-

tinous calling didn't produce it. Her small boy was standing by the radio vehicle for a time and in spite of the nearly steady stream of code coming over the speaker, I'm sure he could hear that fool turkey talking back every time the woman called. Just to be on the safe side and prevent any international scandals, Simpson dumped the looted turkey out the back of the truck, away from the farmyard, but the turk wasn't satisfied to be loose, he had to go walking out away from the truck ruffling his feathers and talking to himself at a great rate. Really pointed the finger at the boys. It ended well, the old lady made another count and you could just see her beam all over as she found the count correct, but probably condeming the rascally Yanks who would steal an old woman's turkeys.

We left Pays about a half hour after the scheduled time and crossed the Marne River just about dark. I can remember nothing of what it looked like there, but I saw it a good many miles further north sometime later, and it looked to me like a small stream to be carrying the name of a river.

What a night. We pulled into Diarville at 0500 hours, nearly twelve hours after leaving Pays, and covered only 70 miles. I was traveling with Chaplain Gamache and had to take a turn at the wheel, due to the extra long time on the road. We nearly froze. It was clear but damp and cold, as well as pitch black. The only sure way of telling when we passed through a small village was the smell of the manure piles stacked in front of the houses. We could not see the houses.

As soon as the vehicles were displaced under cover of apple trees, we all bedded down, chiefly to warm up, as there was no time for a real sleep. I got about an hour before rolling out, had breakfast and went out to locate the battalion CPs. Had to get wire in fast,

as it seemed that we were all out on the end of a finger and Germans on three sides of us. Sounded insecure to me, but no one else seemed to be worried (after we got our wire in, and were ready to shoot).

This was quite a little village, even had a bakery, so we tried a loaf of rye bread, or maybe it was just dark bread that tasted like rye. It wasn't at all bad while fresh but nearly bit back after it got a little stale. I forgot to mention that as I staggered down the road to the kitchen that morning for my breakfast, I met an old Frenchman with a bottle. He poured me a tiny glass of colorless liquid. I needed something to wake me up and take the chill out of my bones, that was still there even after that hour in my sleeping bag. Without even smelling the glassfull I downed it. The chill disappeared fast, literally burned away, and even my shoe soles started to smoke. It woke me up too. I found out that it was Mirebelle, distilled from a small yellow plum that gave it its name. The ripe plum was excellent for eating, and I got my Mirebelle in that way after that first time.

After things were all straightened out, I moved my home to another plum tree and got a nice foxhole organized. Jewell made a very highclass one that nearly drowned him when we had a hard rain one night. He was sleeping in it and all the water drained down into the hole. He came out like a drowned gopher, and pitched his tent alongside. Some of the operations section were in a building but the rest of us used the open spaces as usual.

While in position here our battalions were firing over the Moselle River and into the town of Charmes, located on the river some miles to the east.

I made several trips from Diarville up to the 3rd. Army Signal Depot located some 50 miles west of Verdun for supplies. It was about a 200 mile round trip and was quite tiring for a one day journey, as

it took so long to get the different items needed from the depot, and especially as we generally hit an engineer and quartermaster dump near Verdun to pick up things there.

I well remember one trip made in a jeep with Awbrey and Newell. We were on our way back and it was cloudy and pitch dark, as we were delayed at Verdun until nearly dark. It had grown so difficult to see that I decided that we would hole up in the next village and go on in the morning. Then the road disappeared altogether and a moment later Newell said, "We're going over!" And that's what we did. The jeep came to rest in a ditch six feet deep, on its side. What kept it from rolling over on its back was the big wooden box of supplies we had loaded in the rear seat space. After taking stock and finding no one hurt except for some scratches and a bruise or two and only a small tear in the jeep top, we dug some raincoats out of the supplies and Awbrey and I sat down wrapped up in a raincoat apiece leaning up against the fenceposts across the ditch. Newell curled up in the bottom of the ditch, inside the jeep. So we spent the night. I don't think a single vehicle passed that way during the hours of darkness. It was about midnight when we dumped over and as soon as it was daylight, Awbrey and I walked back some two miles until we found an engineer outfit who sent a truck with us and snaked the wreckage out of the ditch. The box that saved us showed that its work was done by falling to pieces as soon as it was straightened up. The twisting and strain had pulled the nails loose in the heavy wooden box. After filling up with oil at the engineer's camp and burning all the oil out of the carburator that had drained into it, we finally got going again and got back to Diarville about noon.

Our semi-steady moving picture shows were so well attended in the school room that we O.I.s were hardly able to squeeze in. The

local French were allowed to see the show and they really did flock in. Guess it was something they were not accustomed to. I know there was no cinema house in the village.

My main trouble here was in trying to keep dry and keep the power unit functioning to provide juice for the CP work and the moving picture machine for the nightly shows (when we could get a film). The battalions close this time to our outlying lines didn't give us much trouble, but the rain did. It seemed to be trying to show us just how much it could pour down.

We had been in Diarville seven days expecting to move any time but nothing had come of the several times that reconnaisance had gone out. Then one night at 0030 hours, when I returned from another trip to the Signal Depot beyond Verdun, I found the battery alerted and ready to move out at two. Was I tired! Things seemed to be under control so I rolled in for a catnap.

At 0200 hours we did pull out, me draped in the back of the chaplain's jeep. I hoped for a chance to get some sleep, but it turned out so cold that I kept myself awake shivering. At daybreak we had covered only about five miles. Some outfit that really had priority was on the road and we just had to wait. Soon after 0800 hours the column started rolling. We passed through Charmes and got to see some of the rubble piled in the street by our firing, crossed the Moselle River and went on through some very pretty level country, all green grass and lots of trees. During the latter part of the morning we made a halt south of Rinvaux, dispersed the vehicles in the orchard and looked over the outside of the huge chateau that was nearby. From the appearance, the place had been quite a farm in the past, but now the barns and water runs were in disrepair. We hadn't much more than completed our wire net than we had to start picking up

again. This wasn't it after all. Shortly before dark we moved on up to the village of Einvaux. The outfit was scattered over about ten acres of plum orchard on a hill overlooking the village. By this time however, the fruit was few and far between and I wore myself out looking over the orchard for some.

I was nearly caught one day, while taking a helmet bath near my tent, by a couple of Frenchwomen coming up through the orchard looking for fruit. When they reached the top of the hill they turned the other way and I was safe. One of the other boys wasn't quite so lucky however, he was caught and dodged around behind a vehicle for some moments until the intruders departed.

Bing Crosby put on a show in Einvaux during our stay here, but things came up and I did not go. Nearly everyone else did however, except those on duty. He was very good they said. For a wonder the weather was good for his show. There was no rain, but some good clouds.

We used the local schoolhouse again for our picture shows. Managed to get several films during our few days stay.

For the first two or three of our five days stop-over, the weather was fine, but from then on it was quite damp - rained nearly all the time. When the order came to move, we had quite a time getting one of our big trucks out. There was a muddy field between where it was and the harder ground. It really plowed up that potato patch on its way out.

This time we made a 10 mile move to Chaufontaine, a small wide spot in the road about two miles from Luneville. This was quite a deal. There had been a foundry there, and although nearly all the machinery had been removed (probably by the Germans) the buildings were solid, but big and drafty. The size of three of them was about

200 feet by 150 feet. There were a few rooms scattered around in the auxiliary power house and some other small buildings (pattern lofts and such) but some of the men picked a corner some place in the large buildings and called that "home". Where we holed up there were several thousand bales of hay and we were able to re-stack a few hundred bales in one end around a partition, install a stove made out of an oil barrel and make ourselves a fairly snug place, although the roof was about 40 feet above. Needless to say, we all used that hay to good advantage. It was a good thing that we were at least under a roof because the weather really turned nasty and gave us a good deal of rain.

For the first few days some of us looked over the tools in the supply shop, but could use very few of them as they were all for heavy duty business, and except for some few odds and ends of stuff we disturbed little of it. There was a small fortune in files, drills, iron and other hardware. That was soon taken care of by some civilian caretaker. Funny that the Germans did not take care of it first.

Our wire lines here were semi-permanently placed, overhead wherever possible, as they expected a long stay at this position. One of them gave us much trouble after the electric power was turned on in that section. There was much interferance due to leakage of juice in several places. More trouble was caused by the tanks and other vehicles of the 2nd. French Armored Division who were stationed in that area. Those drivers had no regard for wire lines and drove wherever they thought they could go. Sometimes they got there and sometimes they didn't. This particular line was the one to Corps Artillery, and they had very much trouble from their position, due to interference and vehicular causes.

We had a couple of volley ball courts set up here and a few hundred bales of hay spread out on one of the floors for seats for the almost nightly shows. I say almost nightly, because the power unit took this time to give some trouble and the picture machine gave out and needed some tinkering to keep up with its good work. The light situation was well taken care of because we were able to tie in on the commercial line and give the CP and kitchen real lights for a change. The kitchen was inside, making it fine in that we could all gather around to talk while eating, instead of scattering out the way we had to do when outside, also no matter what the weather, we could always eat under cover.

A few days after moving in here, two of our battalions set up repair units in two of the large buildings, and brought their prime movers and trucks in for repair work. It did not crowd us one bit as there was much more room than we needed. The CP and most of its men and officers were in the power house, radio and battery hq personel were in the building with the hay, along with two or three of the wire crews. The rest of the wiremen and message center and drivers were scattered around in different small buildings or in corners of the big ones.

While at Chaufontaine Aubrey ~~we~~ had to make a trip to Seventh Army QM and Engineer supply depots. The XV Corps and attached units had been shifted over to the Seventh Army so we now had to use their depots. I went along with Aubrey to see about some signal supplies and Captain McAvoy also went to get some dope on medical stuff.

Engineer depot was at Epinal, about seventy miles south, the Medical and QM depots on down at Vesoul another seventy miles and the Signal depot was at Besancon, making it about one hundred and ninety miles from Luneville. We had a quarter ton trailer behind the jeep

but didn't fill it up much. The QM requisition would have done that right well but we only got a few items on it.

The road followed the Moselle River for some distance after crossing it at Bayon. We passed on through Charmes again and on to Epinal, all the way along the river. The land away from the river was rolling and fairly well covered with trees, with some open grassland and a little in farmed plots. Epinal was quite a large place and showed much damage from bombardment. The railway station was a mess. The glassed over roof completely gone, leaving only the skeleton framework. Many of the shops were boarded up and the very few that were open did not seem to have much stock.

After passing Epinal the country became rougher, and we passed over quite a winding steep grade before reaching Plombieres. Now and then we saw some wrecked German tanks standing near the road, most of them evidently the results of air power. Vesoul was in the midst of a flat valley, farming being the evident occupation of the people, however the city seemed to have had some sort of small industry. Many large buildings and not too much destruction was seen.

On down to Besancon over rolling wooded country, and into the city. This was quite the busiest town I had evidenced since arriving in France. The war had all passed through some time before and there were many French and American soldiers visible. We were told that the Americans were all moving up and the French would take over all installations around the city. The shops were full, jewellry being displayed in large show windows and the streets were jammed. Miller, the driver said it was quite like Paris, with such a crush of pedestrians and bicyclists. I was able to get a few pieces of French lace work for fifteen hundred francs. Beautiful work it was too. Being only about one hundred fifty miles from Bern, Switzerland this place had been,

before the war, more or less of a tourist center, and also the site of a large college.

We had to go on through the city to reach the Signal Depot which was a few miles beyond, in a large factory along the Doubs River, a small stream but quite pretty because of the high rocky cliffs that towered above the water. High up on the far side was visible the walls and towers of an ancient Citadel. We were tempted to try and get up to it, but it was late and we were to pick up Captain McAvoy back at Vesoul. The Signal Depot was in the process of moving to Epinal and only had a small stock of equipment, but we were able to get part of what we wanted.

When our business was completed at the depot we went back through the city and made a turn through the business part to see some more of the sights. It had started to rain by now which rather spoiled the effect but it was interesting to see the old stone buildings, narrow streets and alleys of this almost undamaged place. The street cars, or rather trolleys, were running and about the only damage we saw was a large bridge or two lying tangled in the river.

It became dark not long after leaving Besancon on our return trip so we were unable to see any more of the area. Dark and rainy, this seemed to be the common sort of weather in this part of France at this time of the year, and we became colder and colder as we went along. Captain McAvoy was waiting for us at Vesoul and we ate a K ration supper before going on. We tried to talk him into staying over and going on in the morning but he had not found anything in the place so we wanted to get back. We stopped at the new Signal Depot at Epinal about 0100 hours and managed to get the rest of our requisition filled. Also we tried the Medical Depot there and spent some more time waiting. Finally we were on our way and reached home about 0300 hours.

It was still raining, and we had covered nearly four hundred miles. I really wished that I could have spent some time in Besancon looking for souvenirs. The prices seemed high but still not the holdup ones that were to prevail in places where soldiers had leave privileges later.

On the twelfth of October, after nearly three and a half weeks sojourning, we moved through Luneville and six miles beyond to the village of Marainviller. On the thirteenth we moved on to St. Clement, seven miles east, and were to set up in a huge pottery factory. It seemed that another PA group that had been in that vicinity was being relieved and we were taking over. It was all a good idea, but we just had the necessary wire in and I was beginning to look for my bed roll and a place to call home, when we got orders to move back to Marainviller. A new PA group had been assigned to the Corps and they were taking over here instead of us. The Colonel went post haste back with a detachment to retake our buildings. Luckily we were in luck and got them all before some other outfit was able to tie strings onto them. The mop water in the basement of the CP building (the local beauty operator's house) was not even dry yet.

The radio operators, First Sgt. Clark and myself found ourselves back in the cow shed, which had been cleaned out by Sgt. Miller when he was up on reconnaissance before, and with the two bales of hay that we had brought along from Chaufontaine spread out along the wall, we had a right comfortable place, in spite of the anemic look of the structure. It was so full of holes that the wind passed through it like a colander. The kitchen was a couple of hundred yards away in a barn and the men were all in shelter of some kind, from hayloft to basement rooms in houses.

One of our battalions was in Emberimenil, a village about four

miles up the road towards Avricourt. The 79th. Division was in this area at this time and we had some trouble with their units getting grounded up with our own wire during the wet weather. Of course all this was to happen during the long period that we were in position in this area, and did not occur all at once. The big headache was late in October when a heavy rainfall caused the branch of the Meurthe River to overflow, covering the road leading north out of Marainviller for a depth of one or more feet for a distance of nearly one half mile. Our wire lines together with many others were under all this water and much trouble resulted from it. Due to the current flow, the whole lot was tangled together. When we had trouble, the best way out was to isolate the bad spot or area and lay in some new wire.

After moving into the village we were not long in finding out that the local hydro-electric plant was operable but the feeder lines needed much repair and replacement of a few poles, all of which we did and then we had regular juice in the area and could give our power plant a rest. This arrangement worked fine until other units in and around the village (and it was full of them) and the villagers themselves realized that there was power available. Then there was a period of peak pull on the system about dark which caused our lights to dim down to about candlepower. The villagers started to retire early so the dimness began to disappear after a couple of hours and by eleven it wasn't bad. Of course the worst part of the dimness came not long after supper when the Colonel wanted to look over the map situation and plan his targets for the next day, or some of the officers wanted to write letters. The result was that we finally had to arrange to have the portable unit hooked up so they could interchange and use either one.

In connection with the above, I made a trip back to the power plant

in the foundry at Chaufontaine and finding that the whole place had been taken over by the 79th. Division for a rest and replacement area, I had to finagle my way in. After that it was easy. The power house was full of men but I acted like I really belonged, took a double pole, double throw switch off the big fuse and switch board and walked out. This switch came in handy later on when we had one of those double hookup deals to work on. I had found out before that if you wanted to pick up something from under a GI's nose, all you had to do was act like it belonged to you and unless it actually belonged to him, you had a very good chance of getting away with it. For instance the hasp that I unscrewed from an athletic box belonging to some anti-aircraft unit at Myles Standish POE, and which sat outside one of their buildings, with men going in and out all the time I was taking it off. Easy if you don't get that guilty look.

One of our pleasures, or at least a diversion, while here was to go on reconnaisance out in the Forest of Parroy, just north of Luneville. This deal actually consisted of going out and looking over this "battlefield" for war debris; guns, bayonets, radios out of wrecked tanks, (we never did get one that wasn't smashed up). I got a couple of Gott Mit Uns belts there and sent them back to the kids. This had been one of the very hard fought over areas and there were foxholes, wrecked tanks (both American and German), shell holes, mud and other wreckage of war scattered all through the forest. One particular spot of interest was a few buildings in the center that had been a German CP. It was really a wreck, but some krauts that didn't leave rather smelled up the cellar and spoiled it for "sightseers". There were thousands of rounds of machine gun ammunition in belts scattered through the wreckage, so it must have been a hard fought for place. Nearly all the boys found and

fixed up German Mauser rifles from this place and intended on using this extra armament in case of close fighting some day. One day we were all dismayed when an order came down from Corps to get rid of all unauthorized arms. So the captain got quite a load of M1s and German Mausers to turn in to Ordinance. There were nearly as many Mausers smashed up beyond use also that weren't turned over. I dismantled mine, threw away the stock, oiled up the metal parts thoroughly, wrapped them up in paper and carried them in my sleeping bag for months, intending some day to send it home if the ban were ever lifted. The ban was lifted, but down in Bad Aibling , Germany, I added my gun to the hundreds that we had piled out by the CP. They were turned in by soldiers and civilians. By that time I had seen so many guns, good and bad, that it seemed foolish to send one home. Anyway I had already sent three fine sporting rifles home. After I got home though, I wished that I had sent one of those army Mausers back to show the difference between a well made weapon and one of the mass(or should I say mess?) produced ones. The Mausers made prior to 1939 and 1940 were smooth and well made, but the later ones lacked the fine grained stocks, close fit of bolts, and were not machined dount. They still showed the lathe marks on the barrels.

It was from the motor park in Meratnviller that someone stole one of our radio 3/4 ton trucks one night. There was quite a mix up over that. The area was guarded by us and an engineer outfit. The engineers were strongly suspected of lifting it. That was never proved and we never did regain the truck. There was a 284 radio in it too and presumably the colors, although that point was never completely settled.

Along towards the end of our stay here we received several more units, two of which were fresh up from the Italian front. Getting packed up with artillery like we were, it began to look like business was coming up. We did have a lot more wire to put in too and were kept quite

busy those days. In anticipation of a CP move down towards Avricourt, we laid lines down the RR tracks to Emberimenil, one for each of our battalions, so that when they moved, we could still operate from our present position, or if we moved and they didn't we could operate just the same. It was a swell scheme, but the day that we started to move, we laid in an entire installation in a village just south of Avricourt, which was not used (CP ended up in Avricourt instead) and we and the battalions made the entire jump at once, or rather in two days. We operated a split CP at Marainviller and Avricourt for 24 hours, with plenty of wire in between.

Seems like I am getting ahead of the story, as we are really still in Marainviller. During the time here we had our first snowfall, not much but enough to freeze us all up and in melting made slush out of the already sloppy mud. We really went classy in our shed. Needing a stove, we got a twenty gallon bucket, tipped it upside down, cut a hole in the bottom and another in the side, and had a stove. Of course there was no real stovepipe, but a tube about four feet long took the smoke up above our heads and from then on it was on its own, there being plenty of holes for it to go out through the roof. For fuel we used push-alongs some as long as four feet, that we borrowed from the school yard next door. The roof was so decrepit that several of us had to stretch a shelter half over our beds so that the rain coming through the roof would have some place to go, besides on us.

This stove was a source of some excellent piles of hot coals that we occasionally used to barbecue such delicacies as rabbit, chicken (those unknowingly donated by the farmers of the community) and steak, the latter knowingly donated by Wally Glerup, "King of the Kitchen". The long evenings, it was beginning to get dark about half past five, made us get hungry before bedtime, as we ate supper while it was still light.

The area was buzzed by German planes a couple of times. They payed

for their foolishness by being shot down just beyond our area. I know that in every case they were chased by streams of 50 caliber machine gun bullets until they went out of sight beyond the roof tops. That was as low as they came in. There was an airport being built down by Luneville and they seemed to come down on it for a strafing run and then stayed down on the ground, coming up the valley for a run back to their own lines. It was a bad idea, as there was plenty of artillery in that valley, and they had plenty of machine guns.

The 79th. Division was replaced about this time by the 44th., one of our acquaintances of Fort Lewis days. We were not overly pleased about this change as none of us had much faith in them. We had followed and supported the 79th. all the way from Normandy and felt like we were losing an old friend.

One item of issue that showed up here and that we really got pleasure from, was the shoe pac. Together with the ski sox they enabled one to slosh through the cold wet mud and keep his feet warm and dry. I remember that my feet rarely got cold while wearing them, and then not if I were able to walk. The cold could still be uncomfortable while riding in a vehicle.

Sgt. Mosely was out on a "reconaissance" in the forest one day and was attacked by a wild boar. The animal really made fine eating. It was a funny thing that Mosely had the "varmint" in the side, when it was supposed to have been coming right at him. Quite a bit of sleight of hand I'd say.

On the 19th. of November the long expected move forward happened. The wire crews (two of them) had been forward since the night before, laying in lines for an installation a short distance south of Auricourt. However, when the Colonel and his party went forward on the morning of

the 19th. the situation had changed so that he decided to move on into Avricourt instead. The work already done had to be abandoned and they moved into the larger town to make the installation there. I remained at the rear position to take care of tying in the units that were remaining, expecting them to move forward that night. They didn't, so a split position was operated with communication between the two CPs. Colonel Coffin was in charge at the rear and there were about ten men with us. The main purpose in having the two CPs was that we had a battery of 8" rifles under us with a range of about twenty miles. One of the two rifles was still in position near our rear position and it was more convenient to fire it from there. The other one was up beyond Avricourt and they fired it from that position.

The remaining units displaced late in the day on the 20th. and after dark we moved up to Avricourt. Some of the roads leading up were under fire but we avoided all that by going up the railroad, which was really the most direct route anyhow. When I arrived at the CP I found that Captain Anderson was forward somewhere near Saarbourg and putting in an installation there. Ales was laying back to us at Avricourt. That meant that already we had a continous line of wire from Luneville to near Saarbourg with a small break in between. It amounted to about eighty miles of wire, the distance being not that great, but due to duplication of lines between Embertmenel and Marainviller. I left Grimes and Gunell back at the rear to pick up all the wire possible before moving up.

That night things kept me rather busy. There was not a full wire crew here because of two forward and two back at Marainviller. So when trouble came, I had to go out on it. The lines to two of our battalions were hung in trees along the road leading east out of town. This generally was the best way, because of vehicles breaking them when laid

on the ground. However this night turned out windy and the trees (Lombardy Poplars) shed a lot of their small limbs, which caused a great deal of breakage. It was some job trying to follow my lines twelve or more feet up in those trees in that pitch blackness. After two different trips out on that road, I got communications back in. Then, soaked to the skin (it had started to pour), I went to the house that was quarters for my group. I had a spring bed, over here it would be called a Hollywood bed, and I looked forward to a fine restful night. The trouble was that the springs were not very strong and the bed was too short, so things didn't go so good. Anyhow my rest was broken by the wind blowing the shelter halves from the window frames (no glass in them) and the rain pouring in on the floor. It was a good thing I was on the bed or I probably would have been drowned.

The next morning we saw the 2nd. French Armored Division moving up through the town. It was quite colorful but they really made a mess of one of our wire lines leading south from town. They had no regards for roadside ditches, where our lines happened to be lying. Ken Yee and Hill spent quite some time out on that road but fortune smiled on us. That battalion moved forward so we left the line the way it was (all cut up by tanks.)

Can't say that our kitchen was in too savoury a spot here. It looked like the yard where it was had been used for a slaughterhouse. Something had been finished off there anyhow. Also a very dead dog perched on the shed roof just across the driveway. For some reason my appetite didn't seem to be affected. Guess I was hungry.

We moved out about 1000 hours for Aspach. Passed over some pretty rolling ground on the way. The vehicle I was in went down through Blament to pay a visit to Corps Artillery, but the place wasn't very

spectacular. I know that I nearly froze on that ride.

Aspach was quite a place. Our apartment (?) was in the hayloft of a fairly substantial barn. Sgt. Miller had managed to rig up a stove so we could thaw out. The radio truck was inside just under the loft and a couple of dead cows just outside the door made it a little hazardous in getting out. A dead German soldier in the stall off to one side didn't bother us much either, and we didn't bother him. I remember that I rested well on the several feet of nice dry hay under my sleeping bag and got a good night's sleep. The next day we were alerted for moving on and I sent two trucks out to pick up wire. They got badly stuck and by the time they got out of the mud, we had to load up and get out. One good thing was that the rain had stopped.

Our move took us along the banks of the Rhine Moselle Canal and on up through Saarbourg. The canal had several blitzed canal boats in it and they appeared to be pretty badly wrecked. Saarbourg, at least what I saw of it, showed the usual type of buildings, some cobblestone streets, many very narrow ones, so narrow that one way traffic was in order through part of the city. There were not many people on the streets. It was quite different from the ride through towns back in the Normandy days.

A short distance beyond Saarbourg we seemed to be climbing slightly and the country became hilly, not rugged hills but just large rolling ones. We saw a huge radar installation and a lot of tank trenches together with many lines of infantry trenches and dugouts. They were not very old so it appeared as if the Germans had expected to fight it out on this high ground just east of the city. The road we were on was the main highway leading east to the Saverne Pass and the Rhine valley beyond. Evidently we had broken their defenses before they were able really to get organized.

Our new CP was in St. Jean, a small village strung along a couple of hundred yards of highway. Our gang had one end of a lean-to shed with some infantry occupying the other end. We had a fire built on the dirt floor of the shed. Between the smoke and all we made out pretty well. It was much better than being outside, as it had started to rain again. The power unit was giving some trouble so I had to go and see about it before the Colonel made a ruckus. Then my two wire trucks came in that had been back at the rear and I went down to show them their haylofts for the night.

The next day was Thanksgiving. We expected turkey and weren't disappointed. I ate mine standing along side of the road before a manure pile in the pouring rain, wet to the waist, and watching artillery tanks and infantry moving up. It looked like everything in the Seventh Army, or at least the XV Corps was moving on that day. To make things interesting, word came around that we would probably move up that night too.

During the afternoon I had occasion to go looking for one of my wire corporals who had found quarters for himself and crew in a civilian's house near the kitchen area. The Frenchman who let me in was certainly a bossy looking individual and the smell that came out nearly knocked me down. When I found my man he told me that the old boy who owned the place was distilling some Mirabelle. I was in the place only five minutes but could hardly walk straight when I came out, the air was so thick.

Later in the day the news turned out good and the word was that we probably wouldn't move that day. We didn't. There was more trouble with the power unit that night though. The gas line and carburator wouldn't work right. Sometimes a more or less gentle beating on the carburator would fix things, but generally it needed something more

drastic and the thing had to be taken all apart.

It was still raining the next day and the wind had started blowing so that even my worked-over raincoat with an extra foot added to the bottom didn't keep me from getting partially wet when I went down to breakfast. Sure had to eat fast to keep the rain from washing the food right out of my mess kit. St Jean was the place where I finally became the owner of an almost complete mess kit again. My old aluminum one I accidently donated to the engineers back at Maraimviller and had been getting along hit and miss since then. When I couldn't borrow one from the radio men who ate in shifts, I messed out of my canteen cup. At St Jean when I was going up the road from the kitchen I found the bottom, knife, fork and spoon of an aluminum type mess gear lying in the mud along the side of the road. Someone had lost it from one of the many outfits moving up along that way. I was really the gainer that time. Generally I was the loser.

All during that day we expected to move at nearly any moment, or rather we expected to get the word to move. At suppertime it was reported that we would probably remain there again for the third night. That was good, as it was still raining. There was little time to rejoice though because not long after we were told that we would stay, orders came down to move out. That was nice. Well we were ready to move at the scheduled time, and I went in a command car with the S-4 section. Arko is the only one that I can remember of the six of us in the car. Due to the heavy traffic on the road, we infiltrated, that is the unit left at intervals of several minutes between vehicles. It was pitch dark and showering when we took off. I didn't see much of Phalsburg as we passed through. It was one of the old fortress towns

that guarded the Saverne Pass and had been bypassed by infantry and armored units this time, or it would have been a hard place to take by direct assault.

We were climbing gradually all the time but could not see what type of terrain we were passing over. A few miles beyond Phalsburg we started down over a twisting road. Even in the darkness we could make out smashed roadblocks now and then but nothing more. On through the town of Saverne, and two or three other small ones. Our directions were to go so many towns past Saverne which would bring us to Hochfelden. We came to that town alright but no one met us as we were expecting, so we went on some distance beyond. Still no one, so we turned back, this time in the center of town we were stopped by some of our men and directed up a block from the main street to where our vehicles were parked.

The situation had not settled down enough so that the battalions were going into position, so we had no wire to lay except for a few short local ones. Nearly the entire battery was quartered in the four story school house. Some of us lucky ones found straw ticks to lay on the floor so that we got a few good hours sleep. The guards had orders to challenge anyone passing through the area where our vehicles were, and it seemed as though half the town passed that way during the night, as certain loud-voiced guards kept us awake a good part of the time. I don't know what they found out because the civilians evidently understood nothing of the American language.

The next morning after breakfast we saw about a battalion of German prisoners being marched up to a PW enclosure beyond where we were. They were all young rugged looking men, and even though prisoners, marched as though they were on parade.

I remember seeing civilians carrying pastries to a bakery to be baked there. Evidently they made ready the pies and other things at home and then took them to a bakery for the baking. If we had not been alerted for moving on, we would have tried to dicker for some of those pies that we saw.

We departed Hochfelden at 1130 hours and arrived in Walenheim at 1200 hours, a distance of 6 miles. It seemed that we were out on a limb here, so much so that the infantry outposts were only some 400 yards beyond the town, really a small village. Just after moving in, Capt McCory and Sgt. Rosebrook (liaison pilots) were flying their planes up and passed over the town. We were in contact with them by radio to bring them in, but before they could make a turn and get back over town, Rosebrook was shot down some distance out in front.

Our wire was strung out like a spider web here and took some work to get in. Also after it was in the crews needed to go out on it several times because of enemy shellfire causing breakage. Our radio and Battery Hq group managed to get a couple of upstairs rooms in a farmers courtyard near the CP. They were small but there was just room for the eight of us to get our rolls out on the floor. It really beat sleeping out on the wet ground.

There were quite a few German planes overhead and we saw at least two of them shot down. I saw one pilot going down in his parachute a mile or so away. One of the wire crews waited anxiously for some time for a certain low flying plane to come back over the area so they could open up on him. In addition to the 50 caliber machine gun on their truck they had a couple of BARs and at least one French type of automatic rifle. A few minutes before they got organized in this fashion, this plane had come over and one of the boys let go a

terrifically long burst from the 50 at it but seemed to have missed. Anyhow it did not come back again, which disappointed those amateur anti-aircraft artillerymen.

As close as we were to the Rhine River we all expected to get a glimpse of it before long, and excitement was quite high as we believed the XV Corps might be going to attempt a river crossing. The speed with which nearly all the Rhine plain south to the Swiss border had been cleared, made it seem like something big was about to happen.

The 308th. battalion Hq had to move back from their first position that night because enemy rifle fire was troublesome. We ourselves had direct lines to the infantry regiment headquarters in Wahlenheim in case of a counter-attack. Nothing happened and as for us we spent a rather uneventful night.

We had some restringing of lines to take care of on Nov. 26th. (the day after our arrival) due to the shifting of some of the units. I believe the Colonel pulled the lanyard of one of the guns that was laid on a target across the Rhine River.

The country was quite level down here in the valley with quite a few trees around and the population seemed to be engaged chiefly in farming. I noticed several canals, or maybe it was the same one, as we moved down from Hochfelden the day before. There were larger villages here also than back over the Saverne Pass. The more fertile land accounted for this I suppose. It bothered us at first hearing the civilians saying "Ya, ya" instead of "Oui, oui" when talking. One could almost think that he was actually in Germany if he did not know about the history of this area.

On Nov. 27th. we were shocked to receive orders to pull out, backwards. We left two battalions in position, attached to another

PA Group and took two with us, moving back up over the Saverne Pass and arriving at Phalsburg. It was a distance of 24 miles and as it was daylight we were able to see most of what we had missed a few nights before when we moved down in the dark. It was cold. In fact frost covered the ground during the first few miles of the move.

The town of Saverne was one of quaint mixed French and German architecture, with high chimneys topping most of the large houses. I heard that the storks made their nests on many of these chimneys but never saw one myself. Shops seemed to have a good stock in them from what we could see in the windows as we passed through. There was little damage in the town due to the speed with which the area was taken. In fact this area showed none of the destruction that was so prevelant in the villages back near Saarbourg and beyond.

Soon after passing through the town we started climbing up the pass. It was quite a steep grade from the valley side, but the road had a good paved surface and except for a few places where road blocks had been removed, it was undamaged. The mountainside up which the road ran was covered with a thick growth of evergreens. Pine was the only one that I recognized, not being an expert on them. Unlike many mountain passes, when we reached the top of this one we did not start to descend rapidly, instead as we came over the wooded crest , the trees thinned out and we could see the road several miles ahead as it very gradually dropped in elevation. Around the mouth of the pass and in the woods all along the crest were many German guns, all emplaced to command a view of the approaches for several miles. These would have made it necessary for our artillery and planes to have blasted them out, except for the fact that units of the 2nd. French Armored Div. bypassed the Saverne Pass to the Rhine Plain, going over

by means of various back roads and coming in from behind the massed guns. Instead of making a stand at the pass, the Germans were forced to fall back and leave the defenses they had spent so much time and work on.

A few miles beyond the top of the pass we came again to Phalsburg, the town we passed through on the black rainy night not so very long before. We were to go into position on the western edge of the town, and the Colonel had chosen a house in the yards of the local gas and electric company for his CP. Other sections had found houses near this place and we in the Hq section and radio, together with some of the wire crews took quarters in what had been part of the old fortress system of the city. On a small hill overlooking the western plain approaching the town, there had been fixed gun positions in the early days. As part of these positions there were three half round tunnels about 100 feet long, 18 feet wide and 12 feet high, the three were side by side and entered by a ramp running along the townside of the hill. There was probably 20 feet of earth and concrete over the ceiling of each tunnel. Some light was provided the two outside ones by a cut having been made from the surface straight down along the outer sides, several feet wide. It nearly made a moat around the two sides of this shelter.

We were expecting to run into some "cooties" here as the tunnels showed that they had been used for sleeping quarters by either soldiers or civilians. At least they left the straw on the floor, and we DDT'ed our rolls good before climbing into them. It must have been good because I at least failed to have a single visitor during the two nights we were there.

There wasn't too much wire from here as we had only two battalions,

having left two back in the Rhine Valley. However they were long ones, and took some trouble to put in. One battalion was back near St. Jean, where we had spent our Thanksgiving, the other in a small village about six miles west of us and slightly north of St. Jean.

Now we found out why we had been pulled back in such a hurry. The area north of Sarrebourg was nearly bare of heavy artillery and in the woods some twenty miles up, there had been reported concentrations of German armor. The brass at Army were looking for a counterattack down through this area, hoping to find that we had overextended our lines and had all our strength over the passes on the river side of the Vosge mountains. We had been brought back to support the infantry north of Saarbourg in case of trouble, and our other units were to join us later. The gravity of the situation was such that we were given a direct line to the Artillery section at Corps Hq through a Corps switch in Phalsburg. I only had to put in about 200 yards of wire from the CP to the switch. Generally in situations similar to this we were called on to put in several miles, but luck was on our side this night.

The different units taking the town over had opened up a huge German army supply dump and we got as our share, some sugar, about 150 pounds of excellent cheese, some canned plums put up in glass, and some other fruit. The sugar was in grains about three times the size of our granulated sugar, but just as sweet. Also it was here that I got the top to my mess gear, making it complete again. One of the radio operators snooping around the area located one of our salvage dumps and picked it up for me. Now for the first time since Marainviller I had a complete mess gear of my own again, and kept it for the remainder of my travels in the ETO.

One of the highlights of our two days in Phalsburg was a shower, a real honest to goodness shower. Someone found out that there were hot showers available in the town, so we took off with some clean clothes, looking for the place. It was in the schoolhouse and the shower would have been a credit to any of our U.S. schools, tile on the floor and plenty of hot water. There was so much being used that we almost got a steam bath at the same time as the shower. We all certainly enjoyed it, as for me, it was the first real bath I'd had since leaving England four months before. Of course I'd had my baths taken out of a helmet, but they were only teasers, especially compared with this one.

There was quite a bit of excitement on the second night when part of the railroad depot caught fire from some undetermined cause. It almost went unnoticed by us, sleeping up in the underground shelter, and was about out before any of us got down to it. Some ammunition stored in the place made it sound like a real old fashioned Fourth of July when it got hot and started going off. The Colonel was a bit put out because none of his high ranking non-coms showed up to do anything until it was out, but he was soon calmed down and forgot about it. The damage didn't amount to much, but he thought perhaps it was a diversion planned by some Germans and that they intended to start something. But nothing eventful happened.

On Nov. 29th. we pulled up stakes again and moved northwest to the knocked apart village of Hirschland about 14 miles away. I stayed back until the battalions completed their displacement and then moved up with Colonel Coffin and one of my wire trucks, although I rated riding in the Colonel's command car. Somehow he took the wrong turn, we got mixed up with some infantry columns and he blamed them for the

wrong turn. Anyhow it took us a bit out of our way, and that, together with having to stay at Phalsburg the extra time, caused us to reach the new location just a little before dark.

The outfit was pretty well scattered out here, the kitchen up the hill a couple hundred yards from the CP and some of the rest down below the CP a hundred yards. The rest of the sections were pretty well together around the CP. We had a barn where the 193 radio transmitter was parked and we all slept in the hay now up above. I was in the third story of the place next to the roof, which persisted in leaking every time it rained, which was often. It was the greatest place to reach in the dark, because of the two sections of ladder and landings that had to be traversed when climbing up to sleep, plus a reach out and step across from the top rung of the ladder to the edge of the hay mow. Made it interesting to say the least.

In a small triangle caused by the intersection of three roads, or streets in front of the CP was one of the town pumps, and it was a twice a day occurrance to see the natives herding a cow or two or some horses up to the pump for their drink of water.

This village had suffered quite a lot of damage in the fight for this area and many of the houses were pretty well wrecked, especially on the hill above the part where we were. In the wrecked sheds were the remains of some fine looking stock. We had the mayor start moving these out the next day to clear the town from danger of disease as much as possible. It seemed like they had been waiting for someone to tell them what to do because none of the dead stock had been moved off the property or buried before we got there and then the mayor came to see what we wanted him to do. That cleaning up was the first thing he was told, and after that he really had things going.

I went looking for one of my wire crews one evening in the house where they had a couple of rooms. The rest of the house was occupied by the French family. When I knocked on the door it was opened by the French woman, (my boys slept upstairs). I asked, in my bad French, about the boys and she pointed upstairs. I started up and she really unloaded a torrent of French, pointing to my shoes and talking to her husband who had just come out. I will admit that my number 14 shoe pacs had more than their share of sticky mud on them but I couldn't see to scrape it off outside and as sticky as it was I doubt if any of it came off as I climbed the stairs. She surely thought it was terrible the way I carried the mud in. I'm afraid I was a little unimpressed though. All of these French had it on us because they wore wooden shoes out in the wet while they did their work and kicked them off at the door, putting on slippers for their inside walking. Some of the kids looked as though the shoes were made for them to wear when they grew up and then had to start wearing them too soon.

One of the 8 inch rifles was in position up the hill about 300 yards away and we got quite a thrill watching it fire one day. It is really a gun.

We had heard of some wrecked tanks in the woods above the town and Simpson and I went looking for some radio parts. Zorn said there was a big German tank with a radio in it and a dead operator in the tank. I went up there all nerved up to get that radio even if the dead German was sitting on the radio. When we got there we found the German (what there was left of him, the tank had been blown up inside) on the side of the tank, with just the headset and transmitter, the main part of the radio was gone already, so we got no radio.

There must have been a good tank engagement in these parts because

we saw three smashed American light tanks and this big German one. The wooded hill, above the town where these tanks were, commanded a fine view of several miles of terrain to the south. It was fairly open but quite rolling. It must have been the rolling feature that prevented the Germans from emplacing guns there, as it seemed a fine place to have held us up.

We got a new battalion while we were here. The headquarters of the 8 inch rifle battery which we had attached to us for some time. After making a fast trip to Corps Artillery for some codes for the new outfit we lost the new unit. They were pulled out and went some place else. It was all right by me as it happened before we got wire in to them. For the short time we had them, they were tied in with one of the other battalions in the same town, or should I say village, as that was all there was in this area.

After being here for four days, rumors of a move were wafted around but it wasn't until two days later, December 5, that we moved. At least most of the battery moved, but Col. Coffin, two or three operators, Cpl. Grimes and his crew, and I remained to operate a rear CP until the next day when all the remaining units attached to us moved on up.

The next morning I took off with Grimes and Gunell who had brought his truck back down to load up some of the extra equipment for the new position at Tiefenbach, 11 miles away. While passing another working wire truck on the road we slid off in the mud and nearly tipped over because of the heavy top load. Gunell was right behind us and maneuvered so that he could pull us back on the road, so we didn't block it for very long. A good thing too as there were dozens of trucks wanting to use that road right then.

Tiefenbach was a pretty little village down in the bottom of a

steeply valled V-shaped valley, stretched out along the bottom and part way up the sides for a distance of about half a mile in length. The red roofed houses against the background of green hillsides made a picture worthy of any postcard.

Some damage to the town, chiefly tiled roofs and a part of the double tracked railroad bridge was blown up. One of the church roofs was nearly bare of the flat red tile that formed its covering and every time one of our guns fired nearby, more of them slid off. We were amused that the natives let two good days go by and then on a beautiful drizzly cold day, several men and boys started relaying the tile on the roof. Looked like they wanted to let the rain settle the dust that had fallen inside when the tiles were knocked off.

My home this time was in the hayloft (again) of a rickety little barn on the hill almost directly above where the kitchen was, it being on the main road below. As close as we were in one way, it was a two hundred yard walk to chow, due to the extreme steepness that we had to go around before getting down to the lower level. The roof over where I slept was in such a ratty condition that I pitched my pup tent halves above me and then had no more trouble, a house within a house it was. That hay really made comfortable sleeping though. It was worth the leaky roof trouble to have such comfort.

Our wire lines here were quite extensive. Our battalions were spread out, two of them about four miles away, the third in Tiefenbach. The double lines to one of the other units that we had to lay in this position and the four or more miles to the third unit, more than made up for the one that was only a few hundred yards away. Corps Artillery was also in the vicinity, but they normally laid to us, so that was no real benefit as far as wire was concerned.

The lines to the 208th. gave us some trouble, as it was open terrain over part of that distance and several other outfits persisted in parking in the fields off the road, doing quite a lot of line breakage in the process, so the trouble crews were called out frequently.

The 240 mm Howitzer battalion had much difficulty getting in and out of position here because of the deep mud they ran into, and having two of their big cranes deadlined made them work short on this account also. When the group displaced they worked for nearly 40 hours getting out and were then a full day behind in displacing.

We had a bathroom set up in the more or less mangled hotel lobby here. We were using that building for quarters for some of the men anyhow, so it was convenient for the water heater to be set up there. It rained nearly all the time we were here so it was hard to get our clothes dry when we did get around to washing the mud off.

It was here that some of our Christmas parcels started arriving and so we had several choice feeds in the comfort of our barn home. I received in one of my parcels, the paroumx I had ordered some time before for waterproofing my sleeping bag. One day I decided to brave the task and mixed up most of the wax in a can of gasoline. Using a brush, I managed to work the most of the solution into the fabric and left it spread out to dry. It was too cold and damp so I slept for the next two or three days in quite an aroma of gasoline. The job worked however, although I found out afterward that the mixture should have been heated. I knew myself that a good hot day would have been the best time for it, but couldn't wait for that to come. I always carried my bag strapped to the front fender of the radio truck, making it pretty well exposed to the weather on the moves and even wrapped in a shelter half, it was inclined to get damp at times, until after my

doping it. A good many months later during some hot weather, with my bag in the bottom of a truck in full view of the sun, the heat melted the wax sufficiently for it to pick up a wonderful camouflage coating of dirt, even though it was almost distastfully soiled as it was. The outside dirt never bothered me though and as for the inside, between frequent dustings of DDT powder and semi-frequent airing of the blankets and inside of the bag, it remained clean in a favorable sort of way.

The chaplain borrowed the Lutheran Church here one Sunday for his services and the local clergyman's wife could speak excellent English. She played the organ for us and both she and a girl helped sing. It was good to hear women's voices again, in a tongue that we could understand. The benches too were really built to sit in, instead of being small torture seats, like the ones back at Hirschland. There, the backs had a decided lean towards the front, and they were just the right height to gouge one in the small of the back. Maybe they were designed to prevent people from dozing off to sleep. I'm sure that would have been an impossibility. I couldn't even begin to relax without being reminded of my where-abouts.

All the time it rained here the steep streets were miniature waterways and in several places there were small streams that rattled down the hillsides through one person's backyard, alongside another's front door and through a courtyard here and there. From my observations I believe they served to carry away a certain amount of the local sewage. There was a sizeable stream following the floor of this canyon that contained the town, so all the little rivulets flowed into it.

Lt. Meade, who had at one time been attached to our battery and was transferred to one of the battalions, showed up for a visit one day bringing the carcass of a nice young beef that had (this was his

story) been hit by shell fragments up near the forward OP where he had been observing. Naturally it would have been sinful for the meat to have been wasted, so he brought it down to his old friends in the 144th. We really enjoyed fresh meat for several meals. It seemed strange that several times when Lt. Meade was out as forward observer, the cattle were so unlucky to run afoul of stray shell fragments. Or perhaps it may actually have been a well directed rifle bullet. I was never curious enough to want to examine the meat. I believed his story.

We had been here for several days when Corps Artillery moved on forward to another position. When they pulled out they were supposed to splice our line to them, to the one from Corps to them, making us hooked directly to Corps. Their splicing was OK I guess but we were unable to contact Corps. I went up to their switchboard position to check on the splicing and found about 20 pair of wires in a jumbled mass, without a tag on a single pair, and spent several hours hunting, and running down connections but still failed to contact Corps. We finally reached Corps Artillery through some hookup with another group but before that was done I made two trips up to their location about six miles away, and checked some lines all the way, in a rain and such blackness as one only reads about. When I returned to our CP after the second trip, there was a crew from Corps there changing their line for us (that hadn't worked since we got it from Corps Artillery the middle of the afternoon) into a cable that would operate on a carrier frequency. This was really a very low radio frequency that operated on wire lines, making it possible to carry on several conversations on one pair of wires. The Sgt. in charge told us that the other line that should have been working had been picked up several miles back, because of extensive damage done to it by tanks. I felt better then, after finding out

that it wasn't our fault that it hadn't worked.

One afternoon the Colonel took a reconnaisance party forward to look over positions for our battalions and we passed through some real hilly, heavily wooded country, with small streams winding around down in the small green valley floors. It was quite pretty, but the prettyness of it all was somewhat dimmed by the nearly freezing wind that was sweeping along. After doing some casting about for new areas, the Colonel left most of his party to wait and took off up ahead. We more than froze, while waiting there in that little village for them to come back. The only diversion was an 8" howitzer that kept firing away at some unseen target, which was emplaced only about 50 feet behind a building which we soon found out was to be used by Corps Artillery for their switchboard. Every time that howitzer fired, the building really sat up and jumped. One thing, I got the place pretty well impressed on my mind. We were expected to move up in this vicinity in a day or two, as I found out on the way back to Tiefenbach.

A change from the almost daily rain was provided by a fairly heavy snowfall. It at least didn't come through the holes in the roof above my bed, but it made my four blankets, my sleeping bag and straw mattress very welcome. At least I was warm when in that.

The battery moved up the next day, December 12, one week after we had moved in here from Hirschland. The 240 mm howitzer outfit couldn't displace fast enough and the 208th Bn left one battery in position so we operated a rear CP again. I stayed back with Colonel Coffin, Captain McPherson, and a wire crew to maintain the necessary lines. We expected to move up late that night but the 240 mm outfit had more trouble than was expected, and by the time they were ready to move out it was going on towards midnight, so the Colonel called the forward CP and received

permission to remain there for the rest of the night. We dined on K rations and the contents of some Christmas boxes. I remember some crab sandwiches, the crab having been furnished by Mrs. McP. way back in Washington. Anyhow we were not operational after about 11 o'clock so we could all relax. I was caught short because I'd sent my sleeping bag forward on the radio truck, expecting to catch it by dark. There was a good bed in the house that had been the CP, so Colonel Coffin invited me to use it and between us all, I got enough stuff to keep me warm. It was a black night, which was the reason that we stayed there. They did not want to try traversing the road up to the new position, which would have taken us through quite a rough wooded stretch of country.

We made our trip up in the morning without incident, except for a flat tire on Grimes' truck and having to push it before getting it started at Tiefenbach. The battery had run down in the night for some reason. Our trip took us up the same route that we had gone with the Colonel a couple of days before, through the little village where I had nearly frozen while waiting, and on to Enchenberg, a sprawling village laid out on a plateau some 15 miles from Tiefenbach. My first impression of it was a sea of mud along which were houses, some undamaged and others pretty well battered, and down the middle of which ran a solid footing roadway. Our position was in the western end of town, the worst beaten up portion. We were here, instead of in the better end, because when our reconnaisance came forward to occupy the position, there were German shells falling in the other part.

The streets were the only really muddy part of the place, as the fields all around the town were nice green sod. The streets and many of the yards were ankle deep in stinky grey mud. The Colonel had some resurrected boards laid into the CP from the road to keep from having

to wallow the entire distance.

When I got around to locating my "home", I was shown a two storied house that had originally had a large barn on one end of it, but the barn had been blitzed and was now only a pile of hay, stone and morter, with a few big timbers mixed in the whole mass. The house itself looked good. On one side was a three foot hole caused by a shell and on the other side the whole wall of one room was gone, evidently taken out by the shell that made the three foot hole on the other side. Sgt. Miller had plugged up the one hole with a couple of shelter halves and that made one of the three downstairs rooms good and livable. There was one of the big porcelain stoves in this room which we made good use of in the days to come. The other good room downstairs was used by the old Aleutian grandmother and her two granddaughters, for cooking and living in during the day. At dark everyday they took off for the "heller" where they spent the night, returning about 0800 hours in the morning. There were three rooms on the second floor which the radio section occupied and an attic on the third floor which the mice used. In addition to plugging the hole in the wall, Sgt. Miller had spent the previous afternoon relaying the many displaced flat tile shingles on the roof and now had it in good condition, which was a good thing in view of the incessant dampness (rain).

This old grandmother really mothered us. There were some cows that had escaped the barn's fate and almost daily she boiled us each a cup of milk. Twice she broke out a bottle (nearly empty the first time, and emptied the second) of cognac and gave us a tiny glassful. Each time that happened it was because of something special that we had done for her, like cutting up some of the demolished roadblock piles that we had dragged from the road alongside her house into her yard. She also began bringing up some more or less wizened apples from the cellar

beneath the house, as she left in the evening. They were not too handsome looking, but really tasted good. We were of course properly grateful. It was not until several nights later (in fact it was the last night of our stay there, although we did not know it that evening) that Sgt. Miller decided to go down cellar himself and see what there was there. He found three piles of apples, all good sized, and each of a different grade. The apples that we had been getting and which we appreciated so much, was from the No. 3 pile. He brought up a few apples from the No. 1 pile and they were really fine, as large as indoor baseballs and a light pink colored skin. Then we really enjoyed apples.

This was a very busy area, due to the attack that was in progress on the fortress city of Bitche, one of the anchor points of the old Maginot line and now a main point of defense for the Germans. Our artillery was engaged in firing on some of the huge concrete forts surrounding Bitche, the most formidable of which was probably the Stnserhoff Group, several strong points slightly northwest of the city, some elements of which were over 100 yards in length and went underground to a depth of several stories. All the forts in this area were connected by underground tunnels through which ran small railway cars. Even the concrete piercing fuses used on the 240 mm howitzers failed to pierce or smash these forts except after several days of firing, during which the gun positions were shifted to enable a proper angle of impact on the sloping face of the forts.

Late one night, sometime about 0020 hours, I was called over to Capt. Anderson's room where we got the dope. So far there had not been much damage caused any of these forts, and stereoptioon views of them showed that the angle of impact was not quite right. The two 155 mm battalions were shifting position at that time to a point some 15 miles west and north, the 240 mm battalion was shifting one of its batteries some miles

to the east. We were to get wire in to these units right after daylight, so they could be firing as soon as visibility was good. The extra long lines involved and the short time for getting them in, was solved by giving three different crews a sector of the line to lay and having them tie in as they reached the point where one of the other crews had started to lay. Communications were in by the time the guns were ready to fire, and due to this shift, it was not long before the Sinzerhoff Group had been neutralized. I well remember the jeep ride (several of them in fact) that I made over that route between Enchenberg and Rohrbach, near where the 155 guns were, on that cold frosty morning. I nearly froze, but it gave us a view of some of the extensive Maginot fortifications that spread through that area. The installations here consisted of single concrete bunkers some 30 feet square and placed so that the fire of one could cover another. It was rolling country here but devoid of trees, and visibility was fairly good for several miles on a clear day. There had evidently been quite a battle around a small village near Rohrbach (where some of the barracks had been located for the fortress garrison) because there were several burned out German and American tanks in the town and within view not far away out in the surrounding fields. Also we saw two jeeps, evidently the remains left after they had run into mines. They looked as though a can opener had been used and then someone had pounded over them with a huge hammer.

Our lines gave us some trouble during the nine days that we remained here. A great deal of movement was going on and even though nearly all the wires were overhead, some of the heavy equipment would break limbs off and there would be a break somewhere near that point. There were some 50 pair of wires draped on the telephone and power poles through our end of town, nearly all the wires alive, so when there was trouble

in that mess it was just luck that found the break, because everyone, when a break could not be found in the tangle, just added a new stretch of maybe one or two hundred yards (enough to bypass the bad part).

In the small town just west of us where one of our battalions was located, there was a steep hill at the bottom of which was an intersection where several streets (?) came together. An MP was on duty at that intersection directing traffic. His position was not an envious one because the continuous traffic down the hill and along the streets, kept the mud thoroughly chewed up and caused a river of it to be always drooling down through the space where he stood, shoe-top deep in it.

Our kitchen was in a barn out at the southern edge of the village and for every meal we had visitors in the nature of several children and women, who lined up to take the leftover food after the men had finished eating. Coffee was one of their favorites. We ate scattered out in the barnyard and along the roadway in front of the kitchen. I only mentioned the barnyard because, although there was a house in connection with it, the house portion was pretty well damaged, and the officers' mess was in the only good room left. One day one of the boys tried out a pump that stuck up alongside the manure pile. He, as well as the rest of us, wished that he had left the pump alone. It was hooked up with a tank of tankage underneath the manure pile, and although he only tried it out, it stunk up the place for several meals.

We had been here for eight days and I had made arrangements to take a truck to Savenne the next morning for sixty or so miles of wire. Sometime after midnight I was called over to the captain's room again and told to send the truck after all the wire we could get on emergency requisition, and for it to leave at 0400 hours, but I was not to go. The 1st. Sgt. was called in too and informed that the battery was to move out at 0900 hours. All this information was to be kept from the

civilians, so we figured it must be pretty hot stuff.

The next morning the battery left by echelon starting at 0900 hours but I was left, to wait for our wire truck that had gone after wire, and also for Lt. Sanders who had been in Epinal on business (of some kind). The wire truck returned about noon, so I gave them a marked map and sent them on their way. Lt. Sanders returned about 1400 hours and we left an hour later for Hanbach, 25 miles westward. This was too much, after we had been expecting to be across the Rhine by this time, and here we were gradually getting further west.

I noticed many anxious faces among the civilians in Enchenberg while I was waiting for my transportation, and from questions we learned that they were afraid the Germans were on their way back and we were pulling out. In a way they were right, as I learned upon reaching Hanbach. The Germans had launched their Ardennes drive (it was Dec. 21, 1944) and the 12th. Corps (on the right flank of the 3rd. US Army) covering the sector around Saarguemines, St. Avold, and Saarbrucken, and east to the left flank of the XV Corps of the US Seventh Army, was pulling out completely and going north to support Patton's drive to relieve the surrounded 101st. Airborne Division at Bastogne. The XV Corps had to stretch its lines thin to cover the added front originally covered by the divisions of the 12th. Corps, plus what it already held. Our mission was to act as temporary artillery headquarters for the artillery of the 12th. Corps, which was remaining in position for a time to prevent additional clogging of the roads leading north. We were to do this, in addition to handling our own battalions, until the XV Corps Artillery Headquarters moved up and took over.

There was really a headache for awhile at Hanbach, a small village along the railroad between Sarralbe and Saarguemines. Our own lines to our battalions were no sooner in than we had to send the crews out

to get in lines to connect us up with the scattered 12th. Corps Artillery battalions. Just after dark I was sent up to the CP of the 12th. Corp Artillery on the outskirts of Saarguemines to arrange for the taking over of their switchboard, and to replace it with one of ours as soon as possible. By doing this, we could get by pretty well by only having two lines from Hambach to this forward switchboard, which was already connected up with most of the 12th. Corps battalions. This was taken care of and several lateral lines between some of the extra battalions was finished by about 0100 hours and we had taken over a total of about 12 battalions, in addition to our own four.

So much had happened that I could hardly realise it all, and the hardest part to realize was that it was all completed so soon and worked. I know I didn't relax for several days, didn't even begin to until two days later when XV Corps Artillery Hq set up in Sarralbe and took over. However by that time nearly all the extra artillery that we had were on their way north to Luxumberg and we only had our own left.

It was getting close to Christmas and we thought we had a pretty good set-up to eat Christmas dinner. The mess hall was in a small hotel dining room and we were all able to find seats of some kind, as well as to eat inside out of the weather. It had turned very cold, had another snowfall the day after we arrived here, which didn't warm things up one bit. Where we slept was on the floor of what had been a beer hall, but the beer was all gone, and there was nothing left but the floor with some straw laid down for bedding. We ran electric wire to nearly all the quarters and prepared to spend a comfortable stay, (the power of course came from the portable generator - there was no local juice in this area). We didn't even have to dig slit trenches here, there were permanent emplacements already built for the

patrons of the beer hall and hotel. All in all we were sitting pretty, for with the extra units back with their own corps, it didn't look too difficult for us. The terrain was easy to lay wire over and we were told that this was to be a static position, in other words we probably wouldn't be moving around much.

Our surprise and disappointment can be imagined when we received orders to move, at noon of Dec. 23. The new position was at Puttelange, 6 miles west. We sent crews out and got the wire lines extended to the new position and a board installed, so that we could control our battalions from the new position. Our wire was taken over by another FA Group who installed their board and took over just before dark from us. Plenty of excitement while it lasts. I arrived at Puttelange while it was still light, our wire was all in, except for getting electric lines in for the kitchen and CP, so I had a little chance to look around and see what we had gotten in exchange for Hambach.

We had taken over a two story hotel, with a large dining room on the ground floor, twice as large as the one back at Hambach, plenty of chairs and tables for all. The officers' mess was in a private dining room off to one side. Nearly all the wire crews and radio operators had rooms on the second floor of the hotel. The CP was in a large residence up the road from the hotel which housed all the CP personel and offices. Battery Hq and message center was in a big brick house next to the CP. The French family retained the large kitchen on the first floor and their own bedrooms upstairs. Sgt. Miller, the clerk radio sgt, two relief operators and myself had another big room on the first floor, as did message center, just across the hall. Two other rooms in the house were occupied by different battalion messengers. There were three persons in the civilian family, the husband, his wife, and their daughter, reputedly married to a German soldier fighting on

the Italian front. The house was supposed to belong to her, the old peoples house, down in town had been damaged by war and they had moved in with the girl.

It was all really a perfect set-up, and none of us were sorry that we had left Hambach. This was so-much better in all ways. We were more comfortably housed, which was good. The room that we had was well equipped with double-decked bunks mattressed with straw ticks, a small porcelain stove and a table.

This end of town we were in had been the location of some of the Maginot Line Garrison barracks, and across the street from us were several huge concrete three story barracks buildings, also several well constructed residences, evidently for the officers of the garrison. The French told us that this area had also been used by the Germans for a garrison and the houses had been used for non-coms and officers. The buildings looked good, but some were partially filled with debris of one kind and another, but very little damage from shells. Nearby were the wreckage of several large buildings, evidently either hotels or more garrison buildings. Also down in the town, which was a fair sized village there were quite a few wrecked buildings, the largest ones were the ones most generally wrecked, for some reason. I saw two burned out churches and another huge frame nearly half a regular block square, that had the roof gone and inside the walls it was filled with rubble, so I could tell nothing of what it had been used for.

The street leading north towards St. Avold through our end of town was lined with huge shade trees, but the season of the year being what it was, they were perfectly bare of foliage. I believe it would have been a pretty scene in the spring when things were green.

On Christmas morning I was sent in a jeep to St. Avold to see if I could locate the 6th. Cavalry Group, elements of which had passed

through Puttelange during the night, and to find out where there CP was to be. They were part of the Corps and we had to maintain communications with them. It was bitterly cold. I remember a fountain in St. Avold that had been hit by a shell breaking the water pipe and the spray from that had built up a large blossom of icicles from the center of the fountain basin, and also festooned some of the surrounding poles and rooftops with ice. The city had been damaged somewhat and several buildings in the center of town were held up by large braces running across the street to the building fronts on the other side.

We finally found a part of the Cavalry Group temporarily located in what had been the site of a German garrison near the town. It had been quite a place, had a parade ground, sentry boxes scattered around and large buildings. I enjoyed a brief stay in one of them where the GI's had a roaring fire going. It thawed me out a little for the 15 mile drive back to Puttelange.

This country was nearly bare of trees, except for widely scattered small groups of trees. It was quite rolling and from the general look of the soil was used for growing grain in the past. A large power line ran through here, but it was very much damaged, so we did not expect much from that in the future.

The battery held a sort of Christmas celebration in the dining room on Christmas Eve, and everyone made as merry as they could under the circumstances. They all seemed to enjoy themselves too.

The wire crews were kept busy, three of them being sent out nearly every day to pick up and salvage wire that had been left by units who had originally held this area, and pulled out in a hurry. One crew, or a part of it was kept in to take care of any trouble that might come up. Along towards the latter part of the time that we were salvaging this

wire, the trucks went as far as twenty and thirty miles away in search of dead lines. I'm sure we got some that were not as dead as they should have been. There were two reasons for this activity. One was that our supply of new wire had been drastically cut from the Army Supply depot, and we had nothing much to do and would need the wire. This was a defensive position and we were to organize alternate positions and lay alternate wire lines. All this ate up wire nearly as fast as we could get it, but at the end of three weeks, our picking up had resulted in a stock of nearly 100 miles of very good wire, and the day we moved from Hambach we had less than 10 miles of wire, of all kinds.

A directive from Army informed us that in the future, no requisitions for wire would be honored unless the requisition was accompanied by at least 60% of the amount in empty wire drums. Accordingly the day before we were to send a truck down after wire, I went with a 2½ ton truck on a reel finding jaunt. We covered about 90 miles and returned with enough reels for 90 miles of wire, some of them we picked up in Saar Union out in front of another unit's CP. Our requisition for 90 miles of wire was not honored. However we did get about 60, which was our quota for the period, and we received credit for the extra drums.

The weather had been hovering down around the 10 above zero mark for days and several snowfalls had given us a good foot of dry powdery snow on the level. Roads were slippery because of the ice and careful driving was necessary, but we had no accidents during this time.

I almost forgot one of the incidents of our reel salvaging trip. Just below Sarralbe was a depot of the Corps Signal Battalion, located in a large cantonment. As we drove by we noticed a large pile of empty reels behind one of the buildings. They looked so good that we decided to make an attempt to salvage them. The sentry at the gate

let us through, we located the drums and loaded every one (about 20) without a suspicious look from any of the men who passed. Nonchalantly we drove on out the gate and beat it. It was quite a help in getting our load, but I often wondered what happened when the supply officer at that place found his spare reels missing.

One day we needed another line in to hook us up with a unit up above St. Avold and the distance being so great we didn't wish to run the extra wire so went out hunting someone else's wire that we could use. For some time we had eyed two pair of rubber covered cables running past our CP and continuing on up through and past St. Avold. Accordingly we tested both cables and received no answer or indication of any use being made of them. So a detail went to St. Avold to disconnect the cable and connect it to a line for our use, while another break was made near our CP and hooked up to our switchboard. Then the trouble started. Before the men returned from St. Avold there was a repair man up at our CP from Corps. It seems that those two cables were used by a carrier setup, therefore an ordinary telephone did not make any impression when applied to the lines. That was why we could not get any results when we tested for their use. We had to get out and unhook our wires and rehook the cable up again. No one got in the doghouse for it, as it was a logical happening.

In one of the Christmas boxes received by me during the short time at Hanbach was a camera, so I was able to get some pictures of this area around Puttelange. I had not had such a chance before, and all pictures obtained by me were from someone else. It was quite nice to be able to take my own now for a change.

The long awaited Christmas packages really started to arrive while we were here and the window sills, under the beds, and most of the

clear space on the table, were always occupied by boxes of candy, jars of sandwich spread, cookies, fruitcakes and other good eatables. It was common practice for us to have a before-bed snack every evening, besides the piecing that we all did during the day. Its a wonder that we didn't get a dose of upset stomach or something. In our evening snacks we generally got some bread from the kitchen and toasted it on our little stove, adding cheese or something to it for the finishing touch. Hobart got some caviar, crab, shrimp and other appetizers in a box and gave them all to us. I guess he thought we were the hungriest bunch around there and could make the best use of it. We were eating supper about 1630 or 1700 hours at this time so the evenings were rather long, maybe that was why we got hungry.

When we ran out of fuel for our several stoves a truck was sent "foraging" for some more. Several types were common, one was small egg shaped, hard lumps of pressed stuff looking like coal dust. It made a fine fire that gave out a lot of heat. Another was shaped like a building brick only about half that size. It seemed to be pressed out from coal dust, oil and saw dust. It was better to light and gave as good heat as the smaller eggs. Then of course we had plenty of coke and coal. The coke, after it once got started would nearly run one out of the room, but the stove had to be kept nearly full and worked with a full draft. Sometimes this fuel was gotten legally, as the army operated a huge fuel depot up towards Sarrbruken. Other times it was taken from caches in the vacated German towns just over the border above St. Avold.

Every few days it seemed that we had some more snow come down, but it was always a dry snow, so dry that it would squeak as you walked through it. I don't believe that it ever got deeper than a foot however.

The temperature ranged around zero and above all this time. Several times the water in the bucket in the non-working "sit down toilet that flushes", had ice on it but even so, not having to use an outside one that did not flush, during this kind of weather was a welcome relief.

It was during this time that the Germans made a bit of a drive down in the Colmar-Strassbourg area, and also tried to cut a wedge down from Bitche, to spread out on the Sarrbourg plain. They captured a small town only about two miles beyond Rohrenburg, where we had been just before Christmas. This wedge extended on to the south to a point just east of Ttfenbach, another place in which we had been. We were more or less on the alert all during this time because of the thinness of the lines in all the XV Corps sector. Up until now there had been no sizeable reenforcements brought in since the Corps had spread out at the start of the "bulge". There were infantry roadblocks on all the roads leading out from Futtelange, and all during the hours of darkness, we operated a jeep patrol out on these roads keeping in contact with first one and then another post. In addition we had wire lines to three more infantry lookouts, but there were not many men at any one of those posts, so actually the force around here was really few.

I remember one of those patrols that I was on one night. I had nearly all the clothes on that I had ever been issued, but if I'd ever had to use my gun while out there, I couldn't have pulled the trigger my hands were so cold. Every time we came back through town we stopped and ran into the hotel where the night cook was doing some baking, to get warm again. It was only for a minute but it helped. Our main job was to look out for parachutests being dropped at night. This time I was out was a beautiful clear night with a full moon and shining on the snow it was nearly bright as day.

One night a German Messerschmidt came over too low and got winged.

It crashed a couple of miles away but the occupants were gone by the time our truck got there and we never did find them. It worried the brass for awhile, for fear they would find out just how thin our lines were at this point, and we would have an attack down through there, but if they did find out about the lines, the attack never came.

I made my acquaintance with Vermouth here. It was quite a revelation; I had been hooking up a line between the kitchen used by the French family, who lived in the hotel, and our generator, so they could have lights. It was Capt. Anderson's idea so they could have lights, and it wasn't such a hard job because the officers' mess was in the next room. When I was nearly done, the mister brought in a small glass of amber like fluid. It had the nicest flavor I ever tasted, no bite at all. So I downed it. A little later he brought in another glass, and since the first was so delicious, I took the second. It made a warm tingly feeling clear to the tips of my fingers. I asked him what it was and he said "aperitif", which didn't mean a thing to me, then he told me it was Vermouth. I knew what that was, as I had read of it in our French guide, a cooked wine. Well, it was nearly dinner time when I finished, and I ate a huge dinner, and for some reason, unnatural and all that, because of my eating, I was slightly dizzy all afternoon. Guess it was the Vermouth after all, but anything that tasted so good should never have any effects like that.

Things looked pretty bad around all our parts about this time, what with the "bulge" the Colmar pocket" and the salient down from Bitche, that we had to organize defensive positions, with alternate positions for all group units several miles to the rear. Wire lines were run in at the rear positions for the battalions, a switchboard was set up at the potential group position and we laid lines from

our regular CP back to the rear. In addition, leads were spliced in for all switchboard lines at the main position and these leads were dead-ended in the basement of one of the big concrete barracks buildings. This was so that in case of an attack we could move our board to that basement and still operate, even though the town might be cut off. All points in the town were plotted in relation to the rear position, so that we in group could remain in Puttelange and call for fire on any particular point from the units back in the rear positions. All this preparation was extra work and luckily was never needed, but it tied up a good many miles of wire for some time, and gave us things to think of. The operators at the rear board were there specially so that the lines would not ring dead in case someone was testing for dead lines preparatory to picking up unused wire. Of course, sometimes trucks would cut a line and start picking it up without even ringing in to test it. When that occasionally happened, there was really some beefing.

It was in connection with this alternate position deal that a truck loaded with several of us non-coms went out one morning to chart possible routes that we could use for withdrawal if necessary. It was believed that the division would have priority of the main roads to the the rear, so our job was to see how passable some of the alternate roads were. It had been so cold for so long that everything was frozen solid, but even so we had to turn back from several of the back roads that we tried. The bridges on them had been destroyed and we couldn't make it over the water courses. I know that the ones of us who made the trip in that 3/4 ton truck with no top or sides on, nearly froze before we got back. I guess we found enough roads to use though in case it had to be.

We were transfered to a new Corps about this time. The XV had

moved over slightly and some of its western area had been taken over by the XXI Corps, fresh from England and the States. None of us were overjoyed by the change, as this was a new outfit, worked more by the book of rules than by experience. Their radio net was bad compared with what we had been used too, which made it worse for the operators, as it fell upon them to straighten things out for the Corps Artillery control stations at times. One time one of our lines to the rear went out and the crew that went out on it found that a couple of wiremen from the signal battalion of the Corps had chopped some wood for a fire over the lines laying on the ground and then built the fire on them. One thing was bad enough, without the second. It seemed that those two men were replacements that the signal Battalion had received just before leaving England and didn't even begin to know what the score was about. After a few days of this "new deal", orders came for us to move. It seemed that the Artillery Commander wanted us to be closer to his headquarters.

We also found out why we had been assigned to this new Corps. We were the senior heavy artillery group in the XV Corps so it fell upon us to act as the guiding hand for the new arrivals.

The word to move came by surprise just after lunch one day, in fact, representatives of all the sections were taken to Leyviller (some six or eight miles by road to the west) a beat up little village of not many houses, to see where our sections were to be quartered and to prepare for a leisurely move on the morrow. It was all a good idea, but before we left Leyviller for the return to Puttelange, the Colonel came in with the news that he had ordered the kitchen to pack and that it and other sections were on the way over. A leisurely move indeed! Well it was done again. We tied in some lines to the battalions to

our north and added some more to them so our communications were in by dark and somehow we got all our stuff moved too, except some of the extra furniture that we had been using - some of the stuff that had been borrowed from across the border in Germany. It was snowing all that afternoon too, which made it interesting.

Our position this time turned out to be not so bad. There had been a garrison for a Maginot Line sector stationed here in this camp, which consisted of two huge 3 story barracks, a guard house, gate house, garage, huge outdoor kitchen, small stable and two other one story and basement buildings that had been used as a hospital and headquarters building respectively. The barracks buildings were pretty well beat up, but the two smaller ones taken over by us, for the most part were windowed and pretty well roofed. At least we thought so until the snow melted some time later and we found that the tile leaked like a colander in many places when the protecting blanket of snow was gone.

At this time Artillery Hq of the XXI Corps were also in the compound, but were in the basement of the guard house, and in part of one of the barracks. At least we weren't far from them, which made messenger service easy and also wire servicing between the two units was not an involved job.

Sgt. Miller raised a stove some place for our room, which also housed Hansen, Jewell (battery clerk) and myself. Before we could get the thing to working without smoking us out, we had to raise a smoke stack to clear the roof. Even so, it took nearly a week to get all the kinks ironed out so we could start a fire easily without too much smoke, for some reason it was just a smokey stove, but we hated to give it up because it made such good heat when we did get it going. This was a sheet iron stove instead of one of the porcelain and firebrick stoves

that were so common, those were good stoves but took too long to get heated up, but they would hold a warmth for some time.

We had only been here for two days when XXI Corps up and pulled out, leaving us all their wire installations, and after tying in those lines from their switchboard we had about forty lines into ours, and a total of 200 miles of wire under our control. The longest single line was about 35 miles, leading to a Cavalry unit up byond St. Avold. When that outfit left, we reverted back to the control of XV Corps, who were clear back in Saar Union, about 20 miles away, but who expected to move in to Sarralbe, which would bring them up to about eight miles (by the shortest, but the roughest, almost impassable road).

The XXI Corps went down to the Colmar pocket to take over control of that area. I guess our gentle teaching was OK because due to something, perhaps the good divisions who did the actual fighting, the danger to Strasbourg was averted and the Germans thrown back across the Rhine in that area for good.

In the building that I called home at this time, were the following; kitchen and dining room, where we again had tables and chairs, the dental shop, switchboard room, Capt. Anderson's quarters, bathroom (where we had a water heater and barrel of water for baths and clothes washing), the quarters of all the kitchen crew, and Capt. McCory's room. All these took less than half the floor space but the windows and roof for the remainder of the rooms were practically non-existant. In fact I believe that most of the windows from them went to glass in the rooms that were used. In the other building, which was in nearly perfect condition, were all the rest of the officers, radio section, operations, supply and the four wire crews. We at least were under the same roof with the kitchen, which was something. There wasn't any need to make that cold outdoor dash in the snow or rain for breakfast, or

any other meal for that matter.

We had quite an electrical installation here too, with lines which ran to all the different rooms. Just before leaving Puttelange we had received a new power unit, so that even with the extra lines used here, there was plenty of juice. This new unit had been assembled by the O'Keefe and Merrit stove company, and eventually gave us quite a bit of trouble because of the high speed the motor turned over. However while it ran it worked very well for all the drain that we put on it. While here and at Puttelange we had been able to get quite a few films and had some good moving pictures, in fact if there was no trouble with the projector or the power unit, we had a different show every other night.

One day I went with several others up to a German town called Merlebach, a coal mining town just over the border some 15 miles north of us. We went for showers and really got them. The shower building at this mine where we went was a good hundred yards long and possibly 75 feet wide. A corridor ran down the center with doors opening off to each side about every 20 feet. These doors opened into a room walled on the corridor side to a height of about 10 feet, the opposite side of the room which was 15 feet square was open and led directly to the shower heads. The walls between each room were of woven wire screen, and in each room were a number of small chains running down from pulleys in the roof which was about 30 feet up above the floor. The miners, when they came to work would unlock their chain, let their work clothing down from the roof, hang their good clothes on the hook and pull them back up. Then on coming off shift they would reverse the process, take a shower and go home, or someplace else. We didn't need to use the hooks and chains, because we only took a shower, and

didn't stay to work. We were told that there were over 1000 shower heads in that building and I don't doubt it one bit. Anyhow this was the second real shower I'd had since landing in France. I only got to Merlebach for showers this once, although we sent trucks there quite frequently for the men. It always seemed quite a jaunt to take for a shower when we could get a spit bath right in our own building.

On one of the nice bright cold days here, we all went out in the little valley behind the barracks for carbine shooting. It seemed that we all had to shoot them for familiarisation, being as how maybe we didn't get a chance to shoot them at Germans. As for me it was the first time I'd shot any gun since going through a firing course at Ross in England. I didn't do so badly though, found that the gun shot straight at least.

Late in February we were again changed over under control of the XXI Corps, and the XV moved into Saar Union again from Sarralbe where they had been for a short time. It seemed that the Germans had it in for Corps Artillery because they had to move out of Sarralbe twice, due to some long range artillery fire from German positions just behind Sarreguemines. It was funny because we at Puttelange had been closer to the German held territory than Sarralbe was and at Leyviller the distance was about the same.

The XXI Corps Artillery moved back into their old area inside the compound next to us, but they didn't bother us any, in spite of the fact that they were holding reville formations and all that sort of stuff. We were afraid being so close to them that they might insist on our holding such formations to keep them company. This was to be only temporary we soon found out, because we had been left here to support the assault up around Forbach and Sarrbruken and when that was done we would revert back to XV again and move someplace else.

I was on pins and needles for some time here as we had been assigned the 515th. FA Battalion which was the one George was in. The only drawback was that no one seemed to know where the unit was. It was due in and we even laid a line to a tentative position for it up beyond Puttelange, and had their code names and so forth. Not long after, it was reassigned to another FA Group and although I kept in touch with them, we still heard no word of them.

There had been quite some unit changes around our area, during the past few weeks. New divisions being sent in, others leaving and new FA battalions being assigned for a period and then leaving. It all pointed to something coming up. When, no one could tell, or if they knew they still wouldn't tell.

I was sent down to Epinal to pick up a new dental officer about this time and ended up by bringing back an additional flying officer also. Its a good thing we were in a command car, instead of the jeep that we had intended taking, because each officer had a duffle bag, bed roll and val-pac. The old command car had bags hanging out from every place. We even lost one down the road from Leyviller about forty miles, but had stopped to check the load soon after losing it, and someone following us had picked it up and they gave it to us when they found us stopped. This new dental officer took the place of Capt. McAvoy who had been assigned to a post near Paris. This meant that we would see no more of his picture taking, as he was an avid camera fan and took his 35mm camera with him every where he went.

I managed to get in some running around while here too, although none of the trips were striking, down to the signal repair outfit below Sarr Union, over near Hanbach, and numerous short trips to contact different battalions and all. The 200th. Battalion up at Cassel really had a fine view. The Hq at the head of the main (and only) street,

looked out on the street which was lined with nearly a solid row of fragrant manure piles, one for every dwelling. I thought it was quite striking and took a couple of pictures of the scene one day.

The weather had warmed up considerably, enough to melt all the snow and frozen ground so that we had some trouble with wire lines getting soaked and shorting out. One of them between us and the 208th. Battalion bothered us for several days, although we had a crew out on it nearly all the time. There was an intermittant short in the thing and they couldn't localize the trouble. Every time they thought they had it and laid in a new span, it would break out again, but finally with two crews out on it and checking nearly every foot of the six miles they found where the line had some insulation rubbed off on a green tree. The trouble only came when the wind blew the limb under the bare spot on the wire. Its a good thing we finally got it because Col. White of the 208th. got a bit wrathy one day when it happened as he was talking and he had to wait until the call was shifted to another line. Its a wonder he didn't melt another bit of insulation off the wire. Some more trouble was caused by the bulldozers that were out grading the roads and grading some of our wire at the same time. That kind of trouble was easy to find though because it was always a clean break and all one had to do was get near where the outfit was working, test the line and you wouldn't be far from the break.

One day Sgt. Miller, a driver and myself decided to take a reconnaisance up over the border and see what we could find for ourselves. We were actually hoping to find a whole or part of a workable radio. A whole one would have been too perfect, but even a part of one that we could use to make one of the partially complete civilian sets get some music for us, would have been a find. Besides we took a ¼ ton trailer

along with us to get some coal as our supply was getting low.

Our destination was a small town across the border and some distance above St. Avold reached over a road running parallel with the front. Before leaving, we carefully checked the front line positions so that we wouldn't inadvertantly make an inspection of some German positions. Just before reaching this cross road running between the St. Avold-Sarrebruken highway and the St. Avold-Saarlautern road (which was the one we were on) we passed over into Third Army territory and had quite a bad time of it for a few moments convincing them that we were the real thing and that we really had business up that way. It being different Army area, we had a different pass word from them and we talked a different language for the moment. It was all cleared up and we proceeded on our way. The terrain up this was hilly, with many rather dense growths of evergreen trees. In between the small wooded areas were fields of grain, not very many of which had been planted recently. They looked more like the growth was volunteer. On the cross road which we followed for a few miles to this town that we were headed for, we sighted several rather prosperous looking farm houses, all looking quite deserted.

When we reached the town (I forget the name of it) it was deserted of all civilians, but there seemed to be a small detachment of American soldiers in the further end of the place. We started going through each house from top to bottom but they looked rather bedraggled for the most part. In many of them we found belts of ammunition, grenades and hundreds of rounds of loose ammunition. I found a German light machine gun in excellent condition, all oiled up, with full drums of ammunition, there in the hay loft of one of the houses. Some of them had evidently been lived in by fairly well-off persons, from the appearance

of the furniture. For the most part, there was not the usual knicknacks that one finds in our homes, but in some we saw an awful amount of junk. Of course they had been vacated in a hurry, and probably had already been ransacked, which accounted for the torn up interior. The arrangement of some of the houses intrigued me in that there was a basement, sometimes reached from the ground level and other times being under the ground level, with the first floor entrance being from the ground level. In these basements there were kegs of vile smelling sauerkraut (to me it looked as bad as it smelled too) piles of potatoes, sometimes sugar beets, fuel of one kind or another, either coal or some of the pressed briquets, and occasionally wood, although it was generally of a kindling nature, being small branches that had been cut up into short lengths. On the first floor there was probably a kitchen and one or two bedrooms, on the next floor perhaps another kitchen and a couple more bedrooms, sometimes the second floor was all bedrooms, but the general layout seemed to point towards there having been a series of small apartments in each house. One or two of the larger ones had two complete apartments, such as they were, on each floor but rarely did we find one that had our conception of an apartment with kitchen, bath, living and bedrooms. The top floor was almost always either the hay loft, although I couldn't see how they got the hay into some of them unless it was hauled up the stairs wisp by wisp, or just a semi-vacant attic with a few scattered piles of some kinds of seed on the floor. A few of them had the usual clutter of junk that one would find in many American attics. I was surprised to see several nice looking sewing machines in some of the places. As to inside plumbing, as we know it, there was a noticeable lack, although a few houses did have almost a full complement of the usual fixtures. Stone and mortar

with some wood comprised the main construction materials, with a few made of some kind of smooth polished outside resembling polished granite. It was probably something that takes the place of our stucco, as it was a complete covering and not in pieces like it would have been if it were polished stone. A few of the houses had a shed behind the house where they had originally kept rabbits and their coal pile, instead of in the basement. It was these coal piles that we patronized to get a few lumps for our supply. We got a couple of choice lumps from one place, so huge that it took two of us to lug them out to the trailer. When we finally got them into our room back at Leyviller, we nearly had to move the stove out so there would be room for the coal. Actually one of them lasted us for a good many days. Radios were at a premium and we found none, but did get a few tubes that we took back. We found after getting them there that there was much more wrong with the sets than blasted tubes. Hansen finally got a little three tube regenerative set to working, that did right well when you could get a station tuned without bringing in all the squeals in several countries. It was one of the little German "peoples' radios" the product that Hitler so kindly permitted his people to have in large numbers so they could hear him scream over the airwaves. It was no real kindness as they were so constructed that they would not pick up anything very far outside the German borders. That was so they could only hear what was thought best for them.

Our curiosity was finally satisfied and we took our lumps of coal and ourselves in our jeep on the way back to Leyviller, which place we reached just at dark, after traveling in the rain most of the way.

The weather had turned warm enough so that it had melted the frost out of the ground and I guess the Colonel figured that the snow was all through for the year because he ordered that the snow camouflage on the

vehicles to be taken off. It turned out to be quite a job. Even though it was similar to whitewash, the men had to use wire brushes and such things to remove it. Then all the vehicles needed a new coat of OD paint. Talk about spring work, we had spring painting. The white coloring on the cars and trucks was very effective though as anything some distance away was nearly impossible to see against the background of snow, especially if it remained still.

Rumors began to buzz around concerning a move for us about this time, it being late in February, and the campaign up around Sarrlautern and the cutting off of the bulge down near Sarrguemines was progressing well in our favor. We had only been assigned to the XXI Corps until those troublesome areas were cleaned up and now we were getting impatient.

Our prospective new location was to be over in the eastern sector some place, and so we sent two wire crews to Ratzwiller (a little village about halfway between Leyviller and Enchenberg, the place that we left just before Christmas) to set up a wire net hooking up to Corps Artillery in Sarr Union and thereby back to us, and to occupy places for the remainder of the battery when and if we moved up. I guess they enjoyed themselves while there, went deer hunting in the wooded area that was all around there, and loafed most of the rest of the time because there was very little work for them to do except wait for us to move. I heard of one deer hunting expedition that was made when even a 50 caliber machinegun failed to halt a deer.

The big day finally arrived. We received word on the 8th. of March 1945 that we would move to Ratzwiller on the next day. We had been there so long that everyone had tables, chairs, deluxe mattresses and many other extra comfort articles. The day before was spent in packing and partially loading the trucks as we were to clear the area by 0800 hours. I even tore down the steel slat springed bed that I

had been sleeping on for my stay here and loaded it on one of the trucks. This contraption was either French or German in ancestry but for all its weight and looks, it made sleeping something to look forward to instead of something to dread. The frame was of angle iron and the springs consisted of about eight 3/8 by 1½ inch steel strips running the length of the frame, fastened solid at one end and running through slots in the other. This looseness at one end permitted the springing action when a weight was placed on the slats. With a pad under the sleeping bag it really made a comfortable bed spring.

On the 9th. of March we did take off, and I mean it looked like a gypsy caravan. All the trucks looked more like a band of "Okies" on the move, with stoves, bed springs, chairs and brightly colored cushions riding the loads. Capt. Anderson had said we could take anything "German" in origin if we could without leaving any GI stuff, and we did.

Ratzwiller had not been shot up much by the passage of war, but was really a crowded little place. The fellows had been hard put to find enough room for all the various sections, but had managed it by doubling up in nearly all cases. So, after about ten weeks spent in two places only six miles apart, we made a move of about 30 miles and resumed our nomadic life that we had left to the past along about Christmas time. It was a relief to get started again, nice as it was to be able to feel settled for awhile and know that you would be sleeping in the same bed for a few nights in succession, it did not win any fights, which was what we all wanted to get done.

The radio section and battery headquarters all had one large room in a house here and slept on the floor, having to roll up all bedding in the morning so that we could walk on the floor. I know we didn't get too much sleep because of the extension speaker used from the big

receiver so the operator on duty could remain inside out of the cold. The air was full of static, code and various stations checking in and out of the net, so that things never did quiet down enough for a good sleep.

Just below the town there was quite a heavily wooded section that I had occasion to pass through in going down to another town to see someone in our air section. Besides the woods, it was quite hilly with some small streams flowing through the small valley floors. Attempts were made to keep these little valleys drained by having a series of small ditches running diagonally across the floor to the stream, but there was so much seepage flowing down from the hills on both sides of these valleys that the spaces between the ditches were soggy. The uninitiated, if attempting to cross one of these valleys in a vehicle would immediately find himself good and stuck.

I believe it was on the 10th. of March that Corporal Batten and myself received orders to be at Corps Artillery Hq in Sarr Union, some 15 miles away, to receive the award of the Bronze Star. The ceremony was to be at 1300 hours, so we left early and ate dinner with the Corps Artillery mess. Batten (one of my wire corporals) and myself were all dressed up in our cleanest OD uniforms, mine had been pressed between the top and bottom layers of my sleeping bag for several days, so was really a snappy deal.

There were some forty men and officers to receive awards of one kind and another from the Artillery Commander, General Ott, so we were not alone, which made us feel much better. A signal Corps photographer was present and took pictures of everyone just as the General pinned the ribbon on their jacket. After the awards were made the General made a speech lauding the work of all the ones just honored and from

several remarks that he made, we could assume that the XV Corps together with others would be on the move again soon.

On the way back to Ratzwiller we saw the remains of a Chaplain's jeep and trailer that had hit a land mine along the road. The two vehicles, together with various Chaplain's paraphernalia had been well scattered along the right of way. Not a very good manner in which to have the gospel word spread, I would say.

Our wire net here consisted of only ten or fifteen miles of wire, a far cry from the 200 plus that we had been working on back at Leyviller. We salvaged very little of that amount, because we had turned nearly all of it over to the XXI Corps and another Artillery Group. One good thing about it was that we were saved the job of picking it up, as it had all been in for so long that it would have been a tedious job.

This town was really crowded, full of infantry units resting up before going back into the lines again, engineer and some armored units waiting, like us, for things to crystalize. Some of the infantry was supposed to move on out and we would be able to get a couple of the houses they were using, which would allow us to spread out some. The only fly in the ointment was that we moved too soon.

On March 11th. we moved up to the village of Bining, a distance of eight miles. Moving up we passed through Rohrbach and the area where we had laid wire to our battalions last December when they displaced from the Rochenberg area to place their fires on the Bitche fortresses to more advantage. It was almost like seeing an old acquaintance.

The bulk of the battery was bivouaced here in the schoolhouse, a three story concrete building, pretty much the worse for fire but quite usable for us. The kitchen was in this place too, so we were handy to

it again. I was in the basement, a fact that pleased me very much as I thought we were getting rather close to where things might happen without warning.

The school was on a raised space at the turn of the main road through town and we could stand in the front yard and watch other units move on up towards the front. It was quite interesting, being that we could see others the same way that so many had been able to see us so many times.

While back at Leyviller we had received a new SCR-193 radio and had not had the opportunity to get it mounted. Major Shaug's command car was deadlined here and Sgt. Hansen got ready to install the set in his car. Cpl. Grimes and his wire crew did their good deed for several days by relaying much of the tile roof on the house used by the CP.

The Colonel recommended (?) that vehicles be washed and Grimes (one of the drivers, not my wireman) started using the water from a pump not far from our schoolhouse home. It was right handy, but after pumping out about 50 gallons and almost getting his car washed the pump ran dry. It was just that kind of a pump, about a four cow drink size. It just went to show what type of water we generally would get if we drank what came out of the little village pumps. I believe for the most part that they only tapped a surface water supply in that, although I did see many places in France that the water flowed continuously into a horsetrough some place in the street. But for every one that had one like that there were a dozen that depended on a hand pump. In some places I saw women carrying water over 100 yards to get enough to do their washing. Other places they took their washing to the horse-trough and did it there. A number of towns, particularly those along a stream, had wash houses built along the stream and the women took

their washing down and pounded it out on the flat stones or boards found there as part of the facilities. Several times in passing through or near a village I saw a small ditch full of water and along the banks of that ditch spaced every few feet were little wooden ramps built out over the water. They were used for washing clothes.

We were close to two of our battalions here so our wire net wasn't too bad to put in and maintain. Corps Artillery was up the hill less than a mile in some ex-German or French Maginot Line barracks, so it was just one little happy family.

I don't remember where I got the information, but the second day we were here I got the news that the 515th. FA (the one that George was in) had gone into position over at Sarreguemines, about 20 miles away by the shortest route. I made arrangements to borrow a jeep and driver for the next day for the trip but on a check-up for the route through the CP I learned that the short way was under enemy observation (and fire) so we decided to go around, a distance of perhaps 25 miles.

The morning finally rolled around and the driver and I took off about 0800 hours. There was little wooded country through here and the land was rolling, most of it used for grain, and the farmers were busy this morning getting their plots of land plowed. Everything from one milch cow and one horse for a team, two milch cows, horses alone, or oxen comprised the motive power for these farm implements. An idea of the size of individual farms here can be gained from our being able to see as many as ten teams working in a half mile square piece of land.

We attempted a couple of short cuts of our own but both times the road just quit, once in a muddy patch of ground, literally a mire, and the next time it ended in a group of buildings. That was what we got for trying to follow some of the third or fourth grade roads that were shown on our large scale map.

It was about two hours after leaving Bining that we found traces of the 515th. just east of Sarreguemines. I remember that we passed the building where I spent a busy short while before Christmas, the night we took over the 12th. Corps Communications. It had been their CP and seemed to look so much different in daylight than it had that night when we managed to find it in the inky blackness of a cold December night.

The unit that we found was the Hq Battery of the Battalion and I saw several of the fellows in it that had originally been in the old 144th. Regiment, and who had gone out on cadre before we left Ft. Lewis. They told me that Service Battery, where George was, could be located back at Sarralbe, and we had been through that place over an hour before. Anyhow back we went, passing through Hanbach on the way. We found the motor shop just exactly where they told us we would find it (for a wonder) and as we drove through the gate of what had once been a threshing shed and compound, George was standing in a group of men. I believe his jaw sagged open six inches when he saw who it was getting out of the jeep. He was really pleased to see me. Needless to say we talked over what had happened to both of us since we had last seen each other back in Ft. Lewis early in 1943.

It was near dinner time so we went up to the battery location on the hill overlooking the valley wherein lay the town. They had a big mansion sort of affair for quarters with running water in places. I washed my hands from a faucet instead of out of a helmet for the first time in ages. Had a good dinner too. After lunch we went back down to the shop where George did his business, and talked some more. They had only pulled into Sarralbe the day before, so were quite busy getting straightened out.

Sometime after 1400 hours we took off again for Bining. I hated to leave but the way conditions were I did not want to remain away from the

outfit too long as there was always the chance they would get a move order in a hurry and I always felt that I should be around when things happened, then I could help worry, and as we had been gone since eight, I thought we should get back before five, so we took off.

On reaching the battery again I found everything quite peaceful. The Colonel was out on reconnaisance, but there was no word of moving, the radio was installed and working, so I could just as well have remained away for sometime longer and everything would have been just as well.

We could tell that things were getting ready to pick up, as every day new units passed through the town moving up, where, I don't know because we were not too far from the active front. Some of these new outfits had all markings painted out, so were evidently from a far different sector. I talked to a marker for one of these unknown outfits and he admitted having come from the 1st. Army sector, moving down in three days. Some of the new units affected us, in that two new heavy battalions were attached to us, one of them a self propelled battalion. There was so much artillery passing through that it looked as though we were expecting to blast something to pieces out in front by weight of projectiles alone. All the time we remained in position here our battalions continued to fire at targets out in front, so things were not exactly at a standstill.

The more or less expected word to move came on March 16th. after we had been enjoying our health here for five days. Some of the sections went up just after noon, but it was dark before I was able to leave. I couldn't say too much for the trip up, a distance of 12 miles, as it was a bit cold. There was a feeling that my neck was being stuck out, and the little villages that we passed through did not look too inviting, all beaten up and desolate like. Also we saw several burned out tanks

and a couple of vehicles that had run too close to land mines, and they weren't in any too good shape.

My first impression of Ormersviller wasn't too impressive, even in the dusk. It also looked beaten up, how much, I found out the next day. I located my wire crews and the switchboard. They were in the basement of a rickety two story building. Sgt. Akes (my wire sgt) really had burrowed in a hole this time. I found out that just after they arrived in the place to set up their wire net, the Germans dropped a few 88mm shells in there. That was all Akes needed, he was very allergic to shells, especially when they were incoming. Speaking of shells, when we were on our way up that evening, we passed in front of a 155mm howitzer battery in position. They were firing and let go a salvo just after we passed. They were evidently firing Point fuse because two of the rounds exploded a few hundred yards in front of the guns and not too far above us. No damage was done but it made me wonder for a minute or two whether the Germans or our own guns were going to do the damage to me.

It didn't take me long to get located that evening and when I found that all the necessary wire was in, I went looking for my own hangout. Sgt. Miller and the radio operators had been busy doing other things so hadn't gotten our "home" fixed up as yet. It really needed a hand too. It was, or had been, a barn and three story house combined, with a basement, three rooms on the first floor, three on the second, and an unfinished attic made up the third. The barn section was almost gone, some of the walls were still standing, but the front door was completely blocked by debris that had fallen in front of it. The door was gone anyhow and all we could have used would have been the opening. Anyhow we actually entered and left the front way by going out a door that had originally gone into the barn. The back way was usable all right, although

we eventually had to move a few timbers, German grenades and mines that were laying around before we felt absolutely safe wandering out after dark that way. All this description and we hadn't even gotten our rooms cleaned out so we could sleep. The two rooms that we were going to use for the orderly room and for sleeping, had a foot of fine grain chaff and straw on the floors. It was a job cleaning it out, even if all we did was to shovel it out the windows. It was so dusty that we had to stop and run out for some fresh air after every few shovels. Eventually we got them cleaned up enough to lay our rolls out and got to sleep. I went to sleep with one ear open expecting to hear some more foreign shells coming in, but nothing happened. The next day we borrowed some water and sort of gave the apartment a better going over.

When I got a chance to wander around in the village in the daylight of the following day, I could see that this was one place that had seen the war twice. There wasn't a roof that had all its shingles (tile ones). Most of them had none at all or a very few. Nearly every building had some kind of shell damage, a wall out, hole through where the roof had been or just a general sort of disheveled look caused by different kinds of damage, windows of course there were none. To help solve that shortage we "borrowed" a couple of sheets of celloglass from the operations truck. They had lots, due to finding a cache of it (nearly a ton) in a German pillbox back near St. Avold. From the looks of some of the damage it must have been caused by shell fire back when Germany invaded France in 1940. The scars were old and weatherbeaten, grass was growing in places where the roofs were gone. We later found that this was the case. It had been fired upon in the early days of the war, the inhabitants had left and never came back. I think about the only occupants of the place had been some German Troops from time to time. One of them

hadn't got away, he stayed at the corner near the CP and kitchen for a couple of days, keeping his eye on things I guess, then one day I noticed he had gone. I guess the QM got around to picking him up.

Two batterys of the 208th. Bn. (155 mm guns) were sitting on the forward slope of a gentle hill back of the town and every time they fired, which was quite often, more tile shingles would come sliding off the roofs in the town. It kept one busy dodging them if one happened to be close to a building when they were firing.

It didn't take me long to find out that Ormersviller was practically on the border. It ran on the crest of a hill about one half mile to the west of us and the road crossed it about a mile further up to the north.

Several times during these few days here we saw and heard huge flights of our bombers flying over. The upper air evidently was cold because we could see the vapor trails streaming back to the rear of each plane. Very pretty, but from the standpoint of the flyer very deadly because it pointed the finger to his plane to anyone in the air or on the ground, even though distance prevented the plane itself from being seen. We learned that most of these flights were bombing Zweibrucken, Kaiserlautern and Pirmassens, all of them only a short distance up ahead of us. They were evidently softening up things for us, which fact we were able to see for ourselves in the near future.

Units were moving up through the village every day, our battalions especially the self propelled one had displaced forward in another area some distance to the east of us, which called for some extending of wire circuits. One night after convoys had been passing through all evening and I was walking down the road headed for the apartment I found a carbine laying in the road. For a wonder it had been missed by everything, so was only dusty and not damaged a bit. There were no

markings other than the serial numbers and it belonged to none of our men, so I was the possessor of a carbine, plus my pistol. At the time I had visions of getting it home with me in some manner, but when the coming home time came, I failed to carry out those earlier visions and left it to the tender mercies of the supply sergeant.

One other evening after I had been up around the CP for a period of time I returned to our place and found Cpl. Batten, some of the radio operators, Sgt. Miller and one or two others just getting ready to test out a couple of German demolation explosives and a couple of other pieces of bang stuff. Just below our place which was on a lane, was a 2 foot thick, 10 foot high stone wall. They had this collection of stuff piled at the base of the wall at the corner and were getting ready to set it off as I returned. Naturally I was interested in seeing what would happen so I gathered around too, but when the fuse was lit we all ducked for good protection nearby. Well, when the "boom" went off and the smoke and dust cleared, we saw that the entire corner of the wall was down in the lane. It had made such a disturbance that we didn't spend too much time looking over the "remains" but scattered to more peaceful pursuits. We could hear some excitement over in the 208th. area. I believe they thought there had been an "incoming one" that had just missed. Some ten minutes later I was busily engaged in doing some typing in the orderly room when a delegation comprised of Capt. Anderson (our battery commander), Major Wist (group S-3), a Lt. from the 208th. (their ass't. Comm) and one or two other officers walked in. I was quite awed by all this but with the help of Sgt. Miller, we convinced them that it had been only a bit of a test of "kraut explosives" and had been handled in a very competent manner. Cpl. Batten (one of my wire corporals) was of a very inquisitive nature, but was careful and had worked with such things a time or two.

Come to find out that everyone thought there had been an "incoming one" especially over at the 208th. where a couple of pebbles had landed. I'm not sure what Capt. Anderson told the Colonel, but it was evidently OK because we heard nothing later on. As soon as he found that no one had been injured and so forth he was all right. Anyhow it provided a bit of excitement for a few minutes. The poor wall would never be the same though I fear.

On the afternoon of Mar. 22nd. we were given march order, got loaded, did everything but close down the switchboard and began to wait for the move out order. It didn't come and didn't come and finally we unloaded, went back to our homes and set up housekeeping again. It wasn't long before we got the word again. We would pull out at 0800 hours in the morning. I don't know what most of us expected, we all knew the Seigfreid Line faced us not far over the border, but we also knew that Patton's armor had been running loose up above Kaiserlautern so hoped that the Line ahead of us was somewhat unmanned, due to the defenders having pulled back.

The next morning we did pull out at the scheduled hour, crossing the German border a few minutes later, it was marked only by a small dusty somewhat weatherbeaten white pyramidal marker. I don't know what I had expected to see on the border, but it had been more than a little white marker I know. Well anyhow the great day was finally here. After eight months and over 1000 miles of combat travel we had finally crossed over into Germany.

What I remember of the first few miles was patches of woods, a winding white dusty road that hundreds of vehicles had been and were using, small stretches of valley where the bulk of the bridges over the meandering stream had been blasted by bombs or demolition. At intervals we got glimpses of huge pillboxes, one could call some of them "forts" and not exaggerate one bit, they were so big. I know we missed many

of the ones that were there because some of the ones we saw were excellently camouflaged, and a casual observer would probably have missed them too.

We passed through Zweibrucken (Deux Ponts) named because of its position on the fork of a river, and saw evidence of the plastering of bombs that it had received in the softening up process during the preceding days. Later on we seemed to be climbing, the road following the ridges of a fairly rough type of terrain. Several places, generally near some small village we saw lines of the famous "dragon's teeth" type of tank traps, which did not seem to have done much good from the German standpoint. I saw no trapped American tanks, maybe the bait was not the right kind. The column made a long halt about 1100 hours in the middle of a nice little valley. It looked quite peaceful I know. Just above where we were stopped there had been a stone quarry of some kind. We could see where the blocks of stone, resembling our sandstone, but of a dark red color, had been rolled down the hillside to the paved road where they had been loaded on conveyances of some kind for hauling. It was not exactly a lunch halt, because we ate K rations, and we could do that while traveling, but we did eat while at this stop. I don't know what caused the halt, probably a tieup of traffic ahead some place.

All along this route we passed through wooded patches, some quite large and from the high points that we sometimes reached, we could see heavily wooded areas stretching off into the distance. Except for the Vosge mountain area of France, I believe we traveled through more wooded terrain on this trip than we had seen on any trip of similar length in France. It may be that my memory just doesn't click on such details, but it seems that way.

There were numerous villages on our route, some of them were evidently

getting the lowdown, because there seemed to be political meetings of some sort in some of them. No doubt the burgermeister giving them the daye headlines. We saw many groups of German soldiers, all walking down the highway with their hands up, most of them quite seedy looking. Also several parties of what must have been ex-soldiers of some nationality other than German. They were in uniform but I could not recognize it. However they all insisted on saluting Chaplain Camache, whose jeep proceeded the one I was in, also some of them gave me the highball as we passed. Quite a novel sight. None of them were bothering anything they just seemed to be heading for some definite place, probably a PW camp back down the road.

Kaiserlautern was a large city, originally the center of much manufacturing but the bombers had really made hash of much of that district. The rusted look prevelant around many of the blasted apart factories proved the damage was of some time before, but some fresh damage was evident, probably the result of a few days before. The street that we followed through town had been really blown apart it seemed, as there were filled in places hundreds of feet in length in spots. This damage rather made us feel good, as heretofore all the damage we had seen was only done to French buildings. This proved to us that the Germans had also taken a bit of a shellacking. Later on we almost changed our minds, but changed back again right soon, after we had penetrated further into Germany and had a chance to see more of things.

A few miles beyond Kaiserlautern, the road ran in a narrow canyon for some distance. For a mile or so in this area we passed through the largest mass of wreckage I had seen yet. There were dozens of horses wandering about, some with vestiges of harness still hanging from them, more dozens were not wandering, in fact they would never wander again.

Transport wagons lay in tangled piles, all mixed up with horses, guns, equipment of one kind and another, and here and there in all the mess were the guns, many overturned and wrecked. Much of it had burned, so there was the rank smell of many things hanging over the canyon. We heard later that the air corps had spotted a German artillery convoy retreating back through this canyon. They shot it up some and before that wreckage could be cleared up, some of the 3rd. Army's armored columns reached it and finished the whole thing up. The tanks shot up everything they could see, blocking the roads. Then the tankdozers cleared them and the whole process was gone through again. When we saw it, about two days after it had happened, there were places that the road was barely a two way width between the piles of wreckage along both sides.

We soon passed out of that spot, probably it took less time than it has for me to tell it, and continued on down the canyon breaking out into what seemed to be the beginning of a large valley. It could only be the valley of the Rhine. At the mouth of this canyon was quite a large town, Bad Durkheim, of which we saw very little, but it was built along the steep walls of this canyon with short winding streets radiating off of the main ones which were not many, due to the narrowness of the space. Our route did not follow through the main part of town but swung off on the north side, following the curve of the hills. We could see that it seemed to be quite a place and would like to have been able to get a better view but it was impossible. The roads were narrow, winding along between vineyards planted on terraced hillsides, some of the terraces made fields of several acres in size, while another one was very small in comparison. Entrance to many of them from the main road was up short flights of stone stairs, some 15 to 20 feet in

length. I suppose there were other means of entrance because these stairs gave no chance to take tools up them, unless of course they were left in the field and only the horses moved about. The soil seemed to be a light sandy loam, probably quite easy to work. Due to the season of the year very few of the vines showed signs of growth as yet.

Our destination had been someplace a few miles north of Bad Durkheim, but before reaching that place we met a marker who told us that we were to continue on to Wachenheim, about ten miles further. Accordingly we swung slightly away from the road we had followed, running along the base of the low hills and hit a main north-south highway out on the level. At no spot as yet had we been able to see the river, at which fact I was not surprised when I found that we were several miles from it yet. We passed through several rather busy looking towns, the inhabitants of which seemed quite full of curiosity at seeing such a show of heavy strength. I know the entire corps artillery, plus lots of armor had gone up this same road that day and it all should have given even the most ardent Nazi something to think about.

Everything was going along fine with us, proceeding along a raised highway, when we had a flat tire on my jeep. Nothing to do but pull off as far as possible to allow the remaining vehicles of our column to pass and change the wheel. There was plenty of room for normal traffic to pass, but when we were only about half finished a column of tanks pulled up behind us. That was too much and they had to break up as they passed, due to the traffic going south, all of which made us feel fine and put wings on our fingers. I believe that was probably the fastest tire changing ever done on that particular jeep.

By the time we were ready to go again all of our vehicles had passed, so we took out up the road after them, with no more idea of

where Wachenheim was than the man in the moon. Just outside of quite a sizeable town, we ran into a railroad embankment with the road swinging right and left as it reached it. Just before we got to the point of reaching it and having to make a decision as to which way to turn, we sighted Blaney's maintenance truck turning to the right. So we turned to the right too, as he had been in the rear of the column when they passed us. It was sure dusty, the pavement had been blown and the dirt fill was just right for a cloud of white dust; we could barely see the vehicle in front of ours. To make things interesting there was only one stream, due to narrow places and engineers working on it. Several hot, dirty MPs were busy trying to keep things moving rapidly but to me it looked worse than Market Street on the busiest day the city ever had. When we were congratulating ourselves on being on the right road, we met Blaney coming back. A shouted conversation as our two vehicles met and departed, told us they had taken the wrong turn. We went on to a place that we could turn around in and got headed back. It was nearly as much as one's life was worth to run that gauntlet again, but we finally made it. The road was easy to follow, after we were going in the right direction, especially when we met the Colonel's driver, who had been sent back to catch any stragglers that he might see. (We were one). He told us how to reach the position which we did in a few minutes. Blaney, we found, had gotten out of touch with the battery column by having to stop for some minor motor ailment and when they reached that turning point were unable to get through the traffic to make the proper turn.

My eyes were giving me trouble, probably from the grit blown into them during the 80 plus mile trip, windshields down and no goggles. A short time after we reached our destination Lt. Sanders was leaving to go back after a couple of vehicles from our convoy, and I took off with

him in a jeep. It was a short trip. Some 15 miles back we met Colonel Coffin with the two lost vehicles, so we turned and went ahead to show them the exact way.

We had taken over two large farmhouses in Wachenheim for our quarters and for the first night on German soil, we were in quite ritzy surroundings. The two places were evidently owned by very well to do individuals. A large courtyard was surrounded by the big house, several outbuildings housing the stock, implements and a Polish couple who did much of the work on the place. There was a garden about half an acre in size that looked fine. It was full of vegetables and well taken care of. All this gave us the impression that this part of Germany had not suffered much from the war as yet. It looked too settled and well off. The owner turned out to be a fat well fed looking dutchman. Of course the German people had been ejected and were only allowed back that night to feed their stock and then had to leave again.

The CP and officer personel were in one place and the rest of us were in the other house. Ours had fine furniture, rugs on the floors and some excellent soft beds. However the orderly room, which was also mine, had been a small dining room or something similar, so had no beds. As usual, we rolled our sacks on the floor.

My eyes felt so bad and looked so bad that I was persuaded to go to the medics. They did an eye wash job and bandaged them, but they still remained just one big ache. I don't know how long after I went to bed that they troubled me, but I had to get up about 0100 hours to take care of a line that Corps Artillery ran into us. We had no main switchboard in, as the short battalion lines that were in, terminated at the little fire control board in the CP van. Anyhow my eyes were still aching when I was up working on that line, but when morning came, they were better, but still inflamed. A second trip to the medics more or less fixed me up though. We decided that there must have been

some sort of irritant in the dust because several of the fellows had inflamed eyes but none quite so bad as mine.

The Group was not operational in this position as things were not settled enough to know for sure what targets were available. They expected us to move on again in the morning though so this was really a bivouac area. It saved us from having to lay in a complete wire net which is hard after such a long trip.

In a sort of reconnaisance around the house I had run across a fine big beer stein with an artillery piece mounted on the lid. The whole thing was about 18 inches tall and I rather thought it would make a good souvenir, but when I went looking for it again, someone else had picked it up. Maybe it was for the best anyhow. It would have been a bit hard to pack around without breaking it.

Word was wafted about during the morning that we would be moving by noon, but we managed to get our dinner there and started to pull out just after dinner. Our destination was Offstein, about 6 miles eastward. I had to stay at Wachenheim for some reason until the last, so everything was getting fixed up by the time I arrived there. The route was a backtrack a short distance over the road that we had covered on the way in the day before, past the point where we had the mixup with the dust, traffic and MPs at the railroad embankment. From there on it was a different road, just a country road it seemed to me, winding around up and down some small hills, through some nice looking embryo vineyards and small orchards. When we reached our destination we still hadn't seen or smelled the river. I was to find that wasn't the half of it, the river was still quite some distance beyond yet.

A short time after arriving, I went with Capt. Anderson and an interpreter to visit the burgermeister, down the street a short piece from the CP. The main purpose for the visit was to give him the latest

dope. There was a curfew effective now (I forget the times), some women were wanted to do some washing for us, and a few other items that I don't remember. He was quite cooperative though, didn't seem to begrudge doing what he was asked. On the contrary, he seemed to be relieved that there was someone to tell him what was to be done.

The street we were quartered on was quite narrow. I remember seeing one of our battalion guns being pulled through that particular one and there would have been quite an overhang over the sidewalks, if there had been sidewalks there. One night a tank met a truck in front of the house that held the CP and the tank took the front stoop off. It was just too tight a squeeze. The CP was in a huge house with a courtyard behind it that was about 50 yards square. In the center of it was a huge manure pile which didn't bother any of us one bit after living among them for some months in France. The court was bounded on the street side by the house, (I think it was four stories and I never did see in half of the rooms), the gate and an end of a large tool and grain shed. I went up into the second and third floors of this shed and discovered it had been used as quarters for some of the German Army. There were bunks for nearly one hundred men, but I found no loot. I guess they had plenty of time to leave. This shed made up the west wall of the court, running together with the main barn at the rear. We had our kitchen in the part that generally held the hay, but I guess it wasn't quite haying time yet because there wasn't more than a forkful of hay in that part. The old boy that belonged to the place had hay in another part though, because he seemed to have plenty to feed the several head of stock that the barn held. More storage sheds made up the eastern wall of the court, but there was nothing spectacular about them. The place evidently belonged to a person of means, because of its size and the abundance of tools standing around.

The house that some of the rest of us (myself included) along with the dental officers and Capt. Anderson and wire crews occupied, was not quite so pretentious, the courtyard being only about half the size of the one at the CP across the street, but the rooms were nice. In fact the floor where I slept even had a rug on it. Also Sgt. Akes had found a radio someplace in the house for us (after finding one for himself first of course) that didn't work for some reason or other.

Our wire lines were short at first and we had little trouble with them. As yet there had been no evidence of any wilful sabotage from the local populace. The second day of our stay here we went out on a several mile reconnaisance towards the river for a wire route for two of the battalions who were moving up to support a river crossing. One battalion was to go in near Worms, a large city on the Rhine some distance north of Mannheim. We located their position and on our way back to group headquarters took a cross country route to see about shortening the wire line. The roads ran catawampus here and if we had to follow the road it would have used so much more wire. Some of the fields were in alfalfa or clover, some in beets and other vegetables and there were a few small wooded patches. Dirt roads ran between nearly all the vegetable fields and it made no difference in crossing the hay fields. The only trouble was that when the wire truck headed back for the church steeple that marked the town that they wanted, they picked the wrong steeple which threw them off course a bit, but it only took about a half mile more wire. This was a well built up area and had villages everywhere it seemed. From the looks of things it was farming country and quite prosperous. At least they raised their food and plenty of it, what the army didn't take I guess.

The burgermeister had got a group of women to do our washing and I think every man in the battery had turned over two or three pieces of

clothing to them for a good old fashioned washing. Of course we had furnished the soap as they had forgotten what it looked like. Back in France we would barter a bar or two of dessert chocolate or cigarettes for a washing deal, but this time here, it was off the country. There was no haggling as to price.

It was understood that we were sort of putting in time here at Offstein until the time was right for crossing the river. Being heavy artillery we would not cross until a bridgehead was built up so we were rather on pins and needles waiting for the auspicious time to arrive.

Time seemed to pass slowly but finally on the second day we received orders that we would cross on the morning of March 27th. A reconnaissance party of the Colonel's jeep, the big radio truck, 2 small wire trucks, and the S-3 command car equipped with a radio were allowed from Group and each battalion was allowed three vehicles. This party would cross the bridge around 0530 hours with the main battery crossing a short time later. The preparations were rather involved. Each vehicle had to have certain serial markings on it and the men were allotted to certain places to ride. They all had their usual places of course, but we had to leave our personel section, part of maintenance and a few other men at Offstein for a couple of days to pick up supplies, our laundry that the good ladies of the village were washing for us, and some other reasons that have slipped my mind. Normally these remaining sections would go with us, but in this case it was expected that no return traffic would be allowed back across the bridges for two or three days. All trucks had to carry an extra amount of rations in addition to the one day's emergency that they always carried (plus some extra that every one had on hand). It seemed that the powers that be were expecting to pour everything across just as fast as possible and that we would keep on going just as fast and far as we could after

crossing.

Reville, or what passed for it in our unit during action, came about 0200 hours on B (bridge) day, and after we got loaded we gathered around the kitchen truck for some coffee that Wally (mess Sgt. Clerup) had brewed for us. For a wonder I was being priveleged to go with the advance party this time. I think it was about the first time since landing in France that I had been allowed to go on one of them. Generally I had to remain at the old position to see that communications were closed out and that any special arrangements with other units regarding communications were taken care of, so I was quite elated over this. Of course I had to nurse the radio that our car was carrying and encode and decode any messages that we sent or received, but that was all in the day's (or night's) work, so I didn't mind.

Our party left about 0300 hours, in a nice black dawn. There were high thin clouds but not rain. In fact I don't think there had been any rain for nearly a week, evidently the start of a dry spell. (It didn't last long however). We were due to cross near Worms and passed through the town in the dark. There had been considerable damage, we could see that even as dark as it was, but as to what sort of a place, that we couldn't tell. Just after passing through, we swung off on some side roads going through patches of woods. I thought we must be getting closer to the river all right just from the way things looked and felt. The road crossed over a short stretch of open ground just after going through one of these patches of trees and that open stretch was where the fates chose for a place for us to halt. I guess there was a tie up at the crossing or something. While we sat and waited, there was a series of shrill whistles passed overhead with sharp thuds sounding immediately after in the field off to our left. To me it sounded like the wing beats of the fast flying teal while you waited in

the dark along some river bank for the light to break so you could begin shooting. The first time wasn't so bad, but when it was followed some five minutes later by another salvo, and then another, it seemed as though this might be a bad day for a river crossing. Some of the incoming rounds exploded, but not all, so we could only hope that when the ones lit on the road, they would be duds. We could even imagine that we could see where the shells were coming from, way off in the distance. There would be three or four flashes, then a moment later the whistling and thuds, or explosions would come. It was certain that they were gunning for the bridge or its approaches and they must have thought their data was correct because all the rounds seemed to fall in just about the same area off to our left.

There were several in our party that took to the dubious shelter of the shallow ditch that ran along side the road. Majors Hapes and Wist plus nearly all the wiremen, especially Sgt. Akes, he was the one that was especially allergic to anything that sounded like it was incoming. The Colonel sat in his jeep with a raincoat pulled up over his head smoking a cigarette, and didn't seem to mind it at all. I must admit for myself that one time I got out of the jeep so I could take it standing up instead of sitting down, but I didn't exactly trust the ditch so didn't partake of its protection. The shelling lasted for probably 30 minutes and then stopped. The Germans maybe thought they had scared everyone so they would stop using the road for awhile. I wonder what they would have thought if they knew how far they had missed it every time.

Just about daylight we moved some more and this, together with several other short jumps ahead brought us to the first of two banks to the river, from where we could catch a bare glimpse of the water. It was not quite light enough to make out any details but it was the

sight we had been waiting for. Soon we moved down across a short level grassy stretch and stopped again, this time along side a row of big trees that lined the river. Those of us who had cameras tried a picture or two, even though it was hardly light enough for anything other than a time exposure. We could see the pontoon bridge that we were to cross about a quarter of a mile up the stream, which was about 200 yards wide at this point and flowing fast, but smooth. Vehicles were crossing but it looked like something was wrong, as several men were out in the middle of it and our column was not moving.

The Rhine did not resemble our western rivers in that its banks were grassy and tree lined, not brush lined and dirty. The Seine River back near Fontainbleau looked like this too.

In a short time we started moving, pulled up to the bridge approach and out on it, separated from the car in front by about 50 feet, and followed by another at about the same distance. It was quite a thrill crossing like this, after I had rather expected to maybe have some bullets whizzing past as we crossed. Thrilling, but peaceful, which was the way we liked it.

When we pulled up over the low bank on the eastern side, the road ran over a slightly rolling stretch of wooded area for a distance of maybe one half mile. Then it leveled off and bare of trees, divided into fields of various sizes and shapes with a paved road running parallel to the river and several dirt ones going here and there dividing the fields up into definite patterns. The crop seemed to be grain of some kind and was up about six inches. Farther back we saw some fields of corn or maize, it wasn't up far enough to tell for sure what it was.

At the intersection where we met the paved road from the bridge crossing, the colonel and one other vehicle left us and went on a

reconnaisance for position. We waited for a short time when the S-2 and 3 decided that they needed to go and check on the location of the division artillery headquarters that we were attached to for missions. It was in a town about four miles from the river, I forget the name, and the only thing that sticks in my mind about it was seeing all kinds of army vehicles and men around, and while we were parked in front of the artillery headquarters I saw two German girls come jauntily down the street towards where we were. That is they came jauntily down until they arrived at the point where stood a guard. Then they were stopped and when motion began again, it was back in the direction from which they came. The street was closed to Germans in the area of the headquarters.

It didn't take long here and we took off for the river again. When we arrived back where we had left the other vehicles the colonel had not been back yet. A few calls on the radio established contact with the other car. We got their approximate position and went looking for them. The rest of the battery had crossed the river at another bridge downstream from the one we had used and were now establishing position a couple of miles from where our vehicles had been waiting. It was quite a scramble when we all got together again. Wire had to be laid to our battalions who were going in position, and due to the mixup on losing contact with the rest of the party, were behind. It was about 0930 hours now and breakfast, or dinner was about ready to be served at the kitchen truck. I was sure hungry too.

They had taken over three farm houses and their accompanying buildings for our unit. Unlike the places we had seen so far, these were spread out and not on the courtyard fashion. Our house was a three story and attic affair, in very good shape. It had a fine kitchen, tile drainboard for the sink, and a large pantry full of utensils.

It all seemed fairly new, but from the looks of things the occupants hadn't had time to do much cleaning up, food was still in pans on the stove and dirty dishes sat around everywhere. The flies had moved in too. There were two dirty old fellows still there working in the barn. It was a dairy farm, but I guess the cows had gone underground for the present because I saw none around. I did go snooping in the basement, but aside from a large pile of briquettes and some bunks that had been vacated by soldiers not too long before, it was an unsuccessful snoop. The room that was to be battery headquarters (and mine) had been an office. It had quite an imposing desk in one corner, but the drawers were locked up. Sgt. Miller said he had looked in them and they held nothing more than reports on the business. At this place and also in one of the outbuildings down the street where the CP was, there were quite large stocks of German Army Quartermaster equipment, clothing, (most of it reclaimed) of all kinds, but mostly blouses and pants, a lot of leather equipment, bayonet scabbards, ammunition pouches and so forth. I got myself a brand new bayonet and a couple of belt buckles here, but aside from that there was nothing too interesting. It was just junk.

There were water taps in the house and outside around the barn and sheds but they were dry. We looked all over for the source but all we found was a pump that ran into the tank that held the liquid manure. (It stunk). I guess the supply came from a public pump and it was shut off. I did find a nice US Army wool scarf in a fox hole near our building but left it because I had a nice one that some one had sent me for Christmas (Jerry I think it was). Two days later I lost mine and kicked myself all over for not picking that other one up, but I was still imbued with the idea of travelling light at that time.

All during the afternoon, artillery, tanks and some infantry passed

our position in a steady stream. They were really getting it across the bridge and during all the time we remained here (it wasn't long really) I saw no German planes attempting to bomb the two bridges I knew of that crossed at Worms.

Late in the afternoon just as we were getting ready to eat our second meal of the day, march order was given that we would pull out as soon as we ate. The advance party would leave almost at once. I had taken my bedroll into our room only a few mintes before, hoping to have the opportunity of getting a good night's sleep, but this knocked such plans into a mess.

While we were grabbing a bite to eat I saw elements of the 515th. FA going past. They had evidently crossed the bridge at Worms and then turned south. They had been on our left flank when the attack started back in France and since we left Ormersviller I had not heard of them. Although I looked for George I didn't see him, or the big wrecker, which he generally traveled with when on the move. It was some months later that I learned he did not cross the river until late that night. He was after gasoline or something.

I had a visitor during the afternoon from XV Corps in the nature of a messenger and his driver. He asked permission to use our position as a place to stay in between his runs. He was the Corps Messenger for the east bank of the river and would meet a messenger at the bridge from Corps. No rear moving traffic was allowed as yet. That was why they had to break their trip in the middle so to speak. Of course it was all right, but he was gone when we got ready to pull out and I sometimes wondered later just what he thought when he returned and found no one there. Anyhow he presented me with a quart of champagne, (some that he purloined in the next town) as a retainer fee, as it were.

The advance party was ready to pull out of the yard when Capt.

Anderson asked me if I wanted to go along. Up until the last position I had not been included on the advance. Seemed to be more useful at the old position I guess. Well it only took a second to grab my roll and chuck and tie it onto one of the cars before we took off, because if he thought I wanted to go on the advance, I sure wasn't going to disappoint him.

We passed through the place where I had been in the morning with Major Wist, then headed east, towards the town of Lorsch, where we hoped to find room to set up position. We passed through quite a forest, several miles in depth, on a level road about midway of the trip. It was still light and we could see evidences of camouflaged positions and roads leading back into the woods all along. There was no way of telling what had been there, but once or twice we saw searchlight positions, so maybe the woods had been full of anti-aircraft defences.

On arriving in Lorsch we scoured the town over for places, but all the houses were small and not situated very well to use as a compact position area. We didn't want to spread the battery out too much or everyone would have had to be on guard. The streets were mostly very narrow, so in one or two places that could have been used for quarters, there was no room for the vehicles to park. We finally decided on what must have been a school at one time and what was now a nursery (there were all of half a dozen children there and about three women). As soon as they found out that we were taking the place over there was much weeping and worryment as to what would be done with the "kinder". I guess they found lodging because they disappeared as soon as they saw we were going to stay. The building was large, four storys, and plenty of room for everyone in the one place. Vehicle entrance was down a narrow alley, but the kitchen truck, colonel's

trailer, CP van, the radio cars and trucks were finally slipped through and dispersed around under the trees. The rest of the trucks we got into driveways here and there off the street. It was quite a job of getting them put away and the fact of its being good and dark by the time the battery pulled in did not help any. They closed at 2030 hours but by the time everything was cleared out of the way our wire lines in and everyone that was supposed to be, bedded down, it was about 2400 hours and we had been up and busy since just after midnight of the previous night. Our mileage record wasn't so impressive for the length of time, only 21 miles, but it had gotten us over that big hurdle, the Rhine River, so it really meant more than some of the moves that covered more distance.

During the evening as I got various chances to see around the building that was supposed to be a "nursery" I saw in some of the large upstairs rooms, bunk down straw and such playthings "for the kinder of course" as hand grenades, and a few morter projectiles here and there in the straw. As Winchel would say "A nursery, Hmm?"

Our two battalions were situating themselves nearby in the same town and I went on a "bat hunt" looking for one position. I say bat hunt, because it was so dark that only a bat could have seen, also because all we knew was that the unit was going in "down that street". I found it however and then guided a wire crew down so they could lay back.

I finally got around to unrolling my sleeping bag about midnight and really pounded my ear, even if my mattress was the unsoftened floor. My memory is a bit hazy about one thing there. When we left Ormersviller I had picked up a single inner-spring mattress that had originally come from the German barracks back at Futtelange. The last owner discarded it because of lack of room, but I cadged it and kept it rolled up, except when in use, in the Signal supply trailer. Somehow it

seems to me that I failed to use it that night because I just didn't have the ambition to carry it up the three long flights of stairs to the place where I was to sleep, it was all I wanted to do to lug the bedroll up.

The next morning we had a chance to look around a bit. We were not scheduled to move out, but then we never could tell from one moment to another when things were breaking, the way they seemed to be now, just whether we would remain in one place long enough for more than one meal or for more than one night. Just across the way from us was a large church where some kind of services had been going on (probably memorials for losing so much of the Fatherland as they had). Beyond the church was a big barnlike three storied building each floor of which had a number of double bunks. Scattered around were articles of clothing, papers, knapsacks and in some boxes on the first floor were many rounds of ammunition, bayonets, clips and other "junk". Some of the boys found some rifles in quite good condition and some non-regulation bayonets, seemed to be from some other army than Germany's. I guess I was sort of pigtail as I found nothing worth while scavenging. Oh yes, I did pick up a fine leather case of some kind that looked as though I could use it to make a case for my camera, but that was all.

The fellows around the kitchen had found a couple of caches of grenades and morter shells and buried them in a sand pile. We heard about it when some of us started to sit down there with a full mess-kit at lunch time.

Our laundry caught up with us here too, when the men who stayed behind at Offstein caught up with us on the night of March 28th. They had done a good job of it. My slacks were the cleanest they had been in ages, even had a shade of a crease in them too. Looked like they

had been ironed by something more potent than being rolled up in a sleeping bag.

We were scheduled to pull out of Lorsch at 0800 hours March 29th. and the advance party left about 0730 hours. I again was one of the party. Seems that I was being lucky. It was slightly on the rainy side when we left, a cold drizzle that bit clear through to the bone after a short time.

For the first few miles we traveled over quite level ground with scattered clumps of trees, the crop land looked like hay and grain. Then we began climbing slightly and the land became rolling with the trees covering the hills more generally. We passed through several small towns, indefinitely established a CP in one of them where the battery was to concentrate when it reached there. Then our advance party split up and elements of it went on, stayed at the temporary CP, and looked over the town for a better location. This town was called Furth and had evidently been the supply base for anti-aircraft. In a field near the railway depot and on cars at the depot were dozens of big searchlight generators complete with cables, lights and the necessary automatic controls. I forgot to mention that there were three small searchlights and three generators at the nursery back at Lorsch. We had quite some enjoyment trying to get one of the generators started. It was a fine piece of equipment, seemed to be undamaged, but we failed to get more than a few shots from it. However the CO from one of the battalion Headquarters trucked one away to use. I never did find out whether they got it to working or not.

The situation must have been changing fast, because word was left for the battery to wait at Furth for directions and we all left for Hambach, some few miles further east. As a town it was a bust. I only saw about four houses and to reach them we wound up over a winding

road through the hills until we reached a roadblock where we turned off and ambled along over a one way dirt road of dubious character for a mile or two. There, in Hembach, we moved the occupants out of three farm houses, ate a C ration lunch and waited for the Colonel. When he came we pulled out again and the occupants moved back into their houses. We were still headed east.

The car I was in, headed back for Furth to bring the battery up to Kirschbaum, a few miles beyond Hembach. The roads were full of stuff moving up but not making very good time of it, there were just too many vehicles going different directions at the same time. We finally got back to Furth, gave the necessary directions to whoever was in command and then we turned around to go find our new location.

Kirschbaum proved to be another small village built on the sides and bottom of a shallow canyon. It was the usual assortment of little houses, each with its own courtyard, several of which had been taken over for us. The only rub was that when we arrived, Sgt. Ahee told me that it wasn't really to be our CP, we were moving on again. Capt. Anderson was already up ahead, in fact he and the Colonel together with their cars full of men had been at Konig, over the hills a few miles more. Konig was to be our CP, the real one I hoped, it would be fourth for the day.

We took off behind the Colonel, who was going to take us by a short cut. The main road was too far around and he wanted to get there in a hurry. His short cut petered out in a slippery wagon road in the woods, so we tried another. It just ended in a plowed up field, so another try was made. This time we hit the jackpot and ended up by snaking the two cars down over the steep side hill covered with nice big pine trees, down into the valley wherein lay the small city of Konig. It was quite picturesque, a river flowing past, hills around, and tree lined streets

in the city itself. There were no visible signs of any recent battles having been fought, in fact there were practically no white flags out yet, but they soon began to appear. And so we arrived in Konig, about 1630 hours, 40 miles from Lorsch.

Capt. Anderson was in complete charge of the city. He was in the burgermeister's offices supervising the turning in of any military equipment held by any of the citizens of the city. He had given the burgermeister directions for getting all available man out in the morning to fill in the tank traps dug, or blasted in the roads leading into the place, and to remove the roadblocks also constructed at the outskirts of town on all the roads. There was really a lineup of civilians loaded down with guns, swords, clothing and bags filled with all sorts of assorted military articles, from the present and past wars. When I showed up on the scene he turned the job of receiving the contraband over to me and he and the interpreter took off to the battery area to finish getting our accomodations ready as the battery was expected in any time. All I had to do was reach out and take whatever they handed me as they came in the door. If it was clothes I gave them a toss and they went on the headhigh pile, there were some nobby looking uniforms in that pile too. If the stuff was rifles, swords or knives, there was a place for them. The knives went on the headman's desk, so we could look them over later. Rifles and shotguns were piled in the corner and on the floor, as were the long swords. Some of the latter were really old timers too, nearly took two hands to handle one of them.

When Capt. Anderson left me there he told me maybe I could pick myself up a pistol. Privately I figured maybe I could pick up more than that. I hadn't been taking in stuff long when someone handed me a holster and when I looked inside to see whether it was worthwhile or not, I saw a beautiful little "P-38" automatic, a 32 caliber, made by Walther

I think. It was worthwhile, so I slipped it into my jacket front. Then a couple of little 25 caliber pistols came in and they went into my pocket, awhile later another automatic, not quite so good as the first came in so it went into my jacket too. All this time I was getting guns, clothes and other sorts of stuff, but I just sort of kept an eye out for worthwhile stuff. If it hadn't been so dark in the place maybe I would have seen more, but as it was, before the traffic thinned out I had several dress bayonets, two or three little pistols, two 32 caliber automatics, two party of one type and one of another. These were all stuffed into my pockets and my jacket front, making me look pretty well fed, in fact when I walked I really had to tread easy or I would have dripped loot at every step. There were several fine shotguns came in that I liked the looks of but didn't think it was a practical idea to pick one up as I didn't believe they could be sent home. Later on I found out that I should have gotten one while I had the chance, as they could have been sent. There was one very nice rifle (among several) that caught my eye and I set it off in the corner so I could look it over when I had a little more time. Before I had the time, Colonel Coffin (our executive) came in and was looking around, he saw this rifle and asked if I wanted it, I asked if it could be sent home and the answer was yes, so I told him I did want it. That took care of that.

The crowd was beginning to dwindle and the place was getting so dark that I couldn't see my hand in front of my face so decided to close up for the night. I had my loot all loaded and went out, locking the inside and outside doors as I left. As I got the outside door locked, another civilian came up and handed me a uniform blouse and a nice looking holster, with something in it. I thought it must be a beauty of a pistol as the holster was a nice one, but when I opened it all there was in it was one of these little 25 caliber pistols. They were nearly

a dime a dozen, but I took it with me to give to some one of the boys.

It was about a quarter of a mile down the street to the area that had been taken over for us, and I almost slunk along in the shadows. I didn't know what the citizenry might think if they saw me lugging all the stuff I had. I needn't have worried though if they had seen me, as I found out later.

We were in class this time. The particular part of town that we had hit was made up of good class apartments, running water in the houses, sit down toilets that worked and even the electric lights were working in some of them. The room the battery office took even had a nice thick rug on the floor to make it softer to sleep on. The kitchen was set up in an ex-beer hall and hotel. We ate out of our mess kits at the same tables that had been used for beer drinking, but there just wasn't any beer.

It was about now that I began to find out some of the things about our taking over this town. It was in a somewhat isolated spot, when Capt. Anderson's party first entered it by coming in on a wagon road over the hills because the main roads were still blocked, no other Americans had been there yet. He hadn't been there but a few minutes when a scout platoon from an armored outfit entered from another direction. Between the two groups they "captured the place", including three hospitals containing over 500 German soldiers, ranging all the way from seriously wounded to convalescents. These hospitals had to have guards on them, as there were more Germans there than our battery had men, by several times, and no one wanted a bunch of rabid Nazis coming around during the night. Our battalions were in position some distance away in small villages, so we were the only unit in the town. The scout platoon was to have pulled out just after dark. Anyhow we had a machinegun posted in the entrance of each hospital and nothing

happened.

It seemed that I was destined to get little sleep that night, because not long after supper I left with Capt. Anderson and his driver to make a visit to Corps Artillery who were located some ten miles up the river. The chief reason for the visit was to talk them out of having us lay a 15 mile line to them that night. It all turned out that the Como hadn't authorized the line at all. The Executive up at Corps Artillery told Colonel Coles to have it laid. Well, when we finished up there, we didn't have to put in that particular line. It was just a pipedream that someone had. We were pretty short on wire at the time and they finally decided that it wasn't really needed.

On our return trip we met a convoy of those big DUKWs, traveling on land for a change. They really made our jeep look small when they loomed up in the dark, so we gave them all the road and waited while they went on about their business. It was quite late when we got back to Konig and I turned in right away because I had to get up again at 0330 hours to take a radio car up on the hills east of town to make contact with a forward gun battery down near the Main River. They were out on a special mission and there was not enough time to lay wire. We could not even begin to reach them from our CP because of being down in the valley. We figured out a road for us to take, on a very large scale map, that looked as though it would carry us up on top of the ridge. At the right time I got up, rounded up the radio car driver, radio operator, jeep driver and a couple of others for armed protection. This area had not been cleaned out yet and it was expected that there were roving groups of unattached soldiers in the hills. We started up the road shown on the map but a mile or so out of town it dwindled down into a trail. We made a bit further in the jeep to see if it cleared

up but it only got narrower so back to the radio car. This road, from the looks of it, had originally been used to bring wood from out of the hills and to enable a farmer or two to reach the little grain patches that dotted the cleared places. It was really a cart trail but the jeep could have made it in dry weather. Well, we went back into town and hit the main road north for a couple of miles and took off up another road that the map showed. This one took us clear up on top where it was all cleared and planted to grain. Our armed protection found some use for their carbines. The field was full of deer when we hove into sight but they didn't stay around long enough to find out whether or not we were friendly. Maybe its a good thing for them that they didn't, because we had already found out that German deer meat tasted just as good as any other. This was an ideal spot for our work, so I left the radio and proceeded back to Konig, where we could contact the in between radio from our set at the CP.

I arrived in time to see the lineup of men that were going out to take down the roadblocks and fill up the holes blown in the roadbed. They were armed with all sorts of shovels, hoes and forks and really "fell in" and made quite a formation when they were marched out for their work.

I don't believe I have ever mentioned the type of roadblocks that we encountered mostly, along the highways, especially near the towns. They were a sort of picket fence stretched across the road at some narrow place or between two big buildings on the edge of town. Instead of being stuck in the ground a few inches and made of stakes, they were set in trenches five and six feet deep and made of trees, sometimes as much as two feet in diameter. Many of them projected above the ground ten or more feet, set in two parallel rows and the space in between filled with earth and stones. There were many that we saw

whose construction was not fast enough to keep up with the progress of the war and had only been partially finished. Others had been completed for some time except for a narrow passage through, with planks laid over the trench. For some reason never explained to me, there were more of them uncompleted and of no use, than there were finished ones. The only reason I can think of for my explanation, was that communications were delayed, keeping the people in the dark as to how close we were until it was too late to finish the construction of the blocks. I do know that in the case of Konig, when Capt. Anderson went to a house to ask some information just after getting into town, the woman whom they talked to at first, said "it was impossible for them to have gotten into town". That's what she thought.

When the right people found that I had returned from my little predawn ride, I was given several placards to display on the bank, power house, post office and waterworks, notifying the civilians that they were the property of the Allied Military Government and all the red tape that went with it. That little chore was done, and it wasn't as easy as it sounds because I spoke no German other than being able to ask for drinking water, saying good morning and a few other phrases not adequate for this occasion. We got good directions from one individual as to the power company's location but when we found it, all there was there that concerned the power business was that it was the home of the bill collector for the company, maybe not the bill collector exactly, but where the bills could be paid at least.

Sometime before dinner it began to look as though we would be pulling out again soon for further parts, known to some and unknown to many others. The rumor became a fact about the time we were to eat and those of us who were going on the advance party had to eat in a hurry. (I was included again.)

Our party left town by a dirt road, hoping to bypass much of the

traffic that was moving up on the main roads towards the river. It had been raining during much of the past several days and that road was really a bog hole. The vehicles just ground up the hill in front wheel drive and low gear but we did see some pretty country that we hardly had a chance to appreciate due to not knowing whether we would slide into the ditch or not. At one time we reached the top of the ridge and could see all over the valley. There were patches of bright green grain fields intermittently spaced between the irregular shaped clumps of darker green evergreen trees. From there too, we could see the route of the main highway leading to the river near Worth, for miles it was a stream of tanks, artillery and trucks, many of them engineer bridge building units.

It was as we left this ridge that we lost one of our wire trucks for a short time. It slid off the road and into the field, which was so wet and slippery that it finally took all hands and the winch power from the other truck to get it and its trailer back onto the road again. Just all in the days work I guess.

We were headed for the village of Seelmauern which was to be the jumping off place for our crossing of the Main River. Traffic held us up for a time but not for long because when we went forward, with the light wire trucks and a jeep or two, if the road was at all passable, we passed the slower heavy traffic.

Arriving in Seelmauern we found that it was packed, everything under the sun (and moon) was there, tank units, aid stations, infantry CPs and some light artillery units. After canvassing the town we learned that some would be pulling out by dark so we sort of put our finger on those places, appropriated a couple of others and finally made out with enough room for the battery when it came in. This village was built on the sides of a small valley, with one main road running

through it, with a few short streets leading off to reach houses up on the top side. This road needed traffic lights, it reminded me of Broadway during the rush hour. This traffic wasn't too rushing but the size of most of it more than made up for the lack of speed. Especially when one of our battalions came wallowing through. Those prime movers and guns just more than took all the road. There were several yard fences and corners of too close buildings that suffered terribly when a big bulldozer had to come back against the oncoming deluge. Where the room was a little short, momentarily, that shortage didn't exist too long. I would say that there was an irresistible force meeting a not too immovable object.

The house that we expected to use for battery headquarters and the radio group, had several pretty decent bed rooms in it, and I appropriated one for my own use. That is I appropriated the bed and left the floor for those who came later. It made pretty good resting too for a change. I noticed an odd thing about many of the mattresses here, they were made of three rectangular shaped pads, each one a perfect mattress, but it took the three, laid side by side to fill the space, generally there was a fourth piece that went with the mattress. It was a low triangular shaped pad that made up for the lack of pillows. That was always the first thing that I took off of a bed, because there wasn't any too much length in any of them for me anyhow, and that triangular piece at the head shortened it just too much. I always unrolled my sleeping bag out on the beds anyhow and didn't sleep between the masses of feather bags, that seemed to pass for comfortors here. These bag sort of things were about half the length they should have been and would have needed two to completely cover a person, and then would have about smothered him, they were so thick.

The battery arrived about 1800 hours, having taken three hours to

cover the 12 miles from Konig. We managed to get the vehicles spread out sufficiently to satisfy everyone up to and including the Colonel, but one or two got nicely stuck out in what seemed to be very solid grass pasture. It was, when we walked across it but when those heavy trucks went out there, they just went down faster than they could go ahead. That made things rather interesting for a time. There was a small but intriguing creek flowing along parallel with the road and just behind the buildings that we were in. I couldn't see any fish in it, but it sounded nice anyhow.

We spent an uneventful night, even though it seemed that a stream of traffic was going along the road all night. Every time I awoke, something was growling along the muddy road, or maybe I just woke up every time something went along. It was all so confusing.

The battery was alerted for movement before noon the next morning, March 31st, it was. However something wasn't quite all settled I guess because we ate dinner and just after that, we left with the advance party, after a couple of false starts. The column moved down the road leading to the big valley and soon we could see the smoke rising over the Main River from the big smoke generators that served to hide the exact location of the bridge from any inquisitive Nazi flyers that tried to bomb holes in it. The bridge crossed near the site of the old permanent bridge in the town of Worth (that is it was permanent until a bomb crossed it out). There wasn't any holdup for our party and we made our way through the streets toward the river bank to the bridge which was of the ponton type like the one on which we crossed the Rhine.

I couldn't see how wide the river was because of the dense white smoke drifting over everything. With smoke that thick I thought there should be some offensive odor, but there wasn't. The smoke "fog" as it was generally called didn't have more than a trace of smell to it.

We were preceded across by a medium tank almost covered by infantrymen hanging onto every rivet and bolt sticking out through it's skin. I tried to snap a picture of it but the smoke blotted out all but a faint showing.

Our route turned south after crossing and as soon as we had cleared the town I could see vineyards almost hanging by their teeth from the steep hillside above us. The terraces looked to be a very few feet wide and the rises between each one were as high as the terraces were wide. Stairsteps ran up the hill to provide access to the vineyards. It would have taken a mountain climber to make many trips up and down these stairways carrying the crop away.

At several places we were able to look back on the river and each time we could see several of the huge river barges lying half sunken along the banks, others only slightly damaged were tied up along side docks and the bank. Many of them sported anti-aircraft machine gun mounts, some with the guns still mounted. A number, in fact probably most of these, were the self powered barges that could go anywhere without having to depend on some tug. From the ones I saw along here and along some of the other rivers that we crossed later, it was easy to see how dependent Germany was on her river borne traffic, and it was not hard to see just how hard hit that traffic was by our air corps.

Our route soon swung away from the river, or the river swung away from us and we found ourselves going up a winding valley, dry bottom, or in plain words, there was no creek there. We stopped in a small village to visit a division artillery CP for some time and then pushed on. The valley soon widened out and the country became rolling with what seemed to be a higher range of hills beyond. This was interesting because this was the high ground that the Germans held and they were supposed to be going to give us trouble, as their artillery could

lay down barrages on the river crossings and all roads leading east. So far I hadn't heard of any of that trouble having caught up with us, but that was the way, always expect the worst and then we could be more easily satisfied by the good that came our way.

I forget the name of the town that we went into looking for locations for our CP, chiefly because we didn't stay there long enough. It wasn't very promising, the houses were mediocre, dirty yards, and a criscross of narrow alleys and streets made it seem doubtful if we could organize a very good position here. However several houses were picked although none of the inmates were given their walking notice, but some of our men were stationed in the courtyard entrances to keep some other CP hunting bunch out. That was the main reason we were having difficulty here, several other outfits were already in and naturally they had taken the better location, the one where the big places were.

I spent some time looking over a promising looking barn and haymow for some fresh eggs, but either the hens were on a strike or I just didn't know how to look for German eggs, because I found exactly none. There were a good number of intelligent looking hens running around, so maybe they anticipated something like this and hid their product. I was tempted to take a hen, but wasn't in the right mood for drawing and quartering one of the critters, so let them live. A couple of us did locate a cache of delicious tasting apples in a locked up cellar. It was a funny deal, the cellar door led down right out of a vacant lot almost, so we opened it up to see what was what, (and found apples).

Something seemed to be in the wind, as there was no word to start putting in wire and we still hadn't started moving any civilians out. We were not kept in suspense too long, as a Corps agent came by looking for Col. Coles, to tell him that the Corps boundaries were being moved,

and the XV was shifting slightly to the left. This left the village that we were now in, part of the other Corps territory and we had no business establishing a CP in someone else's country, so we piled in and on the available vehicles and headed for Hausen, which was to be our location.

The secondary dirt road that we were on this time rambled on over rolling hills, ducking down into a little level valley through some clumps of trees, once in awhile skirting an apple orchard or patch of green grain. From the hills we could catch glimpses of several small villages nestled down in the small valleys. If the red roofs of the houses themselves were not discernable, there was always the everpresent church steeple that always identified a village, however small it was.

Once we passed by an anti-aircraft gun outfit and were rather excited to see them prepare for action against some marauding German planes, evidently out to see what they could do for the bridges crossing the Main, which was not very far away from us here, just over a couple of miles of hills was all. They didn't get the plane, but it was fun to watch the firing.

We passed through two or three villages, in one of which I was quite amused to see several civilians, each armed with brooms, trying to keep the street in front of their places swept clean. Each time a truck passed, they would dash out, give a few swipes and then jump back to the protection of the road level sidewalk, to miss the next vehicle. The hopelessness of the situation probably hadn't dawned on them as yet, but we, who knew of the hundreds of vehicles following us, not of our party exactly, but of our side, could only see a never ending job ahead of them.

It was about 1530 hours when we arrived in Hausen, which proved to be a clean little place, not beaten up any, and lying in the upper

part of a valley, causing the town to sort of ride up on the hillside at its outer fringes. Our position was on the edge of town just above the main road, and we had four houses and the accompanying sheds for the personnel and offices. A small orchard behind this stretch of houses gave a place to disperse the vehicles and hide them from air observation.

I was sent back to a town some six miles back almost immediately after we arrived in Hausen to meet and guide the battery in. They had left Seelmauern at 1500 hours and the distance between the two places was only 9 miles. We had covered twice that because of going off in the other direction before the shift of boundaries was settled. The units were to be released from convoy control and revert to unit control at this village to which I went to meet them. I forget the name, no matter as it wasn't important.

The wait for the battery wasn't more than a few minutes and I, in my jeep, took off up the valley, with the outfit strung out behind. For a wonder we got the right turn as we took out of town and arrived in Hausen OK. It was a general fact that when someone took over a unit for the first time to move them someplace, he was apt to start them off on the wrong road, or at least to take one wrong turn in starting. Maybe I was lucky in that I didn't do that here.

Before the unit was settled, vehicles parked, sections guided into position and the necessary wire in, it was nearly dark, and I had just gotten my bedroll carried up the hill to the house that was due to be my quarters. Sgt. Miller, Cpl. Jewell and myself had an upstairs room. It had been a bedroom and had two mediocre beds in it. Of course Sgt. Miller and I appropriated the beds and left Jewell to shift for himself on the floor. These beds weren't luxurious in any way, the mattress consisted chiefly of rags and corn husks. But they did sleep softer

than the floor as we found out. Anything would do that really. My wire men had run a lead in from the power plant but it wasn't connected up, so we decided to hook it through the house system to give everyone in the house a light. This was a good idea but we had reckoned without the local electrical code or something. It was a mixed up installation and by hooking the two wires from our system through the fuse box, we could only get lights in one room. Any other manner of trying it at the main box didn't help any, only shorted out, even if we did break the seals on the meter and hooked the hot wires in through it. (I'll bet someone had a time explaining to the power company's gestapo at some time in the future.) Finally we gave up making a real hotcha job of it and merely ran our wires into a wall plug in the room. This did what we had been trying to do all the time, lights in every room. Stumped the experts, it did.

As I remember it, April 2nd. was Easter, and I with others, attended an Easter service in the school building in Hausen. Our Protestant Chaplain was away at the time and we had a visiting Chaplain from some other group doing the honors, giving a good talk, even though it was probably the sixth he had given that day. Incidently he had a full house here too, as there were several units in the town besides ours. I remember this too, that the school was on a sidehill above the main road about half a mile from our area, on the other side of the road and the town. It nearly winded me climbing the almost ladder-like stairs leading up to the place, winded me so much that I didn't have enough wind to do much good in the singing until after the second hymn.

I had no sooner reached the battery area on my return from church, than Capt. Anderson collared me to go on reconnaisance forward. One of the battalions was displacing forward a bit and we had to see about extending our wire lines. Up and down hills we went, winding down into

a narrow valley following a small edition of some unknown river, through several villages, one of which was pretty well blitzed, evidently got on fire the way it looked. The road was very narrow in spots and the traffic was extremely heavy, so it wasn't a joy ride by any means. There were thick woods here and there of evergreens reaching down from the steep hills to brush the roadsides, and below us the bottoms of the valleys were all green fresh looking grass, criscrossed with drainage ditches to keep the seepage from the hills drained off.

When we reached the area of the new positions our main job seemed to be one of trying to find a shortcut for a wire line back through the hills and woods to Hausen. Several roads were tried out, ones leading up over the range of hills closing in the valley, but all of them turned out to be blanks. Wet weather, shellfire and trees cut for roadblocks had closed all of them. These that we tried were really only bypasses through the hills anyhow, which partially accounted for their not being opened yet. The main roads that we hit were opened although one of them was nearly blocked with an overturned German Army van, that had scattered papers and junk all over. We feasted on K and C rations for supper that evening from the supply carried in the vehicles.

This valley at the point where a battalion (one of ours) of 8" howitzers was going in to position was not over 150 yards wide, and houses lined the road which ran along the base of the hills, in front of the howitzers. I often thought of that situation and wondered just how many windows were left in any of the buildings near the batterys after they had done any firing.

It was after dark when we left the forward position and headed back to Hausen. Capt. Andersen had been thinking about getting radio contact with one of the battalions at the forward area, to take care of things before wire was in, but a direct hookup was not possible because

of both of us being down in valleys. As soon as we got to Hausen he had me get one of the radio cars and leave for the forward area again.

It was quite a ride getting back to the forward position, it was so dark that we could hardly make out the road but finally made it. I contacted the ComO of the 932nd. Battalion, the one that we were to work with, and then we took off up a road that climbed the hills bordering the valley. After we had climbed quite a distance and seemed to have reached the top, we were able to make contact with the Battery back at Hausen. Communications were not too good however, so we signed off temporarily and dropped back down into the valley again. We tried a road leading up on the other side this time, it must have been higher or something, because we had almost perfect contact with Hausen from that point. This was what we were looking for, so we went back to the 932nd. and told them where they were to set up their set, run a wire line to it and our communications were solved. We headed back to Hausen again. It was getting on towards midnight by now and black as pitch. While we were on the main paved road it wasn't so bad, all we had to do was remember the turns, but after we left that, our trouble began. The way led over several miles of dirt road, winding here and there up and down the hills, with branches leading off in several places. I guess I got out of the car a dozen times to see if we had missed the turn, it wasn't too bad where the ground was soft but where the turns were in hard dirt, I couldn't tell which way the previous vehicles had gone. To add to this slowness, we had to stop several times to transmit messages between our headquarters and that of the battalion which we had recently left. It was black as the inside of a hat all this time, but we finally made it back to Hausen, sometime in the wee small hours I believe it was.

This sight I saw during our afternoon trip but neglected to mention

it sooner. There was a small meadow near the main road, nice and green with short grass, no water was visible on its surface, but several jeeps, all with trailers bogged down to the axles, were scattered here and there over its surface, reminding me of a covy of ducks scattered around over a pond. The worst part of it was that some of them had gotten a good hundred yards out on the meadow before bogging. I imagine that there was some fun snagging the stuck ones out, probably with a winch truck, with an extension cable.

Those jeeps getting stuck was just an instance showing how difficult it was here in these narrow valleys to find hard standing. Like this particular meadow, there were many that showed no particular indication of being soft. They were not really, but here and there over them would be places that, under the top two or three inches of hard turf, were just nearly bottomless. Other meadows you could see the water, it practically ran around the grass roots. Several times I was reminded of the large field back in Normandy, near Tribehou, that we cleared of the posts that the Germans had caused to be planted over its surface to prevent or discourage glider landings before D day. We needed a landing strip for our liaison planes and this field was just what the doctor ordered. It gave me a few bad moments however when we first went out on it. Everytime you gave a slight jump, the ground would shake and quiver for yards around, just like a bowl of jelly. I thought a plane, even our light ones, would just drop through the sod and get stuck proper, but after it was put in use, none of them did. Several ditches ran through it, the water flowing only a few inches below the ground level, but when we dug down a foot no water formed in the hole. It acted exactly like it might have been floating over a lake of water. The difference between that place and what we were finding here in Germany was that here, if you jumped on a

place, when you came down, your shoes would likely go in ankle deep in the mud.

I guess things were looking up again, because we got orders to move at 1030 hours on April 3rd. At least I managed to get my rifle cased up and handed over to the mail orderly to mail home. He was rather busy these days hauling "loot". Almost everyone was sending rifles home and the orderly had to pro-rate his packages because the APO could only handle just so many.

When we left Hausen (on time) I celebrated by starting out in the ambulance that was attached to the group. I don't remember why, but I wasn't taken with the advance party, and as usual, transportation was a scarse item so I took advantage of the fact that the ambulance was empty, hoping to get a nice comfortable lift. I guess I'd forgotten that ambulances are not the most comfortable vehicle in the world to ride in, anyhow my main objection was that I couldn't see anything of the passing country. I don't know much of the terrain that we passed over for the first few miles, but sometime about noon, we made a halt on the downhill side of a long slope, which was well covered with trees. It was cold, very cold in fact, one of the damp ones that creeps through the clothes and causes one to feel miserable, so we had to sort of keep moving around as no fires were allowed.

A short time after we halted, the ambulance took off to pick up Capt. Anderson, who had been hurt when his jeep hit a culvert along the road shoulder up ahead a few miles. His knee turned out to be wrenched quite severely, so we lost him for a few days. So my transportation was gone - when we pulled out again. Lt. Sanders was quite perturbed over having to take over the battery in Capt. Anderson's absence, but he was ass't. ComO so it was his baby.

We were waiting for the Colonel to make his reconnaisance up

forward some place to see whether we would go into position or bivouac here for the night. It was expected that we would occupy the next village if we did go into position, which would not be bad because the battalions were going to be close. Finally, about 1630 hours we moved out, heading for the village, which was only two or three miles away. The two light trucks (wire) that had been with the advance party, were already putting in wire when we arrived. We unloaded our rolls and carried them into quite a nice residence, rugs on the floor, a living room with attached kitchen. This was assigned to battery headquarters. It looked like we would have a real cozy place to stay. Things were getting well organized out in the area, trucks getting under cover, unloaded and the thousand and two things that have to be done every time we went into position getting done, when the dismaying news started traveling around that we were pulling out in fifteen minutes. I made a quick check on it and it was true. Lt. Sanders was really in stitches. Well at least I hadn't unrolled my sleeping bag, only carried it in and laid it in the corner or our house that was to have been. We were all loaded and ready to pull out in time, but of course the wire that had been installed just stayed, there was no chance to get it picked up.

I moved in with Talevi and Sgt. Miller in the Colonel's Ford sedan for this phase of the journey. I was very glad that I had, because it turned out to be a dark, cold ride. For the first few miles, we could see before it got dark and we were moving through hilly country, quite heavily forested, with winding streams here and there on the valley floors. Then it got dark and I don't know anything about what we passed through. You couldn't even see the front of the car. I know once that we got stranded in crossing over a wrecked bridge, where the fill had gotten deeply rutted, so deep that the sedan dragged bottom and we all had to get out and push and haul before getting it across. Then

later on we got stuck again down in the bottom of a place where there was no fill at all, just a shallow creek bottom, at least the water was shallow, but the creek banks were not. In the struggle, we got behind the rest of the column and were on our own for some time before we hit a town. There we caught up with some more of our vehicles that were waiting for someone to guide them into the area. I guess its a good thing that town was the one that we were heading for because there were no markers out and we just would have had to stop if there had been many places where we could have gotten off the route.

As dark as it was, the position area looked fairly good that night. I could make out several buildings and we got light lines run in for the Colonel's trailer from our power plant. The buildings all had power in but the juice was 220 volts and the bulbs would not fit in the sockets in the trailer, so for that night we had to use the portable generator for the Colonel. The next morning, we ran a tap from the local power which was generated right there in a plant where we took over, so the portable job could be turned off.

When daylight came and we could see what we had moved into during the night we got quite a shock. The place was some kind of a factory, where they processed a lampblackish sort of stuff. Whatever we touched left black on our clothes and hands. Maybe the Colonel's ears burned, (though I doubt if they could) on account of some of the remarks that were made on picking such a place as this one. Sleeping bags and all got nicely smudged during their stay here.

A small stream ran past the group of buildings that made up the factory, one building which had the generator room fed by a canal that took water from the creek a mile or two up the valley from us. I inherited the job of greasing the outfit to prevent anything from burning out while we used it. The plant only furnished juice for the factory and

not for the village of Partenstein which lay a hundred yards or more across the canyon. It was a medium sized place as they went, but I saw very little of it, except one night when Lt. Sanders and I did some wire patrolling looking for someone's wire line that had originally gone into a divisional switchboard and then had been spliced into one of ours at their board when they moved out.

One of the buildings here had a long conveyor belt system in it with a series of delicate weighing mechanisms below the belt, evidently used to weigh this black powder into black paper tubes an inch or so across and about ten inches long. Another one had several grinding bowls with two heavy grinding wheels in them, used to reduce the stuff to a fine powder. That building had all sorts of screw conveyors, inspection plates looking into black tanklike rooms and over all was a layer of black dust. From the looks of it, with several furnace rooms and all, it seemed as if the stuff had to be heated somehow before grinding, but a series of conjectures was as far as we got. No one seemed to know what the stuff actually was, or what it had been used for. Some of the raw material in an open shed looked almost like oily dirt, with streaks of yellow running through it.

I forgot to mention that we arrived here at Partenstein about 2345 hours after having left Hausen at 1030 hours. The trip was 40 miles, not what one would call good time, but of course there was the time we "laid over" back on that hillside.

We were rather isolated here, entirely out of contact with Corps Artillery by telephone or radio. They were away over on the other side of the Corps sector, leaving us almost "babes in the wood" with agents our means of contact. At this time we were in direct support of a division, so our fire requests came primarily from them, and what did come from Corps were mostly schedule fires, sent down by the

agent.

When we had been here three days Capt. Anderson returned. It seemed as though he had been away for a month. Incidently he returned on the eve of another move. We were going on again. It rained nearly all the time we were here and I made several trips up to the feed canal above the power house to clear out debris from the grates over the penstock. Partenstein was in a narrow valley leading westward from the Main River valley which lay about seven miles to the east. The hills above the valley floor were covered quite heavily with big evergreen trees, pine I guess they were. Reminded me somewhat of hillsides in the Sierra Nevada Mountains here and there.

On April 7th. the advance party left Partenstein early in the morning to reconnoiter a route for the group and the battalions. About one hour afterwards, I left in a radio car with Majors Wist and Mapes, to follow the advance. The battery was to leave at 0900, so it was not too far behind us. For the first few miles we drove down the valley towards the Main River, reaching it at some town that had been pretty well beaten up. I forget the name of it, I guess it held no importance in my memories. At this town we turned northeast following the highway paralleling the river for several miles. Talk about a winding road, this was it, but the curves all had a wide radius and were not "blind", it just followed the river's curves. A railway track also went through this valley and at one place there was one of their "flak trains" standing where our air corps had shot up the engine. It was probably one half mile long made up of flat cars with open topped concrete pillbox things each with an AA machine gun mount in it. A few box cars were mixed up in the train, but the machine gun flat cars made up the greater part of the train. I heard that the box cars contained case after case of German signal equipment. When I heard

the stream. Vehicles had been dispatched to find out if there was a way across but when they returned they reported "no crossing except for jeeps" closer than Kissengen. One of our liaison planes was in the air, so we talked him down (me at the mike) to land in the meadow near the bridge. Major Wist went up with the pilot to look for a route by air. I believe the town immediately across the stream was called Hammelburg, of no real importance, because we had not been going to stop there anyhow. The Colonel was really "peeved" because this particular route had been assigned to us by Division Artillery of the 45th. Division (I believe it was) as being passable. I guess they thought we had no vehicles heavier than jeeps.

The plane soon returned with a route, so the entire party with the exception of the car I was in took off. We were waiting for any portions of group or the battalions who might get up that way before a change in routing had been relayed back to them. I don't remember how long we waited there, but we got hungry and worked over some C rations. Tasted pretty good too.

Our passengers had been changed from Wist and Mapes, to Major Shaug, Group Supply Officer. I haven't figured out yet how come the change, but it was of no matter anyhow. We finally took off to find the detoured route, which proved to be a dilly. For a short distance we followed the highway, then down through barnyards, a pasture or two, under a wrecked railroad bridge, then on a real old fashioned country dirt road that wound up and down and alongside hills, through a little backwoods village that had a fine looking trout stream singing its way down the main street (or I should say "main path" - thats what it really was). On the banks of that stream, just before it entered town, there were two defunct German soldiers that had evidently died just as they were running for cover behind the low stream banks. (They didn't make it.)

Eventually we hit a paved road again, seems that we had made the detour and were on the road that we should have been on long before, except for the job of bridge blowing, back at Hannelburg. A short time after hitting the pavement, we arrived at Thulba, our destination, (but I didn't know it until we reached there). I don't know how far we traveled, with the detour and going on out of the way like we had to, but the battery traveled 32 miles to reach the new position. We arrived about 1400 hours and the battery 2 hours later, at 1600 hours.

There was a slight mishap on the trip with the kitchen trailer being the victim. On a section of the detour, it was necessary to make a sharp turn back off of the road and down a bank. When the kitchen truck did this, the trailer jack-knifed and turned over, spilling canned goods and stuff around a bit, but did no material damage.

When we arrived at the new position, it was just in the process of being cleared of civilians so that we could use it. The CP was to be in a hotel (or Gasthaus) sort of building and there was a butcher shop of sorts in the basement. This day happened to be the one when meat was put out and there was quite a que gathered around. It caused quite a commotion when they were told that the meat could not be given out until the next day. I believe there was some arrangement made for them later, but I remember that they couldn't quite feature it at first. The quarters for several sections was to be in the school house, a building three stories high and about three times as long and twice as wide as the Masonic Hall in Carpinteria. Only half (one end) of it was available to us, as the local priest had his quarters in the other end and we had always made it a practice not to bother any of them or their dwellings, in fact, it was to the priests home that some of the ousted civilians went for refuge after we had moved them out. There were several women and some children living in various rooms in the school

end of the building and there was really a chorus of wailing and howls went up when they were convinced that they had to "raus". A few weeks earlier and it would have affected me somewhat, especially when the "kinder" added their howls so effectively, but after seeing and hearing some of the things that I had, the noise only aggravated me somewhat. After all, they were not being made to move from the town and nothing was being done to harm them, but we needed the buildings more than they did at the moment, so they were being treated much better than many of the civilians had been in areas occupied by the German armies. The room assigned to us for battery headquarters, was the schoolmarms room, on the third floor. She took it very calmly, picked up a wrap or two and walked out, leaving a nicely furnished bedroom for us. She asked if it would be all right to take some of her clothes and upon being told that it was OK, did take a couple of things, but I think the other women thought that all their belongings were to be appropriated, which was what caused the great outcry. I know the teacher seemed more easy in her mind when she found that she could take anything she wanted. Then she didn't want so much.

The burgermeister had a meeting of the townspeople in a little courtyard between the school house and the roadway leading north out of town to tell them of the "new order" I guess. While he was giving them all the dope, one of our battalions started passing by and those big guns and prime movers just filled that road as they rumbled past. It didn't take one who understood German, to know that those passing guns added emphasis to the remarks of the burgermeister.

One of our boys, Cooper it was, got slightly banged up while they were disarming a German rocket projectile (Panzerfaust). He was unscrewing the explosive head, when a small detonating charge went off, burning him on the leg. It was a lucky thing for him that it happened

after the thing was almost dismantled, or there wouldn't have been enough of him left to burn. Anyhow he was taken to the hospital and the next time I saw him was when I picked him up at a replacement depot down near Nurnburg in June.

I had been looking forward to a quiet peaceful evening and a good night's rest in our quarters (schoolmarm's room), but shortly after I'd gotten to sleep, Capt. Anderson woke me up to send me out on some business. He'd already alerted a driver and another man, and I was to get two radio operators with one of the radio vehicles. We were to take the wire-laying jeep with the radio car to a little town about five miles north, contact an infantry regimental that was in position there and get permission to lay a line from our radio car in to their switchboard, from which point, they would get through to our own board. The situation in this position had been such that a wire line to the 932nd. battalion had not been considered necessary when we moved into position. Things had changed, contact (other than by messenger) was needed, there was not time to lay a full length line (they were about fifteen miles northward), radio would not reach them because of the rolling hills between the positions, so we were attempting to fill in the space by setting up our radio on a hill a mile or two above this infantry CP to relay any messages from the 932nd. to us by telephone through the several switchboards and to relay anything from us to them via the same method. We laid the wire line from the radio to the infantry switchboard, part of it through the village, and had more fun. It was not too dark, and the infantry had their artificial moonlight going. This consisted of several powerful searchlights set so that the beam from them would hit the underside of a light layer of clouds, or fog. This acted as a reflector and the light beam was deflected down, lighting up a large area out in the front where the infantry companies were

working. It was very effective. I had seen the lights in use before, but had never been right in with them as I was this night.

When we got the wire line in and tested, we had to make a run on up to get the radio of the 932nd. on the air. They had not been expecting anything like this and so were not standing by. This "run" was like a treasure hunt. I had a map with the name of the town in which they were located marked on it. There were several villages in between us and them, and somewhere up ahead, if we missed connections, was the German Army, or a part of it. Well we finally got through all the crossroads, village squares, detours and what not and found the proper village. I never did find Hq Battery of the 932nd. but did manage to run down one of their gun batteries and get in touch with the Hq ComO by telephone. Woke him out of a sound sleep too, the way he sounded when he came on. Capt. Bruce's old say - That a soldier, no matter what was asked of him, generally didn't know the answer, unless you asked where the kitchen was, then he could give you its exact location even if he himself had not been there as yet, was certainly proven that night. When I found a couple of cannoneers from this gun battery, they couldn't tell where their own Hq was, so I asked where their kitchen was (and found out exactly), went there and then to the Hq, from where I made the phone call.

On our way back we were going down a slight grade, over the dirt road that was taking us over this portion of the trip, when it suddenly left us and we sailed out over a little drop off and stopped in a cow pasture. The road had turned with no visible showing, there was a slight trail leading straight on, which disguised the fact that the real road was missing, so that was what we took. The drop was only about three feet, so nothing was harmed and we lost no time in backing

up onto the road again. It could have easily been twenty or thirty feet however and we both thought of that at the time.

Before going on back to Thulba, we climbed up to where the radio car was parked to see how they were getting along. Contact had been established between all the necessary units in good shape, so our work was finished for the night. On back to the battery and to bed again, at somewhere about 0400 hours, a nice ending to what I had expected to be such a nice sleep.

One of the stories told by the radio operators left up on the hill was that in the morning, one of them who had a captured German rifle in the car, took it a short distance away to a clearing, and let go with a couple of shots at a target to see what kind of a shooting arm it was. He was really surprised when a German soldier came shooting out of the woods not far from him all ready to give up and be a good prisoner. The operator was probably more scared than the prisoner to be, but he handled the situation OK and they called the infantry CP who sent a vehicle up to take care of the unwelcome company.

Capt. Anderson had told me that I could sleep in that morning, but just after breakfast I was rolled out with the news that we were pulling out. That was like a dash of cold water in the face, it woke me up in a hurry at least, even though it was not as welcome as the water would have been. However, like many of our immediate moves, this one did not materialize for a couple of hours after I'd rolled out. At first I was to remain with and move forward with the battery, but someone decided they wanted a radio car forward, so I had to tear up to our car on the hill (a fire mission was going over the phone line between us and the infantry, or vice versa) and I couldn't wait to see how long they were going to take. I had to get the car back, so it could be gotten ready to leave. Besides, I was to leave too and we, together

with Majors Wist and Mapes were to meet the Colonel and his party in Kissengen at a certain time which didn't leave too much to waste.

I don't remember what time it was that we left Thulba, a short time after noon I believe it was though. The battery left at 1445 hours, I know, but by that time we had met the colonel's party in a pretty little meadow just south of Bad Kissengen, where a battery of 45 rifles were firing intermittently at some unseen target over the hills to the east. One of our L-4 liaison planes had also landed in the meadow bringing some situational information for the colonel. I don't know what we were supposed to do, but our car headed back into town. Kissengen was a large place. Evidently in peace time it had been a resort town because of the number of large hotels and huge residences that lined several of the wide streets near the outer fringe of town. In the older portion, it had the same old narrow streets twisting and turning, with alleys branching off here and there. The part that held the hotels and large houses had several park areas. Through them ran a meandering stream, navigable for barges, also providing a waterway for the boating parties that may have used it in better times. The hotels were all converted into military hospitals and the red cross of their medical department was quite in evidence on uniforms here and there on the streets. All in all I thought it was the prettiest city that we had seen yet in Germany, partly because of the more modern portion, no bomb damage and the green grass covered hillsides that formed a rim around three sides of the valley in which it lay. Many other villages that we had gone through were more picturesque in their own quaint way, but lacked that fresh homelike look that we associated with our own home towns.

It developed that we were headed for the burgermeister's office, the two majors that were in the car being a couple of the most rabid souvenir hunters (outside of the colonel) that the battery possessed.

When we arrived at the burgermeister's, there were a couple of MPs stationed at the door of a large vaultlike room, entered from the street by an arched doorway. Through this door were going civilians, carrying guns, uniforms, knives, swords and all kinds of military equipment. We piled out and went in too. I couldn't get into the loot mood for some reason, although there was a pile of guns of all kinds and descriptions mixed together with swords and bayonets nearly head high and several feet across at floor level spreading out inches deep all around this central pile gathered together in the middle of this room. As I said I couldn't get enthused (at first). I spent some most valuable minutes looking for a clip for one of the little 25 caliber automatic pistols that I had appropriated back at Konig. There were hundreds of rounds of all kinds of ammunition, from the 22 caliber size darts on up through shotgun shells and rifle shells of the largest size. Several soldiers were pawing through these, in search of loads for various guns they had picked up at one time or another. I was standing on several inches of stuff, looking down at what I was on, when one of the majors said we had better be going. As I moved one foot, I saw what seemed to be a nice looking rifle on the floor. It seemed that it would make a good one to send to George or Jack, so I picked it up and there underneath it, was another almost identical and both in excellent condition, so I hung them both over my shoulder and ambled out the door. It was really a find, but I often have wondered just what I might have found if I had gotten enthusiastic just a little sooner. The others had gotten a couple of pistols, a party knife or two and some dress bayonets.

Leaving there, we went on out to the meadow where the officers had a short conference with the colonel again after which we headed back towards the burgermeister's again. We were doomed to disappointment this time however because as we piled out again and started for the door, the MP told us that only those on business were to be admitted. Sure

and our business certainly wasn't official, so we don't get in. I had really intended on going through things this time too. Maybe it was a good thing though because I might have had a real arsenal by the time I got out and would have had to worry about getting them shipped home.

We left there, climbing up a series of switchbacks, on good wide concrete streets until we were above the town proper, when we turned off onto a good highway. I don't remember any of the details of this trip, but it was a short one of three or so miles, in which we dropped down into a valley, the floor of which was rolling hills instead of level ground. Patches of woods covered many of them and then suddenly we dropped down into a small village, with most of it being on a single street a half mile in length.

The village was Reitersweissen and we were to spend three days here, although that fact was not known when we first arrived. The delay was due chiefly to two reasons - one, that the corps artillery, of which we were a part, was firing on Schweinfurt (home of ball bearings) and we could not move until it had been captured, the other was that we were also supporting another crossing of the Main River east of Schweinfurt.

Our situation in Reitersweissen was not to be sneezed at by any means. It was a fairly clean village, although the almost constant traffic passing by on the main street, which was also the main highway, made it pretty dusty. Battery headquarters was in a nice residence, that had a bakery in the back section. It was not required to close, as it supplied the bread for the community. We could not figure exactly how it worked as there seemed to be electrical controls of some sort on the ovens and there was no local electricity. They baked bread somehow, because there was a breadline that stretched out of the courtyard and several yards down the street, twice, while we were there. Also, Sgt.

Wally Clerup (our mess Sgt.) with permission of the higher ups, supplied the necessary ingredients to the bakers and they made us some delicious pie. It was planned to have a second treat of this sort, but we moved out before it came to pass.

There were three of us, Sgt. Miller, the battery clerk, and myself in the downstairs part of this house. We had a living room together with a small bedroom adjoining. Two of us slept on single beds there and the third man slept on the floor. It was quite nicely furnished with a dining room set, a couple of comfortable chairs and a sort of settee. We even had our electric system wired up into the living room chandelier, so we were very cozy. Several times we carried our messkits full of food from the kitchen (where we would have had to eat in the courtyard) back to our room where we ate in luxury, sitting down at a real dining room table.

One day when things were a little slack for us in communications, a couple of us went up in the hills to the east of the village. From there we could see every road that led into town from the west. It looked like a fine place from which to have placed artillery fire on our advancing troops. We did find some telephone lines with the phones still attached to the forward end, several small dugouts and some machine guns scattered around, also several dead soldiers. So it had been used for lookout positions until our troops had over-run the place.

I took a walk up to the top of a high hill that lay in between us and Bad Kissengen where I had seen the ruins of what looked like a castle. When I got there it looked more like a castle than ever, one that had almost gone to complete ruin before being fixed up as a national monument, or whatever such a thing was called over there. Parts of the two main towers had been repaired with concrete and stairways placed so that sightseerers could climb up and look out over the valley to the

east from one tower, and from the other one could see down into the valley where lay Kissengen. That city itself was not completely visible because of small hills between and the dense wood growth on them. It seemed to me that the over-all length of the structure must have been about one hundred yards, but its width was not so well defined, as in two or three places away from what seemed to be the main part of it, I found traces of other foundations. The whole building sat on the top of this hill with the last fifty yards of the hill leading up to the ruins, so steep that the trails were zigzagged. It must have been an easy place to defend in its day, provided there were enough stationed there to watch all sides. I climbed out into the room part of the tower looking out over Reitersweisen and snapped a picture or two of the valley, using the opening through the tower as a sort of frame for the scene beyond. There was a placque set in cement at one of the lookouts, probably telling all about the place, but I couldn't tell anything from it. There was no sign language, so I was out in the dark.

Sometime during the afternoon of April 11th. the advance party (me included) departed from Reitersweisen and after various side steppings to ferret out likely positions for guns and CPs, we arrived in Kleinnunster, a village of dubious importance located more or less on a side-hill, overlooking other hills, all fairly well covered with evergreens. I remember practically nothing of this, and the moves of the next few days, coming as they did; every day a move, if not in the daytime, it was at night; we would arrive in a position after dark and the advance party might leave soon after breakfast the following morning, giving me slight chance to look around and familiarize myself with where I had spent the night, or some of it at least.

It appeared that we had moved into a bit of a hotbed of Germans this time, as we heard that the first sergeant of a Field Artillery

Group Hq had been shot(killed), the Commanding Officer of the same battery and his Communications Chief wounded, in an adjoining village when they entered it on reconnaisance that afternoon. Maybe this "spearheading" wasn't such a good thing after all. Anyhow I made sure that the carbine (the one I found back at Ormersviller, France) was in A-1 working shape. This in addition to my trusty 45 (old "meat in the pot") which as yet had not been fired at even an inoffensive rabbit since the days back at Ft. Lewis.

I remember that the house allotted to us here had a tiny courtyard, closed off from the road by a rickety picket fence. A sidewalk led from the road to the door, bounded on one side by the house and on the other by a beautiful manure pile that nearly filled the court. In a small cubbyhole just off from the house door, were some cages fastened to the wall like shelves that contained rabbits and chickens. Our room was downstairs and contained one of the huge porcelain stoves, rather common in those parts. We fired it up as the evenings were rather cool and by the time it got going good we were quite ready for it to be cooled off. They had such thick walls which took a long time to heat up, that they held heat for a good while after the fire had died down. We were all warned to locate a cellar close to our quarters that night. I guess someone had gotten a tip that there might be shelling, or we were within range of some of their heavy defenses.

Kleinmunster was our jumping off place for another crossing of the Main River, which crossed Germany in such a zigzag manner that made it possible for some of the units to cross it two or three times, even while maintaining a fairly straight easterly course themselves. The afternoon of April 12th. we departed from our area soon after noon, that is the advance party did, while the battery was to leave around 1700 hours. The road that we followed led over rolling hills for a few miles until we

dropped down into a level valley near the river. At this point it was not nearly so wide as it had been back near Worth but even so it was still a large river, probably 75 yards or more in width. The ponton bridge that we were to cross was in the open, unprotected by trees or buildings. A sloping ramp led down to it leading me to believe that it might have been a ferry landing at some time or other. We crossed it without any trouble. I got a fairly decent picture of the bridge just as we drove down to it, something that generally was not easy, due to the heavy smoke that was always being generated near them. For some reason there was not much smoke here. It looked as though the generators were not as plentiful as usual, or the breeze did not cooperate as well.

Across the river we hit a paved road that paralleled the river, but I guess someone was looking for a short cut, because it was good for only a few yards when we pulled out onto a dusty trail crossing a grassy meadow. In the distance was a fringe of trees, which we seemed to be heading for. I remember thinking that it was a nice place for some snipers to be set up waiting for unwary travelers. However our trail (and that is all it was, we nearly got stuck getting across two or three ditches) angled across country and where we finally hit the woods, they were no thicker than a poor looking windbreak around some lemon grower's orchard.

We drove into the village of Steinfeld about three miles beyond the river crossing and straight as homing pigeons headed for their home roost, our vehicle went to the burgermeister's to look over their stock of turned in equipment. It was very mediocre, a few military weapons, rusty swords and some bayonets. There was one fairly decent sporting rifle, similar to the two that I had picked up for George and Jack that I glommed onto for Lt. Sanders, as he had asked me to keep an eye out for one if I had the chance. Our visit here was not altogether for personal

business reasons at all, because the S-2, with whom I was riding, had wanted to check up on something from the head man of the village. This town, like nearly all of the small ones, was laid out on one street, not straight by any means, as the road entered on a curve and twist, leaving it some 200 yards on by the same fashion. Capt. Anderson had selected several pretty decent places for the unit to move into, and the former occupants were not getting their things out. Not much, some food and a few articles of clothing was all they took.

The place where the CP was to be located must have been quite a farm headquarters at some previous time. There was a large residence, several outbuildings, not in very good repair, a rough concrete bowling alley and what must have been a dairy building from its appearance. Underneath one of the buildings was a big cellar, one might have called it a basement. The entrance was a flight of steep stairs about twenty feet long leading down into this room which was about 20 feet long and 15 wide, with a high curved stone roof. The interior was all white-washed and the absence of lighting was hardly noticeable. Evidences were present that the owners had been using this place as a shelter quite a bit. Candle drippings, and bedclothes were here and there, together with some food, but with such an ideal location for it, there wasn't a drop of champagne or anything else like it.

Soon after we arrived there, I was sent back to the river crossing to pick up and guide the battery into position when they crossed. They were not to take the same cutoff that we had, the big trucks would have had trouble in navigating the ditches. We backtracked to the river along the paved road and had no trouble whatsoever. It was a little soon for our unit to cross, so we had quite a time watching the big guns of our battalions, together with occasional tanks loaded down with infantrymen riding the rods so to speak, coming across and up the winding dirt road

that led to the pavement. Our battery was sandwiched in between two of the battalions and finally it rolled across. We swung out in front of the lead vehicle and took them on down to Stensfeld, arriving there at 1930 hours, just 12 miles further on from Kleinmunster.

I was helping place some of the sections and their vehicles in their proper locations and nearly came a cropper with the heavily loaded kitchen truck. It was necessary for it to come in through a fairly narrow gate and swing up to the left in order to get inside of one of the sheds. The drive led close to the house immediately after entering the gate, and alongside of it was what I took to be a concrete cover to a sump hole. I directed the driver to swing out over this cover in order to make a wider swing to his stall in the building. One front wheel was well out on the cover when it suddenly collapsed, letting that part down into a vile black mess of water. Sump hole it was all right, I was correct in that much of my theory, but the part of its being a concrete cover was where I made an error. It was really a sort of sandstone, cut in rectangular slabs, about 4 feet long, a foot wide and six inches thick. Anyhow the truck was gotten out with very little trouble, thanks to the fact that none of the rear wheels had reached the jumping off place and were still on good solid ground.

The house in which Sgt. Miller and I were quartered, was a large two story place and we had a nicely appointed living room with the adjoining bedroom, fitted up with two nicely mattressed beds. Our sleeping bags laid out on those, really made sleeping a pleasure that night. I was kept quite busy for some time after the arrival of the battery, helping install electric lines and local telephone leads. The electric lines to all the offices had been put in earlier, but these were for the convenience of ourselves. Sgt. Akes got a couple of nice shocks while hooking up a lead for his room. It had suddenly started to rain, a

heavy downpour that turned the street into a small river. He was attempting to hook up to the line that passed his window but forgot about the wires and himself being wet. I heard a yell and various exclamations and went to see what was wrong. It had nearly heaved him out of the window onto the ground down below, but hadn't hurt him any. I helped finish his job and then put one in for a kitchen crew, who were installed in a room directly below. We had a couple of crews out in all that downpour running lines to some of the outfits and they nearly got drowned in it. That, coupled with having trouble in finding their destination in the dark, caused them to be pretty disgusted with things when they finally finished up.

It was rather late when I finally got back to our quarters for the night (or so I always hoped) and found that Sgt. Miller had been doing some reconnoitering in his spare time. Down in the cellar he had found several loaves of coarse dark brown bread, round in shape and about eighteen inches in diameter, with a crust that would defy anything short of the sharpest knife, also some canned preserves, mainly berry. When it came to food, he was quite famous as an eater, not from quantity at any one setting, but more from frequent settings, and as an evening snack he had brought up one of the loaves and a jar of the preserves. The preserves were quite good, but neither of us cared very much for the bread, it had rather a dark brown, sour taste. I even tried to better a slice by toasting, but it seemed to be too damish to make good at that even. With a heavy layer of jam though, we made out pretty good, one thing to its credit, it was filling. I made a trip of my own during the evening, out through the kitchen, so I could see what sort of lodgings we had, and ran into the stable. Just through a door from the kitchen was a long low room (?) that housed about a dozen quite good looking milch cows. They seemed contented so I didn't bother them. One thing

I'll say is that such an arrangement would make it very handy in bad weather.

Well I spent a pleasant night on the bed in that house, I know that much at least. One of the wire crews weren't quite so lucky however. They were rolled out by the Captain about midnight to run a wire line in to the division artillery of the division that we were supporting. I believe it was the 45th. but am not quite sure, as we supported the 3rd. too about that time.

The advance party departed from Steinafeld shortly after noon the next day and again, I do not remember anything much of the territory that we covered on the move. I do remember however that when the vehicle that I was in caught up with the main party (I was with the S-2 and S-3 and left later than they), a position had been selected in some spread out village lying in the bottom of a shallow valley, its grassy slopes broken by clumps of trees here and there. Several good buildings had been taken over for quarters and local lines were being run in by one of the two crews that always accompanied the advance. The other was out some place trying to locate one of the battalions. Capt. Anderson took me around to show me the setup and it looked good. Our quarters were in a big residence, with well furnished large rooms. Message Center and the Captain and some others were to be in that place also. The CP was to be in a huge place built of dressed stone, with about two dozen rooms, all large. Connected with this house were several outbuildings used chiefly as a dairy barn and milk processing sheds. I would say that it looked pretty prosperous around that place. I noticed a group of people standing down at the base of a hill across a narrow valley from where we were and asked the Captain what they were doing there. He told me that they were the occupants of the various houses that we were taking and there was a tunnel behind them used as a raid shelter in other times and would

be used as a regular shelter as long as we used their houses. At that time we didn't know just how long that would be, but were soon to find out.

I don't know now where the word cane from (but it did) that we were to move on to a different location. All our work was done for naught, but we loaded up and moved out, in a hurry this time, as we had to get into the new town before the battery did and they were to leave Steinsfeld at 1715 hours. It was about that time when we got away from the little place that almost was our home for the night.

Before the word of our move arrived, while the Capt. and I were doing our looking around, we had occasion to enter a couple of the caves or tunnels that went back into the hill behind some of the buildings down in the Village. One of them had been the local "pub" and the tunnel behind it drove some 75 feet back into the hill. It was pleasantly cool in there with water dripping down from the ceiling in several spots. There was plenty of German beer in kegs, boxes of clothing and some food, chiefly more of those round hard loaves of bread, but nothing more. No hidden Nazis or stores of champagne. It was interesting however, to rummage around in the place.

It was not very much farther on that we had to travel before reaching the town of Waldorf, the place that was to be our CP. I believe that the reason for our moving up was, that the two battalions decided to occupy positions near here, and we moved on in order to shorten wire lines. This place was fair sized and had a good many large houses. Evidently it didn't depend entirely on farming for its income, as it was larger and showed more prosperity than the little farming villages.

We took over places for the battery and got moved in, just about the time that the rest of the unit arrived. Our house was a big two and a half storied place that evidently belonged to some man of means. The

bedrooms were large and furnished quite nicely with rugs on the floors in every room. The room that we took for battery headquarters must have been a sort of dining room, or small sitting room. A nice soft rug covered the floor, a table and chairs with one or two semi-easy chairs and a couple of cabinets filled with china wear made up the bulk of the furniture. On the walls were several mounted birds, duck, pheasant, grouse, and something else, maybe a wild turkey, it looked to me like it had a buzzard's head. Also there were several skulls nicely mounted on small shield shaped pieces of polished wood. It seemed a queer custom here, one that I had noticed in several places. Instead of mounting heads with the hair on, it was nearly always just the bare skull with horns attached and not a sign of hair on any of them. Although I saw a few deer heads, the bulk of mounts were of some apparently small animal with a head not much larger than a big dog, with a pair of horns about four inches long. None of us ever figured out exactly what kind of varmint they were either.

In rummaging around this place we found several shotguns, two of them were good. I got one nice one with a telescope sight and 9 mm rifle barrel mounted underneath the shot barrels. Capt. Anderson got another fairly nice one, but two others had Damascus twist barrels, and so were practically worthless except as a souvenir piece. Also I got a beautiful carved bladed short dress sword and a good rifle cleaning rod, part of which got lost in shipment home. There was a small safe in the "master's" office that I would have liked to have seen into, but as I hadn't quite gotten down to safe breaking yet, it remained closed. I did find a box from the Walther Co. that had contained a 32 caliber automatic, but never did find a trace of the gun itself. I guess that the old boy had it with him, I didn't get to see him either.

One of the buildings taken over had a bakery on the ground floor and

a couple of old biddies had a batch of "dark brown looking" bread just ready for the oven. They nearly had kittens until Capt. Anderson told them that they could bake that batch but no more until after we left. They would mix the dough and then place it in round oval bottomed reed baskets to raise, then I think it was dumped from the baskets into the oven for baking.

I remember having some trouble with electrical installations here, when we attempted to run in the lines for the different sections. There were a couple of wire sections, message center, Capt. Anderson and Lt. Sanders and some of the drivers, in our house, and in running the leadin wire through a window, the insulation got squeesed a bit. When the motor started, of course it had to short out at that weak place and we spent quite some time tracing things out before the trouble was found. Then too, in the CP building, where the wires had been tied into the big chandelier in the dining room more trouble had to happen, (during the officers mess) a short occured in that fixture and we had to cut the juice from that area until it could be fixed. All in all the Colonel wasn't too happy about those little things, I guess he mentioned it to Capt. Anderson, anyhow we had orders not to tie into any more house fixtures, ever.

I found that sleeping on such nice rugs as we had on the floor in our room wasn't too bad at all. Compared to the bare boards, or a lumpy piece of bare ground, that was nearly like a "slumber-king mattress". Also the surroundings were quite pleasant and no trouble developed from wire lines that night, so I was always able to look back on my stay at Waldorf with no troublesome memories. Just before dark, Lt. Sanders and I were out in the meadow behind the row of buildings where some of our vehicles were dispersed, looking at his gun, the one I had picked up for him back in Steinsfeld. He decided to try it out and did. What a

roar it made as he fired into a hill a few hundred yards away. I really expected to hear a bellow from the Colonel about it, but maybe it just sounded louder to us than it really was.

The next morning I spent some time out in front of our house watching the thin trickle of civilians on their pilgrimage to the burgermeisters with forbidden military articles. There were not many and after a few had gone into the place and left, I went over to look over the "loot" prospects but there was nothing but a couple of mediocre box cameras, a few delapidated looking swords and guns and a couple of those huge single shot Schuetzen type target rifles with an ornately carved stock containing as much wood as a good back log for a fireplace. One of the boys picked up a beautiful F2 lensed Leica camera here, but I guess it was the only one in town because I sure watched things and no more showed up.

We seemed to be scheduled to move any time after noon, in fact the advance nearly pulled out before noon a couple of times. Finally about 1500 hours we did get away and moved out over rolling, tree covered hills for a few miles until we came out into a valley, at least there were no hills, but the ground wasn't level either. We went through several little villages, all coated with white dust from the heavy traffic that had been passing through them for the past few hours, or maybe days. Somewhere after leaving Walsdorf we had also left the paved road and were moving over graveled dirt ones. These moves with the advance party were quite exciting at times, because the trip was apt to run close to recently cleared out territory, in fact at times it was not known whether or not a village was clear, and we might get word while on the move, whether or not it was safe to enter a certain place.

Eventually we arrived at the village of Herrnsdorf, one of the dirtiest places that we were "privileged" to spend the night. It was pretty

crowded and we had to take houses on "the wrong side of the track" so to speak. They turned out to be pretty dirty places. There were baby chickens in the stove oven of the place that we had. The floor was so dirty that it would have been cleaner to have slept on the ground. One of the sections was to be quartered in a flour mill so it was pretty clean, except for the dust that had filtered all through the place. The flour mill was located on a small mill race and just above it was a saw mill, both powered by water wheels. Neither of them were running, so I wasn't able to get a look at the things in action, although I haunted that area closely during the short time that we remained there.

Soon after we got the quarters located for the various sections, I was sent on the return road to meet the battery and guide them in. This was one of those moves when the battery was left with orders to leave at a prescribed time and proceed on a certain road until met by some one of the advance party. Another little task that I had to get done after meeting the battery on the road was to get several of the vehicles up to the head of the column. This was because the street leading to our area was only wide enough for one at a time, so that there was no opportunity for parking and passing there. Some of the section vehicles that were traveling towards the rear of the column had to go into position first. It was these that we had to get in ahead, and the road between Walsdorf and Herrnsdorf was quite narrow, with trees growing along the shoulder for the greater part of the distance. It was just our luck to meet the battery after they had entered the narrower section of the road, but by pulling up alongside each one of the vehicles to be moved forward and giving them directions what to do, they were nearly all able to pass to the head of the column before reaching Herrnsdorf. There was no place along the route where the battery could have been pulled off and parked while those changes were made either, so we were well pleased

with ourselves by getting the job done in time.

I don't remember anything special that happened concerning communications while here. Maybe things were going in our favor for a change. It didn't even rain, which was something. The millrace, that powered the two mills, wound along in behind the scattered out row of buildings on our side of town and some of the boys investigated the stream for fish but time and conditions were not just right and their luck wasn't much. I remember getting a good night's sleep even in the chicken house sort or surroundings that we had. The house that was used as the CP was about the cleanest of the several taken over by us, but even it needed that certain touch.

The advance party departed shortly before noon the following day, after getting a hurried up early lunch, rather sketchy, but filling enough at the time. I rode, as usual, with the S-2 and 3, in the radio command car and left a few minutes after the remainder of the party. A part of our route led through forested area, nicely kept up, looking more like trees in a park some place instead of a forest. There was no debris on the ground, no underbrush of any sort, and the ground, lightly covered with pine needles, looked as though it had been raked. Maybe it had been, because when I saw some of the "faggots" bundled up in the cellars of some of the houses, they seemed to be the sort of thing that would have been gathered from the forest floors. All the small twigs with an occasional larger piece of limb, evidently broken from a tree in the wind, nicely bundled up and stacked away to dry and be used later as kindling, or perhaps as the main fuel for a poorer family, unable to obtain the coke or coal usually used in so many of the sections of Germany. We passed through this forested area for some time, then went out on a more or less open plain, really the valley of the Regnitz River, flowing north from down near Nurnburg. After zigzagging across this valley, in first

one direction and then another, to keep on passable roads, we came to a decrepit looking bridge over a small waterway leading to the main river some short distance away. An engineer unit was working on beyond the bridge, repairing the road, a narrow dirt one, and a man at the bridge informed us that the bridge was impassable for anything heavier than light trucks. We were hoping to find a route for the battalions to move in on, but this bit of information fixed that. The only way out was for us to go back several miles, to a crossing up the river, which we did, finding a nice paved road just after crossing. Also we ran into Col. White, CO of the 208th. FA Bn (one of ours), who told us that he was bringing his outfit in by another road, good all the way. It had not been reported open when we left the battery, was why we had been checking on this other route. The distance actually traveled by the units in making this last move was about 10 miles, but we covered about 20 for our trip up.

It was about 1430 hours when we arrived in Beckern, a medium sized village of maybe 50 dwellings, in a farming center. Aside from a very dusty main road going through the place, it was quite clean and the several houses commandeered for our use were clean also. The kitchen was to go into a big barn but that was all right, it had been in dirtier places than this one.

Alongside one of the houses taken over for us was a large room filled with dozens of cases filled with paper, the best of which was several containing good writing portfolios. All of us there at the time replenished our writing paper supplies. This paper was rather like the heavy linen used for writing at home, quite unlike some of the thin, rough poor looking stuff that we had seen at other times here in Germany, and from some of the captured German army supplies back in France.

The little house assigned to Battery Hq. contained a working radio, so I really kept my eye on it as some of our wiremen always kept their

eyes open for such things too and I wanted a touch of luxury for our quarters for a change. Our wire was being put in, a switch board was set up and only kept from being in operating condition by the fact that there were no outfits at the other end of the lines as yet. So it was rather quiet and I busied myself for awhile looking for some eggs in a chicken yard behind our house. I didn't find any.

Major Wist came looking for his driver shortly before dark to drive him up the road a few miles to Division Artillery Hq of the 42nd. Div. which we were indirectly supporting at the time. His driver was gone at the time (down the road, eating supper at a nearby infantry outfit's kitchen) so I took over the wheel. The drive was without special interest, nothing to see as we passed through one small village of the "wide spot in the road type". After dropping the Major at Div. Arty., I parked in the motor pool to wait for him. A few minutes later, I heard a couple of planes and at the same time a dozen AA guns opened up at them. There were about seven, all coming in on a long power dive, evidently trying for this village. The heavy machine gun fire, plus that of several 37mm guns, all blazing at them forced the leader to turn up and away, losing themselves in the overcast sky. The gunners hurriedly kicked the empty shell cases from the mounts, changed partly used magazines on the 50 caliber guns and settled back to watch for them again. It wasn't long in coming, from the other direction this time. My thrilling play by play observation of the duel was suddenly interrupted by a sharp explosion about eight feet in front of where I was standing, whatever it was, striking the ground exploding as it struck and then glancing on away from me into a wire fence some distance away. I am sure that it was an explosive bullet, either fired by one of the planes, or by one of the ground guns, probably about 50 caliber size. It gave me a turn for a minute or two, but as there were no more strays dropped around it was OK. The planes weren't

able to get down through all the excitement being thrown up at them again and soon disappeared. We found out when we returned to the battery area, that they had been over there also but had not come down to fire on anyone. A near accident almost happened when an unexploded 90 mm AA shell fell to the ground only 20 feet from where several of our men were sitting, eating supper at the infantry kitchen. There were several of them that thought for a minute that their time had really come.

The battery arrived just after dark but we were able to get the trucks parked out of sight in barns and sheds in a short time, because of the good circulation possible. The gateways leading into the courtyards were wide and there was plenty of room to turn in from off the road. I got the kitchen truck parked and a short time afterward was served a more than generous portion of chocolate pudding. They had served it at supper back at the old position, but there was a big pot left over, because so many were up at the forward position and so many of us there had eaten already, that a few of us were able to nearly make ourselves sick on the pudding. It was one of my weaknesses anyhow, but I almost got a weakness from eating so much of it.

One of our lines began giving some trouble the next morning and I took one of my corporals and went out on it. There was a method in my "eager beaverness", as I took the combination rifle and shotgun with me that I had "picked up" back at Waldorf and hoped for a chance to try the rifle part out. After we had found the trouble and were on our way back, we did stop and give out with a few rounds. We fired it over a small pond into the rail embankment and when that bullet hit, the rails almost jumped. Seemed to be pretty accurate.

I don't remember much about the circumstances of our leaving Zeltern and the trip on down to Wather, but the battery left at 1730 hours and arrived at 1930 hours, taking two hours for the 14 miles between points.

We in the advance party reached Weiher early in the afternoon, I remember that much.

Weiher wasn't much, probably two dozen houses in all. We had what must have been the local tavern and hotel, plus a nice cottage directly behind it for battery headquarters, and three pretty nice houses on up the road for the rest of the sections. Two or three barns and sheds took care of most of the vehicles so they were not visible from the air. The hotel was a three story affair with the topmost floor used as a storage place, rather barren it was too, as a couple of us found out when we went up to see if there was anything hidden there.

We hadn't been there long before a message from Division (we were working with the 3rd. at the time) came in for the colonel, telling him that they had uncovered a wine cave down the highway towards Erlangen and we could share in its contents if a truck was sent down. A few minutes later our wire trucks (the two small ones) came in after completing their lines to the battalions and were dispatched to the cave, returning sometime afterwards with several cases of different varieties of wines. I remember one kind in particular, it was Hungarian Tokay, vintage of 1931, there were only five cases of that in the cave, or at least that was all they could find in the place. In addition there were some of French Vermuth, Maraschino Liquer, and two kinds of Italian semi-dry wine, I forget the brand, but it was in green label and blue label bottles. One of the boys that was at the cave said it extended back into the hill several hundred yards, with another tunnel paralleling it about 50 yards away, and the two were connected by shorter tunnels every few yards apart. The tunnels were about 12 feet wide and 8 high and were stacked full of cased and kegged wine. Our detail brought none of the kegged wine back as it was more difficult to handle, although some of it was pretty good. I didn't get down to the place until after

two or three days had passed and by then they were almost bare of anything. Also some one had started a fire back in them some place and the smoke made us leary of penetrating them. I did notice that the rock seemed to be a fine kind of sandstone and needed no shoring to protect the roof.

We were to spend four days at Weiher, although that fact was not known at the time we arrived. Then we rather thought we might go on again in a day or so, but in the morning, Capt. Anderson told us that we might be there for several days. That brought out the washing instinct in most of the men and it wasn't long before we had clothes drying on the fences and trees. Our volley ball net was emplaced and several hot games were played during some of our slack time. I was quite amused at seeing some of the recently liberated "slave labor" moving a barrel of wine up the road one afternoon. There were four of them, all pretty well under "the influence" and the barrel was one of those with a bigger middle than ends, so it rolled rather unsteadily. I'm surprised that none of those men were run over or that the barrel didn't get away from them, as they had to go up and down several hills between the cave and where we were, plus I don't know how many before they got to their destination.

One afternoon Lt. Sanders and I saw the Colonel come in carrying a beauty of a double barrel shotgun. He told us that he had gotten it at the CIC headquarters in Erlangen where the military loot had been collected from the town. We immediately took off in a jeep, but when we found the place, it was locked up and no one was allowed in to do any selecting until after the Corps Commander had been down and looked it over. That was really a disappointment as we had been counting on picking up something. We did look over the town however before going back to Weiher. It was really a city, although there were not many civilians on the streets, I suppose that division had a curfew operating

during the time we were there. We saw a number of huge barracks-like structures near the outskirts of town, but whether they were used for military or civilian use, none of us found out. Some of the public buildings in the center of town were quite imposing, with huge cupolas on top and columns flanking the entrances.

All of this area around Weiher and Erlangen was comprised of rolling hill land, some covered with dense growths of evergreens and others with grain crops. It seemed to be a good section for small crops, as many of the places had vegetables growing close by. There must have been a sausage factory near there too, because we saw civilians carrying dozens of sausage rolls home from some place. Once or twice I saw bicyclists with two or three dozen tied on the handlebars and from sticks lashed crosswise over the mudguards. For the most part, I think many of the ones carrying this sausage were freed slave laborers, helping themselves to some army stores nearby.

The reason for our longer than average stay at Weiher was because the forces were massing for the assault on Nurnburg and the Corps was to take it. Our battalions did some firing on the city and one of our attached self propelled 8 inch guns did some good work in blasting resistance there, by doing almost point blank firing at some of the strong points in apartments and small pill boxes scattered throughout the town.

All good things must come to an end sooner or later and finally, on April 20th. at 1900 hours we departed. It seemed that our unit was to shift position on to an area some place southwest of Nurnburg, as the Corps was shifting boundaries which would have left us too far out on the left flank. I believe that the reason for the shift was to get units in a better line for the drive on Munich. At least this shift made it certain that we would not be able to see what the war had done for the city of Nurnburg, as many of us had been hoping.

We crossed the Regnitz River again, this time a few miles west of Nurnburg, over a bridge that had been "sabotaged". It had been dynamited in the center, which part dropped into the river, the ends merely folding down to make a long v-shaped structure. Our engineers bulldozed some dirt and boulders down into the sharper part of the v and called it a bridge. For small vehicles it worked fine, but for larger trucks pulling trailers, it presented a bit of difficulty, due to a sharp turn necessary as they went down the incline. To make it interesting, there was a good opportunity to get the dust washed from the wheels, from the river flowing over a part of the fill.

Our route passed through Furth, a large suburb of Nurnburg, a city in its own right, but from what I could see, it was probably all built up between the two places. It was dark when we hit the outskirts of Furth so we were unable to see much of it. There must have been a good deal of wreckage in there because we had to wind around considerably to get to the bridge crossing the river again. It seemed that we were traveling in circles a time or two. Once, as we came down a wide street, sounds of American band music was heard. It sounded good. Not long after we first heard it, we turned off onto a dirt detour, and there on the paved street that we were leaving, stood an entire band, probably of the 42nd. Infantry Division, playing our units through the town. It always struck me as being the height of something or other, here the place had only been captured maybe a few hours or a day before and now our musicians were playing us through just like on parade. Made us feel good though. Not long after this incident, we were almost tangled up in dangling street car cables that had been torn loose and were hanging down and laying in the street. It caused our progress to resemble a snake's track as we twisted and turned our way down through it for half a mile or more. On the southern outskirts of the city we could see some of the

results of the bombing raids. It had grown a bit lighter and we saw one huge plant, or what had been a plant, but was only a relic of one now. All around it were craters from the bombs that were "near misses" or just plain misses, I myself thought that most of them were the latter.

Except for this description of the move, I don't remember much of anything else, except that we eventually arrived at our destination, a place called Zirndorf, at 2330 hours after covering 20 miles from Wether. A relief from communications was gratefully accepted. All we had to operate was the SCR 193 radio in the Corps Arty. net, no wire. The two battalions were bivouaced in the same area with their headquarters only a few hundred yards from us. We had a row of houses, of which Group used four for their sections and the battalions the others. These were really nice places, three storied apartment buildings, one nicely furnished apartment to each floor. The furnishings were of the glass topped coffee table tile bedroom style, complete with hardwood floors. Of course it was well after midnight when I finally got bedded down, as I had to locate all my different sections before retiring, just in case they were needed in a hurry and I was the first one found, so I didn't have too much chance to bask in luxury.

The next morning we found what we had gotten into in the dark. Just above this row of fine apartments and across the street, was a low hill, thinly covered with trees, among them our trucks were dispersed, scattered all up and down the sides and top of what probably was a 15 acre area. That in itself wasn't so surprising, but the network of German telephone wires running up over the top was. Fronting the street, just below where we had spent the night, recessed into the brow of the hill, was a huge steel door, above it some embossed Nazi emblems, carved into the rock framing. That was intriguing, as any of us would have welcomed a tour back into that place. Not a chance for me though, because as I was heading

for breakfast, Capt. Anderson told me to have the wire trucks and myself ready to travel at 0800 hours. Anyhow I found out later that after we had pulled out, some of the men went "looking" and found another entrance to a vast underground airoraft parts factory that lay underneath that hill. They were only able to barely enter the place before leaving, but at least our curiosity had been partially satisfied. The big iron door, opening onto the street was probably the main entrance and the fine apartments belonged to some of the high officers of the place.

Our party wandered on out of Zirndorf, maybe by the same route that we came in on the previous night, but if it was, it couldn't have been proven by me. After leaving the town we passed through numerous small patches of woods, over mostly single track dirt roads, that wound here and there crossing nearly level semi-sandy soil. It looked as though we were taking to the back roads again, or maybe it was just for the sake of shortcuts. Anyhow we soon came out onto a paved road and stopped at a junction of two main roads. One of which ran eastward to Nurnburg and westward towards Stuttgart. The north-south road was just going to someplace from someplace else. We spent some time trying to pronounce the town's name that was printed on the signpost at the intersection, and some time more locating it on the map.

This place was only a stopping point where the colonel met and had a meeting with some of the 42nd. Div. Artillery staff. There was plenty of time to look around through some of the barns and sheds for stray eggs. Some were found. I ventured down into a cellar under one of the houses and found a tunnel leading out to the barn, located about 50 yards back of the house. It must have come in quite handy during wet weather. From the looks of things it needed some pumping out, as there was a sump in a low spot underneath the kitchen of the house with an electric pump to keep it dry, but the power was off and no one had as yet formed

a bucket brigade. Anyhow I guess there wasn't much chance of its ever getting up to where it would have washed up under the floor.

Not long after we first arrived at the crossroads, a battalion of infantry started down the road towards the south, walking. That, plus various other circumstances under which I had seen the infantry in action, made me grateful that I was fighting the war in the heavy artillery.

It was probably about 1400 hours when we decided to leave those parts, and did, heading out to meet the colonel at some destination a few miles below. He was to be in one of two or three towns. Very indefinite, but as they all lay in a line along one road it wasn't going to be hard to find the right one.

We passed through several small villages that looked as though they had been kicked in the teeth so to speak, being knocked about a bit, with a wrecked building here and there, or maybe a bomb hole in the road somewhere near the outskirts of the place. Also passed through two of the three villages that we were to check for the new CP and failed to see anything of the Colonel's party. In the third one however we found one of the wire crews who told us that it was to be our position area. Not long after we arrived, Capt. Anderson drove in and showed me the houses for the various sections so I could help guide them in when they arrived. The CP was up on a slight hill in a residence that had formerly housed the local clergyman, but who now had a larger house just down below the other one. Further on down the hill was the church, across the street from it was the mansion where I and the others who generally holed up with me were to spend our time. It was the usual combination house and cowshed, with a concrete lined pit immediately out in front of and across a walk from the house door for the accumulation of manure. There were about a dozen milch cows in the stall area adjoining the house, which fact I found out when I locked myself out of my part of the place and had to enter through the

barn door and on through the kitchen. It seemed to be a very handy arrangement, everything under one roof.

There was one of the huge porcelain stoves in the front room where we were to make our living quarters, it was cleaner than the kitchen, right next to it. This stove was all of six feet tall and four feet square, with two or three small cupboards built into it on the three sides projecting into the room. These were used to keep food warm and also to cook it, as at least one of them was set down so that it was almost immediately above the flames. A fire was built in the stove from the kitchen, where a fire door opened into the back, and revealed a firebox eighteen inches high and nearly four feet square. Just above this door was a small opening for the smoke to come out of, rising on up to the ceiling and out through a three foot square hole. That was just the beginning, as this was a three story house. The chimney grew smaller until the top opening was only about one foot square. Maybe the purpose of the shrinking inside was to slow the smoke down in its upward ascent, as this partticular chimney was used as a smoke room. It had several sticks wedged crosswise up about the bottom of the third story and probably a dozen fine hams and sides of bacon hung from them. The outside of these were a rich greasy black in color, but something, the smoking process or perhaps the unaccustomed delicacy gave them a wonderful flavor. We found that out when we commandeered several of the hams for "Wally" to bake.

I remember that it poured down rain that first evening that we were there and I got somewhat soaked because my raincoat was down at my quarters and I was up at the CP getting the light wires hooked up to it and the Colonel's trailer, parked in the rear. The generator wasn't allergic to the rain and kept on running through it all, and so I was spared the pain of having to dry it out.

The following day was spent chiefly in wondering whether we would get

to spend another night there, or move on. Nearly all of us men hoped that we would stay, as there didn't seem to be any forthcoming trouble with wire and it looked like we might be able to get some relaxation. At supper time we got the word that the battery would move out at 1900 hours. It was about 1745 hours then, so it meant some rustling.

We were ready at the zero hour, as we always seemed to be, regardless of the period of warning. It was good and dark as we moved out on the narrow single track dirt road leading along the base of the hills to the main road about a half mile away. Some one else had elected to come in on this stretch of road as we moved out and as they met the kitchen truck, it hit a soft spot on the shoulder as it moved over a little to get by. When we passed it, the mess wagon looked as though it was nearly laying on its side in the mud, hopelessly stuck, as far as our pulling it out was concerned, so it was left, to be rescued later by the wrecker belonging to one of our battalions.

It seemed to me that all the treadway bridge units in the Corps were moving up that night too, as we trailed the big Engineer trucks for miles. Eventually they turned off into a field, or someplace else, I couldn't tell too much in the darkness. All I really knew was that it was cold in the jeep that I was in, and not knowing more than that made me nervous. Just before midnight we pulled up into a village and met Capt. Anderson there. This was the place, Wernfels by name, setting in a narrow valley surrounded by hills and trees. I found that out the next morning in the few minutes in which I had to do such things.

There had not been too much wire to run in that night and about all but the local stuff, including the electric lines had been done when I arrived. I managed to get the light system to running OK and then got to look around. The CP was in a large hotel sort of building, it had a couple of nice looking dining rooms not too badly cluttered up, and a

kitchen that looked as though it had really been eaten in and left. Maybe there had been some infantrymen there before we arrived. It looked like some of their work. I wasn't upstairs at all, but there was a large basement that was filled with boxes and crates of clothing, dishes and assortments of junk, evidently packed and placed down there for storage by the civilians. I gave it a cursory glance, but left it alone as it didn't look like it contained anything for me. I did pick up a small vase from one of the dining rooms that I thought would look right well at home. It was a souvenir vase from Heilbronn.

I had plenty of time to spend because the Capt. had asked me to stay on deck until the kitchen truck arrived, so I could guide the truck in and show the men to their rooms. Just a flunkie was all I had turned out to be. I couldn't help thinking about my nice comfortable sleeping bag, upstairs in the barnlike building across the street, where we had a room. The floor was bare of rugs but I knew that it would seem as soft as any Beautyrest mattress, if I could only get to it.

The missing truck arrived about 0300 hours, so it was nearly a half hour later when I did reach that sleeping bag. The next thing I knew was Sgt. Miller waking me up to tell me that I was wanted. There was a reconnaisance leaving at once and I was to go with it, in my old position as radio operator to the S-2 and 3. I looked at my watch, 0715 hours and I had expected to be able to sleep in that morning. It was a scramble but I made it and even got a bite of breakfast in the rush before leaving. As I mentioned before, I only got a bare glimpse of the village in daylight, so don't really know what sort of a place it was.

I remember little of the terrain over which we passed that morning, perhaps I hadn't awakened by then even, but some time during the morning we pulled into a small place of a dozen or two houses and a church, called Sausenhoffen. For some reason or other the headmen in my car thought we

should go out and look around, as this didn't seem to be an extra good location. It was fairly level with slightly rolling hills off in the distance, rolling enough so they hid a small village that lay across the fields about two miles away, but that we had to travel twice that far to reach. Major Mapes got out of the car as we hit the first street intersection on the outskirts of the village, partially to see what an American armored car was doing out on a dirt road to our right about 200 yards. He found out that the car was cover for a point of advancing infantry moving into town. This place hadn't as yet been entered by the Yanks, and that car had been detached from the main body with a squad of men to move through the town and clean it out, if it should need it. We just took over from there. Two majors, a buck sergeant, the driver and myself. The S-2 could speak some Polish and it wasn't long before we had a good audience of slave laborers from some of the houses nearby. One of them was telling the S-2 a big line and took us all to the burgermeister's so the usual proclamations could be given him for dissemination. Major Wist told us what the Pole had passed on to him, that there was a small detail of Germans in the woods nearby that he would try and have come in to give themselves up. It sounded fishy to me but no one else was jittery over it. A few minutes later we heard the sound of wagon wheels and sure enough, there turned in through the gate to the burgermeister's barnyard, two small army wagons each pulled by a pair of the very small horses that we had seen in those European countries at various times. Accompanying the wagons were nearly a dozen soldiers, guns, packs and all. We had them empty their packs and searched for weapons or explosives, found none so looked through the wagons, finding some more guns (the usual German army rifle), some ammunition, clothing and a complete horseshoing kit. It was evidently a supply detail for a larger outfit. An explanation for the easy victory was given by one of the men when he told us that they had not had word from their outfit for

several days and knew nothing of what was going on. After checking their stuff, we turned it all back to them (minus ammunition and rifles), and told them to move back up the road in the direction from where we had come. Back there some place would be MPs to take care of them. Archer (the buck sgt.) and I remained at the burgermeister's to take charge of any contraband that was turned in, but it proved to be very little, only a few decrepit guns of no value whatsoever. We were amused at a Frenchman, busy eating dinner at this place. As soon as he finished, he arose and went into an adjoining room to reappear a minute or two later, in different clothes carrying a small satchel. "Au revoir" and he was off. There was one man who didn't waste any time in heading for home after we arrived.

We had a chance to look around the barns here while waiting and it didn't look like that farm had been neglected in any way, due of course to the imported labor. There were some good looking tools and a fine store of grain and hay in his barn, but I imagine that his next crop wasn't quite so easily handled, after the departure of some of the cheap help that he had the use of during the war years.

As the family was eating when we went into the house, I had a good chance to see how they went about it. The table was in the corner of a room about 15 feet square and the only furniture, as we know it, was the table, three chairs and a porcelain stove. There was a built-in seat running around one corner of the room that served as chairs for some of the people at the table. Each of the five persons sitting there had a plate and I believe, a fork and spoon. That particular meal seemed to have consisted of a fowl cooked in a gravy. It smelled good but they didn't invite us to help eat. A good thing perhaps as we couldn't have done that gracefully. Three elderly women, the burgermeister, the Frenchman,and a boy, made up the family. One of the elderly women (all of them had been working I guess, as their hands still showed traces of dirt),

was in charge of the round loaf of dark brown bread and every time someone wanted a slice, she took the loaf and holding it up against her chest, sawed off a slice. I looked for her to slice her gullet but I guess she had been doing that same thing for so long that it was second nature. All of them were old hands at "sopping up" the gravy with a piece of bread I noticed too. In direct contrast to our own meals that were always a bedlam of talk, these people spoke hardly a word, and then only when it refered to the meal. Tea, I think, was poured at the end of the sopping up, but the Frenchman didn't wait for that, he was up and off to change his clothes. I believe I mentioned him earlier in this account, of how he only waited to finish eating before leaving for home.

We didn't get to stay there very long, as the Colonel sent the vehicle driver back to pick us up to go back to Sausenhoffen where the CP was to be. I guess it was just as well, because this didn't seem to be a very good place for loot. All the arms that had been turned in by the time we left, were a few beat up old weapons that might have seen service in the Franco-Prussian wars, and some modern military rifles, and goodness knows that I had seen more of them than I knew what to do with.

Our lunch that day consisted of some fried ham, eggs and C rations. There had been a fire built in the kitchen stove of the building that was to house the CP, and someone had located the eggs and ham. The C rations were US issue.

Sgt. Archer was lucky during the afternoon, when a civilian approached him and handed a gun and case to him. Inside the case was a beauty of a Mauser sporting rifle, Mannlicher style. Except for the slightly shorter barrel and the foreplece extending the length of the barrel, it was almost exactly like the one that I had gotten at Konig.

Our stay was fairly quiet, there wasn't much wire to run, as the 208th. battalion was in the same place, their headquarters not over a

quarter of a mile from ours. The guns weren't very far away either, and every time they fired, some slate shingles slid off the church roof.

We had a couple of beds in the room where we expected to stay the night, with some of those short, thick, feather pillow like comforts on them. Although I drew the line at sleeping under them, as they were so short, I intended to roll my sleeping bag out over the things and have a wonderfully soft foundation for it.

At supper time I at least was stunned by the news that we were moving out at 1900 hours. There went all my dreams of trying out a soft bunk. Well we did pull out at 1900 hours, went down a muddy road for a few miles until our road entered a small village, where we were to pass out onto a main road. However a 42nd. Div. MP halted our convoy. At this time we were in direct support of this division, and the artillery headquarters of that unit was in this same town. Col. Coffin went to town to try and get them to permit our movement, but it was no soap. It was just one of those things. We had been given road clearance for a certain time, by Div. Arty., had hit the intersection at the proper time too, but after we had been given the clearance, Division Hq. had decided that one of their regiments was to move at the same time. We spent some time trying to get out, but Coffin finally gave up and we turned around, going back to the places that we had vacated a short time before. Maybe I would get to try the pillows out after all. It was about 2300 hours before things were settled, and we were to move again at 0200 hours. It didn't give much time, so I left my bedroll on the radio truck and Sgt. Miller and I just sort of burrowed under those piles of feathers for a couple of hours sleep. It wasn't nearly enough, because when we were awakened by a guard some few minutes before 0200 hours, so we could get out and have our sections ready to leave, I was up and out for 15 minutes before I was awake. I couldn't help but wonder at this time what the

Colonel might be thinking, because he and a small party were up forward some place waiting for us. They were out of radio communication, so we had no way of reaching them, although we had tried several times. I found out when we ourselves arrived at the place where they had been waiting.

I don't know what kind of terrain we passed over, or what things looked like because it was pretty dark, but just before we reached the town that was to be our stopping place, we dropped down into a valley. The town, a fair sized one, was built on the sides and botton of this valley. Needless to say, I didn't know that until sometime after we reached it though. As I remember the trip, it was just getting daylight when we got there and by the time we got some local telephone lines in, it was good and light. Then I went to sleep for a short time feeling more sleepy when I woke up than if I had not taken the chance for forty winks.

As far as I was concerned, this town had no name. I can find no mention of it in any of my papers and do not remember having heard it. There was no entry of it on the morning report because we departed for it after midnight and were not there at midnight of that day. In other words, the morning report only shows the places that we were in at midnight and not the places that we were in during the day, if we were on the move.

After I had my breakfast and got wakened up, I took one of the radio cars up on the high ground beyond the valley to see if we could contact one of the divisions that we were supporting. Although I spent some time up there and managed to contact one of the artillery battalions of that division, I was never sure that they were able to get a message through to headquarters. They said they did but it was relayed through so many other stations that I couldn't tell.

When I got down off the hill, the outfit was getting ready to move

again. This had only been a stopover, the guns of our battalions hadn't even been put into firing position.

I departed with the advance party and we reached Wending about the middle of the afternoon. It was a medium sized place, of several thousand population I imagine. One of the things we did soon after reaching town, was to look up the areas that our guns had fired into from Sausenhoffen. Several shells had landed in an area where there had been some greenhouse shelters. It didn't help those glass walls much either. Also we had managed to knock off some horses at that same intersection. The main result of those few shells having landed there, was to persuade a detachment of SS troops that it wouldn't be a good idea to try and defend the city, which idea they had instilled into the populace. Soon after the first shells landed, the civilians petitioned the mayor (burgermeister) to surrender it, but a few of the SS wouldn't listen and continued digging foxholes and entrenchments at the northerly edge of town. About that time our range increased and shells started dropping over on the southern side of Wending, (we looked that over too, several buildings had been damaged there). This was too much, and the SS left the town to the civilians, who immediately ran up some white flags. At least our shells were the cause of saving some infantrymen's lives, which would have been lost if those SS men had carried out their idea of making a last ditch stand for the town.

We must have been right up in the advance places because during the time that we were "sightseeing" around town, we saw many units of infantry march on out of town, some of them were picked up by trucks, but others went on, using the older fashioned type of transport.

It was about 1700 (5 PM) hours when we finally returned to the area of town that was to be our quartering area, Capt. Anderson had been there for some time and most of the communications were in. Because I had been

with the S-2 in the radio car, we had been delayed by having to meet the Colonel, who had been flying with Capt. McCory. I guess he was looking over the situation. He liked doing that, could see the whole picture so much better from the air and so much quicker. He seemed to be in quite a jovial mood when they landed in a meadow outside of town. Things must have been going our way.

Capt. Anderson had taken possession of an entire street, or alley it almost was, about 150 yards long, lined with houses of all sizes and description, nearly all of them with an enclosed courtyard of some size. That facilitated the parking of vehicles, because the street was much too narrow for that. Having the whole street made it possible to post a guard at each end and have the place fairly well protected, as there was no way for entrance other than at the ends.

The battery arrived at 1900 hours and we soon had them all parked and moved in. Incidently our trip for the day covered 25 miles by road, from Sausenhoffen, where we had left at around three that morning.

When it came time for supper, Sgt. Miller told me not to hit the "chow line" because he was going to cook us a meal. I had some errands to take care of, so was gone for some little time, but when I returned to our room (which boasted a small kitchen) he had fried potatoes, coffee, toast, and other items that I've forgotten since. It really tasted good for a change. Of course some of the things were donated unknowingly by the former tenants of the place, but we did wash our dirty dishes for them at least.

From what I heard, Wending was quite a place for "collectors" but we were outranked at this one by Division. They had the place well in hand, so try and confiscate anything when those MPs were around.

Don Miller showed me a small Leica camera that he had "picked up". I didn't ask where and he didn't volunteer the information. Just for a

joke I offered to trade the nice little P-38 automatic for his camera, never thinking that the offer would be taken up. I was quite surprised when he asked to see the pistol. That was enough. He wanted the pistol and I figured that I could find more use for the camera at any time, so it was a deal. The next thing was to figure out how it worked, but with a lot of turning and conjecturing, talking with and figuring with several of the camera enthusiasts including Hobert Skafield, Bill Hansen and Col. Coffin, we thought we had it all down pat. Guess we really did because there were only about two pictures spoiled of the roll that was in the camera when I got it. If I had been on the beam at the time, I would have written Jerry to send color film over for the little beauty, but all I asked for was black and white, and so doing, missed many scenic shots that would have been beauties in color.

The advance left Wending soon after lunch on that day, and made a nearly straight shoot for Bairafeld, only nine miles away, a small village down in a shallow valley. One road leading into it was nearly closed by a road block, one of those tree trunk affairs that the citizenry placed in trenches to close their roads. I never could figure out why, because practically none of them ever showed signs of being used for its real purpose. The Colonel had Cpl. Bix, our interpreter and battery clerk, order the burgermeister to have a crew of men report to him and when they showed up, Bix took them up to tear down the road block. The only thing was that the Colonel ran the show. I guess he really enjoyed telling those "krauts" to push. It must have been good, because his supply of German was limited, so it was nearly all by sign language, but the block was down and the road leveled off when I saw it next.

The battery arrived just before dark and when Wally was maneuvering the kitchen truck to get it in a barn through the courtyard, he maneuvered the trailer, loaded with staples and various spare rations, into an

outhouse, which turned over and allowed the trailer to settle on its side in the pit that the house was supposed to cover. It wasn't too bad, considering, but it did provide some laughs. I managed to snap a picture of it from the upstairs window of the CP which was just across the courtyard from it.

Our location at the present time was nearing the Danube valley and it was thought by some of the arm chair strategists that we might cross the river on our next move. Things were really picking up. The rumors of a few weeks ago up near Nurnburg that we were heading for Munich seemed not to have been complete rumor after all.

We stayed in the burgermeister's house on the edge of the village that night, but it was no better than any other that I had seen. The cows were stabled in one end of the building, accessable from the kitchen by passing through a single door. There was nothing striking in the cellar either, which was a disappointment to Capt. Anderson, who figured that there might have been something hid out for entertaining visiting burgermeisters. Through remarks of some of the civilians in the road block demolition gang to Cpl. Biz, it was gathered that the local burgermeister was a real ardent Nazi, but we found nothing in the house to substantiate that.

The next morning the advance party (including me), left Bairsfeld a little before noon, and not long after, we were on a high bluff overlooking the Danube valley. The opposite side of the river, of which we could see a few stretches here and there as it wound its way down through the green valley, was not high like on our side, but stretched away far into the distance, smoky from the fire of burning villages, looking to be nearly level, slightly different from the rolling hills that we had just come through as we approached the river.

I think that our road was not one of the "main drags" across the country, as it wound and twisted down that bluff, crossing what might

have been shell holes, or just poor maintenance, that failed to fill up holes caused by heavy truck traffic. It seemed that we were not to cross the river yet, but had to go into a bivouac area to await the scheduling of our unit to cross the bridge, which might come any hour, or maybe not for a day or more, depending on what success the other units had in crossing without opposition, if there was any of that, it was a sure thing that our battalions would set up and fire out on that plain beyond the river at whatever enemy targets that presented themselves.

We drove along a winding, up and down, roadway that paralleled the river some distance away, until we came to the partially burning village of Graisbach, lying at the base of the same high bluff that we had driven down some time before. A steep winding road led to the top of the bluff and it was up this that we went, coming to a group of buildings - some undamaged and others lying in ashes, from our own artillery fire, or caused when the infantrymen had to smoke out some "last ditch" defenders, I never found out, but something had really worked them over.

Our spot was spread over a couple of hills and a small valley, where they had "vacated" a half dozen houses for us. Ours was the farthest from the kitchen, I remember that, also located at the top of a small hill, so that we got our exercise going to and from meals.

The battery arrived about 1600 hours (4 PM) after taking an hour to cover the 7 miles from Eairafeld. They came by a shorter road than we did and at one time were halted by traffic while on the forward slope of a hill that was in full view of miles of that plain across the river. That in itself was not so bad, but infantrymen scattered around that area were snugged down in foxholes. Just as the battery was pulling on, one of the "doughs" volunteered the information that several enemy shells had fallen around there a few minutes before. That accounted for them all being down in foxholes, probably wondering what fools those artillery-

men were for exposing themselves in such a manner. However the passage was made without incident, but some of the men were able to tell a bit of a story at evening chow.

That night some time after dark we were startled by anti-aircraft fire that rolled out in a steady flow of sound, not intermittently as it generally did. It sounded as though all the AA guns in the corps were set up along that river, and I guess they were, because the special corps troops had not as yet started to cross the river. The sky was streaked with the orange streams from tracer bullets, then we could hear the sound of a plane's motors as it passed over very close to the ground. I did not go out, but some of them in the room did, coming back to report that the plane had gone down not far away. When I did go out a few minutes later I could see the glow from the burning ship in the sky and hear the exploding of machine gun cartridges from the plane. It must have caught fire as it crashed, because the men said that is was not on fire when it passed over.

We were all disappointed the next morning when it was learned that the plane was one of ours, a "Black Widow" night fighter, and all three of the crew had perished. Of course there was a check up over it and the CO of the field from where they came figured that the plane was lost and had dropped down to get a land check, which was fatal for them over that area, as it was what was known as a "closed area", no planes to fly below a certain altitude, because of the problem of identification at night and the bridges in the vicinity. It was certain that the Germans would try any trick to knock them out and when this plane came over so low, everyone of those guns just poured lead out of them.

During the period between the time that I arrived at Graisbach and the arrival of the rest of the battery, I went wandering along the ridge or bluff, above the valley. I took several pictures looking out over the

Danube valley. The only feasible approach was over the ridge leading to it from Graisbach, the way that I came upon it. There was a wall surrounding the place, one part of it that overlooked this narrow valley. I looked over the wall at this point and the dropoff was probably 100 feet, straight down. Inside the enclosure had been resurrected a portion of the ancient ruins, making a tiny chapel. In one of the small rooms of the chapel were plans showing the probable layout of the original buildings.

It had been quite an outlay in its time, from the drawings that I saw. The only drawback from my viewpoint was the distance from water, as I imagine the closest in the time of its occupancy was down in the valley below. There was a notation of the time that it was believed the castle had been used, in the room containing the drawings, and while I am a bit hazy, I believe it was a bout 900 years ago. The stones used in constructing it were all moss covered, giving a restful appearance to the whole place. I would say that the entire area enclosed by the wall was about three quarters of an acre. Probably it was just a small place of its kind, or else they were the first of the "sardines" that lived there.

The next day, we were alerted several times as to our movement, but it was not until about 1900 hours that Capt. Anderson took two wire trucks and a radio car out to cross the river. I was present, took several pictures of the river as we drove along it, but found later that I had committed the sin of not removing the lens cover. The river wasn't much, probably 100 feet wide, flowing between banks about eight feet high, of a decidedly far from blue color. More mud colored I would say. However we were about to cross the Danube and that was the main thing, it was the Danube, regardless of color.

We crossed the river over the usual ponton type of bridge some four miles upstream from Graisbach and I noticed there that the current was flowing quite fast. There was quite a riffle around the blunt ends of the rubber, air filled pontons that supported the treadway bridge. Again

I took a picture of the bridge, as we crossed it and again I forgot to remove the lens cover. I guess I must have been dopey, but not quite as much as I got to be some 24 hours later.

I remember passing through one or two small villages soon after we crossed the river, and then, while we were lined up in a column of trucks and other vehicles, waiting to cross another river (the Lech River that ran due north nearly as straight as a string from near Augsburg), it started to rain, a real dounpour that nearly shut visibility to a few yards. While it was still raining, we moved up and crossed the river. There was a swift current flowing here, the original steel bridge was lying in a tangled mass alongside our engineer constructed one and the water foamed white, as it made its way through the wreckage.

We were to hunt for a location to bivouac the battery when it arrived on our side of the river, and we went through a village or two before we reached a likely looking village. We found Col White and a party from the 208th. Bn. one of ours, and he told us that there was nothing available there. It was good and dark by then and after eating a bite and chewing the fat for some time, we drove on to the village of Neider-Schoenfeld, a mile or so beyond the one taken by the Bn. It looked good, but just for curiosity, we went on to a town called Rains. It was a fair sized place, paved streets and everything but Capt. Anderson decided that it wouldn't do because it would take us too far from the battalions. I had given the commercial telephone lines a check as we drove past them to see if we could utilize them for our circuits. There was little damage to them as far as I could see and I thought they could be worked into our net very well. However we eventually found ourselves back in Neider-Schoenfeld about 0100 hours. What happened to all the time in between, I can't remember, but I think we went back to see Col. White. In the meantime, we received a message (via radio) that the battery would cross

the Danube at 0400 hours.

I have often wondered what those German people thought when they were awakened and moved out of their places in the wee small hours of the morning, which is what happened to several of them there. It really took time to get that done, operating in the darkness as we had to, but finally the necessary houses were cleared and we set up a CP in the kitchen of one of them, got a fire built and a telephone line in, I even forget where it went to, but we had to stand by on it in case there was a call. The radio had been closed down until 0330 hours when it would re-open to keep in contact with the battery as it moved out from Graisbach. Capt. Anderson "ordered" me to get some sleep, so I took Bishop, the other operator and driver of the car upstairs to find a bedroom so he could get some sleep. Found a likely looking bed and told him to turn in. I had a flashlight and just before I got out of the room, Bishop called to me that there was someone in the bed. Was I surprised? Well we looked closer and there was someone there, all burrowed down in some of those down filled things that pass as comforters over there. I took Bishop to another room and went to see Capt. Anderson about the roomer. He told me that it was a Russian girl who had been working at the farm. They did not have to vacate when we took over a place, it only applied to the Germans, and he had forgotten to tell me that this place had one of them in it.

I got about an hour of sleep before I had to put the radio back on the air and from then on until the battery arrived, about 0530 hours, I was busy, so didn't get any more chance for sleep. After breakfast, and after I had done some checking over things to see just what sort of a place we had, in the daylight, I moved my things into the house that we were to use and looked it over, expecting to get in some sleep. I was fooled because about 0900 hours I was called and told that the advance was

pulling out in 30 minutes. Up with the sleeping bag and tie it onto the radio truck again, my sleep all broken up, really the start of a nice day. Anyhow I took a picture of an old goose with several of her young ones parading around one of the gardens in the rain.

This turned out to be quite a day. We must have traveled eight or so miles winding in and out between tanks and vehicles of the 20th. Armored Div. before we came to a small village sitting down in the bottom of a narrow valley. It was really full, we squeezed our way up and down several narrow streets (we would call them alleys here at home), but could find nothing that we could use, so on we went. It was quite a mixed up affair, as it seemed that all we were looking for was a bivouac location, everything was on the move so there was no use expecting to set down for any length of time. We hit two or three villages, but they were all either full of other units, or had something else wrong with them. I forget when it was, but we finally set ourselves down in one place, to wait for the battery to come up. There was a meadow where we parked the trucks and a shed that the kitchen truck was run into so they could serve lunch, that had been cooking on the road as they moved along. I think that the meal was of cooked C ration hash, but it was hot and I was cold, as it had been cold and drizzly all day (so far).

Dinner being over, Capt. Anderson and his party took off again. I got shifted to the C&R car with the S-2 and S-3 and the radio. We sort of traveled back and forth. The battery passed us not long after we departed from the dinner location, while we were sitting alongside the road, radio talking with one of the battalion commanders. As I remember it, that individual was on the point of arguing with us because the staff officers in my car had told him to rendevous at a certain map location and he maintained that it was wrong. I was in between, operating the radio.

The road was still very much filled with the Armored Division traveling along it, but we took ourselves a hole in the column and started out

again. The highway had been winding down through somewhat of a valley for some distance, but now it started to climb, maybe we were going over a mountain. The hill was covered with trees and I almost expected to have some sniping done, but as usual things were quiet. When we passed over the top of the grade, we saw the remains of some excitement. There had been a bit of a road block or a shell crater in the road and evidently a couple of vehicles had attempted to bypass it by moving out onto the shoulder. A landmine changed the mind of whoever started that maneuver. Both vehicles (one of them a halftrack) were really mangled. Whether anyone was hurt or killed I did not learn, however.

As we moved on down the grade, which wasn't quite so long on the down side as on the up one, I could see that the country was rolling and spotted with clumps of trees here and there, but could see no towns. As far as I was concerned I was about ready to stop traveling for the day and hole up some place. Not long after we crossed the summit and hit the level ground a t the bottom, we saw Major Shaug waiting at an almost invisible intersection, where a sort of wagon track road turned off to the left. He turned us off on that road and I thought we were headed for some little cow pasture village, from the looks of the road, but it was just a short cut to where we were going, Wilprechtszell by name, the place turned out to be. Unlike many of the villages the houses here were quite scattered out, or else we settled down in the outskirts. I know that the three storied one in which we had a room (the big kitchen), was nearly two hundred yards from the group that held the CP and kitchen. It was quite a set up, our house was almost modern, all stuccoed finish, tile and linoleum where it was meant to be, (I almost forgot, we ran our own electric wires to the quarters), and running water where it was intended and not from a pump in the kitchen or outside someplace.

Cpl. Batten, who had one of the wire trucks in the advance party during

the day, showed me two of the nicest shotguns I'd seen yet. He had found them lying in a small creek back in one of the villages where we had been halted for some time. The owner must have dissembled and tossed them into the creek instead of turning them into the military authorities.

We had company in one of the sheds that held the CP truck and trailer. It was an extinct German soldier, who must have been picked off by a patrol. There didn't seem to have been any grand scale fight around there. I believe a detail from the battery moved him out on a jeep to a more peaceful resting place.

The distance traveled by the battery in moving from Graisbach to Wilprechtszel was 21 miles and it took from 0400 hours to 1800 hours. I don't know how far we in the advance party traveled, but I know that we left Graisbach about 12 hours before they did and I at least, reached there after the battery.

There was a little excitement around the battery that night due to an order from Corps, requesting the name of an enlisted man to be returned to the States as one of an armed guard that was to be in charge of some German prisoners. After talking it over with the section chiefs, Capt. Anderson decided to put the names of all men in a hat and draw the lucky name out. We all were hoping for the best, but "Shorty"Adams got the draw after several other names being pulled, those persons being away from the unit at the time. I believe the two first names drawn were of men that were back in the rear (Nancy and Grenoble) at rest camps. The main drawing point in the trip was that after the prisoners were delivered, the guards would be given 30 day furloughs at home.

I don't remember exactly, but I hardly think that the battalions did any firing from this position because there was no organized opposition in front of us. There was opposition all right, but it wasn't of a sort that called for heavy artillery.

The following day, April 29th., we left Wilprechtszel shortly after noon, with a jeep or two, two wire trucks and the radio command car that I rode in. The battery was to leave about 1000 hours. For the first few miles we traveled over a winding dirt road that led over and around small rounded hills, some tree covered and others mantled with grass. The road went through a few small villages and in one, we were surprised to come upon a group of children, waving their hands and caps at us, reminiscent of the travles through France not quite a year before. Instead of waving small French flags or imitations of American flags however, these were waving a few white cloths on sticks. That was the kind of flag that we saw being flown through Germany these days, from roof tops, over doors, out of upstairs windows and from wires in the streets. In some places it seemed as though all the bed linen had been displayed for us.

It wasn't long before we came to a big cloverleaf intersection and swung out onto one of Germany's Autobahns, in this case the Stuttgart-Salzberg section, it being near Augsburg that we hit it. Captain Anderson had flown out over the road earlier in the day and reported that the four lane highway was crouded with 3rd. Division vehicles, all heading for Munich. They may have been heading for that place, but they didn't reach it for a couple of days. I know that, because we had to hole up and do some firing for them so they could cross a river, The Amper, a few miles to the west of the city.

This Autobahn was like all the others that I saw during my stay in and around Germany. It consisted of two parallel strips of heavy concrete, generally spaced about ten feet apart, except over more rugged terrain, then sometimes they were twenty or thirty feet apart with one strip maybe fifteen or more feet above the other. Each strip was wide enough for three cars to travel abreast, although there were no markings like we are familiar with on our own wide roads. Every few miles there would be a

big cloverleaf intersection with the side roads leading off to some of the principle towns close to the highway. At each of these intersections would be a huge sign showing the distance to the large cities on the autobahn and also the mileage to whatever town the side road led to. I have a picture taken of two of our officers standing in front of one of the signs that showed Munich, which was on the autobahn and Dachau, the latter off on a side road. No cross traffic was permitted. Any road crossing the main one, that was of insufficient importance to rate an intersection, went through an underpass, or in a few cases, there was an overhead causeway built for the crossroad. The cloverleafs were constructed so that vehicles did not have to cross one line of traffic to reach their own. If it meant that they had to get on the oppositeside of the road, they took an underpass or overhead crossing and turned into a driveway that led them to the outside of the lane headed in the direction in which they wished to travel.

Soon after we took the autobahn we reached a stretch where the space in between the two strips of concrete had been paved over and camouflage painted to try and conceal the fact that it was something other than grass. This, and other similar strips that I saw near Augsburg and Munich had been used for fighter plane landing strips. One of them in particular had been used for jet planes and we saw dozens of that type, nearly all of them damaged in some way, parked in runways out back into the trees of the wooded area through which the road passed. I was reminded of a shark when looking at that plane from the front, due to the triangular shape of the fuselage. These were all Messerschmidts with a jet motor under each wing.

We had to stop our journey several times to meet Capt. McCory who was up in one of the Cub planes and who kept in touch with us by radio to relay messages to and from the battery to us, it being so far and in unfavorable terrain for the direct working. We also landed, at a spot

designated by us, and took Major Wist from our car, up to see what things looked like. Then we visited Division Hq., an Artillery Hq., to see what the situation had become up in front. Eventually we contacted Capt. Anderson, who had been on ahead with the remainder of the party foraging for a CP position. It seemed that we would utilize the several buildings of a farm that set back a few hundred yards from the highway near the village of Lauterbach. He took us there and then departed with the wire trucks to locate the battalion positions. Major Wist and I were to go back on the route to contact the battery, which was marching in convoy with the battalions, and guide them into the area. That we did, arranging to meet the lead vehicle at a road not far from the farmhouse. Then we dashed on back, drove into the building where we left the car, and I walked back to the road to wait for the battery. What was my surprise to see them dash on past, with one of our jeeps leading them (it was the Colonel's). So I went back to Major Wist and found that he had sent the car to pick up someone at Div. Arty. Hq. So we had lost the battery and didn't even have a bicycle to follow it. We spent the time looking over the place to see if there was any worthwhile loot, but there wasn't anything other than a few articles of soldier uniform, probably from some deserter who had left the dubious life of a soldier for the apparently safer one of a civilian.

Nearly an hour after we had seen the battery pass us by, a jeep and one of our men drove up to move us to the battery area. It seemed that after this place had been picked out, the Colonel had found a better place in Lauterbach, enough buildings closely grouped together to take care of all the men and vehicles. He had sent his vehicle out to lead the battery in and they had reached it after Major Wist and I had met them and returned to the first place chosen. So it wasn't anything that we did that caused the passing up.

There was quite a bit of counter battery fire from this position

during the night. Evidently there were some German batteries on the other side of the Amper River that were making a last ditch stand before Munich. I trust that we worked them over plenty. Getting the direct telephone hookup for the special officer sent from Corps for the purpose of handling this firing, kept me from getting my full quota of sleep.

I can't remember that there was much excitement during our brief stay there, except for rooting out a couple of retiring SS high muck a mucks. One of them, a general of some grade, was rolled out of bed the next morning. His hiding days were over for some time, after some civilians passed the word of his presence along to our interpreter, Cpl. Bim, who with Major Wist, went to investigate, finding him in bed, but a uniform which fitted him perfectly, was found hidden in another room. It was his all right, he finally admitted.

The distance from Wilprechtszel to Lauterbach, most of it down the Autobahn, was 36 miles and it only took the battery about 2 hours to make that. Quite a difference from the march of the day before, when it took some 14 hours to cover 19 miles. That was the way of it though, some of the short trips took the longest time.

An advance party left Lauterbach about the middle of the morning to move forward. We followed the highway for a few miles before swinging off to a secondary one that more or less paralled the autobahn. It was quite a change from the big one, more like one of our own county paved roads. What made it interesting was that the shoulders were almost non-existent and like in France, a row of trees bordered the pavement. For the small civilian type vehicles of peacetime, there probably was plenty of room, but when those gave way to big trucks, tanks and other heavy equipment, things got to be somewhat crowded.

At one time we could see abandoned planes sitting scattered around on a flying field, but the road did not go close enough so that we could

tell what type they were.

I thought we must be coming close to Munich as it became more built up, like the outskirts of a large town, but I was wrong, although it really was one of the little communities near Munich. Capt. Anderson and the Colonel had found our CP for the day in this place, called Lochausen. Even before I got inside, it looked to be interesting and indeed it did turn out to be so.

The S-2 had to go out on a jaunt before we had a chance to look the place over but it didn't take long. One of our planes was in the air and we backtracked a couple of miles to a meadow that was clear of houses and trees where we brought the plane in so that the pilot could make his report directly to Major Wist. There was a battery of 105 mm howitzers firing from that same meadow (possibly ten acres in area) and a dozen or more German youngsters of the curious age thronged around the edges, just far enough out of the way so they could not be chased off and close enough to bother. They were so thick around our radio car that we had to run them off, probably would have "lifted" anything that was movable.

The CP establishment was situated in what must have been a community farm and hotel, or what belonged to one of the wealthy property owners of the community. There was a beer hall, huge kitchen and several store rooms and sitting rooms on the ground floor of the main house. On the second and third floors were what must have been bedrooms, although there were no furnishings to prove that theory. The room that we had was connected to the only bathroom in the whole building, a point that I found out in my wanderings around, also a fact that I used to my advantage later in the evening. At some time in its history this house must have been quite a gathering place, probably before the war, as we found odds and ends in some of the closets such as electric heaters, floor lamps and other items commonly classed as luxuries in those parts.

This house and a sort of tree shaded corner made up the street side of a courtyard about 50 yards square, the other three sides of the court being made up by buildings of one kind and another. The most of them were used as stables or storerooms, but some of them housed slave labor (Russians). Underneath one of them was a cellar fully the size of an average four room house, filled with canned goods, furniture, clothes and I don't know what. From the time that the Russians were convinced that the civilian owners of the place had gone, at least temporarily, they spent their time in and out of that cellar, looting it. I saw some of them come out with armloads of clothes, others carried food and when we went down to see what else they were doing, we found that they had opened every box and barrel of stored stuff there, and the floor was nearly knee deep in everything imaginable. Even upstairs, in the big house they went, prying into cupboards and boxes, looking for loot. I guess they thought something was due them for the years of slavery spent in hard work for the German landowners. They had picked up some "fire-water" some place and the most of them were pretty well liquored up so we kept a fair watch on the group for fear they would start a fire some place around with the lanterns they had been using. I will admit that it was amusing to see them go about their "scrounging" but at the same time, I couldn't help wondering how they expected to carry all the things away with them, also, what the owners would think when they returned and found things in such a mess. Probably blame the Americans for it all.

I took advantage of the bath tub being connected to our bedroom, just before retiring, but nearly froze while taking my bath. The water was heated through a coil and a very small tank in the kitchen range downstairs and it didn't store up enough water to wash ones face, let alone all of him. It was good to use a tub again instead of a helmet full of water though, even if it was cold.

The entire battery pulled out from Lochausen the next morning about 0900 hours, leaving the place in the hands of the Russians. I imagine that they really did go to town then.

Our route skirted Munich, at least we travelled on the outer fringe of the city. I could see nothing spectacular about it, but I did notice a number of huge barracks like structures over a block in length and four and five stories in height. I have an idea they were used for factory workers, as there did not seem to be any established military post in the vicinity. There was some bomb damage evident but not nearly as much as I had imagined there should be. Later I found out why, the area traversed by us, did not go through the bombed out section.

One thing I remember vividly was the large zoo that we passed as we left the city. We could see numbers of birds, particularly some flamingoes wading in shallow pools. Some animals were wandering about also, but I forget what they were. Whatever breed of beast, I imagine that some of them have been eaten by now. The appearance of such a group of animals and birds near such a center of bomb damage seemed out of place. I heard at one time that the Munich zoo was one of the most famous ones in Europe. That may have been true or not.

Shortly before noon we halted in a residential district near some large factories and barraks. It was peaceful there, nothing to show that their country was being covered by a conquering army. It didn't take long for the populace to become aware of the "new order". This halt was not to be an operational one and the various men that were not busy, soon wandered about the neighborhood to see what it was like. It wasn't long before many of them came rushing back with Lugers and other prized souvenirs. A soldier would be passing a house when someone called. On going to investigate, the Germans generally had a pistol or two, or maybe a sword to hand over to the "conquerors". It didn't take long for the men to realize

that here was an opportunity not often encountered, so they started going to the doors of these big barracks and ordering all arms to be turned over to them at once. It paid off, there were a good many nice pistols taken there that day. As usual, I found myself busy and away from this foraging so missed getting anything. The house assigned to our section seemed to be interesting, especially as I found a box that had originally held a Walther automatic pistol. Try as I would, I couldn't find the missing pistol though. This house was a three storied affair, well filled with nice furnishings. It had modern plumbing fixtures and some very comfortable appearing beds. One of those, I hoped to try out that night, but about 1500 hours it seemed that such was not to be. The basement, or cellar, had a good many bottles of fairly decent red and white wine, boxes of clothes and some food, plus the usual supply of coal. For a wonder, that was one cellar that didn't get messed up by someone looking through it for souvenirs. Maybe they were too busy roving around the neighborhood where the looking was more profitable. Speaking of souvenirs, leads me to remark of the hidden rifle that Bix managed to dig out of the flour barrel back at Lochausen. It had been cached there in anticipation of its being ordered turned in, but someone else (a civilian) saw it and told Bix.

I had been tagged for a detail that afternoon of going out to the recently liberated concentration camp of Dachau, a few miles northwest of Munich. Orders had been received from Gen. Haislip, the Corps Commander, to send not more than two representatives from each unit to the camp to observe and report on the atrocities there. Chaplain Ganoche and I were to go from Group Headquarters and we were waiting for the truck to arrive from the 932nd. Bn. to transport us and the men from the 208th. Bn. to Dachau. For some reason or other, that truck never showed up, so finally, as it was getting rather late, we took off in a three quarter ton truck belonging to the 208th. It was one of their wire trucks and was loaded

with wire and other signal stuff. In addition to the Chaplain and I, there was Captain Anderson and seven men from the Bn. We literally hung onto the top of the loaded truck as we traced our route back to Munich.

There was a little bit of trouble in getting through and out on the Dachau road. Several of the streets leading in our direction turned out to be dead ends. They were full of bomb debris and we had to turn around to try again. I took two or three pictures, showing what a real dirty street looked like, finding out some months later that they were good ones. We saw a great deal of damage in the sections that we passed through, buildings that were no more than a pile of stones and splinters, buildings with one entire side missing, the rooms exposed to the elements. It was a different story from what I saw during our move earlier in the day. Then I thought that Munich had been spared the damage claimed for it in so many of the communiques.

Eventually we hit the right road and headed out for our destination over a fairly respectable two lane highway, running between two rows of some sort of shade tree, so like those in France. I wondered which country pioneered the custom of fencing in their highways with trees.

It had been cloudy all day, but no rain, but it became colder as we got further away from Munich and as we had no protection from the wind, it was a cold ride. The country was almost level, with here and there a slight rise in the ground. The only trees I remember seeing were the shade trees along the road and others in a village or two that we passed through.

Dachau proved to be a medium sized town, a clean appearing one, quite a contrast to the sights that could be seen not too far away. I don't remember how we reached the concentration camp, but we were on a wide street, paralleling a railroad siding on one side, with a small tree studded park on the other, when we pulled off and parked our truck among some others. We were there.

We went over to see what was in the rail cars. There were about fifty

of them, chiefly an open gondola type, although there were a few box cars. Some of them contained scraps of filthy clothing, others held the parchment skinned, emaciated corpses of anywhere from one to a dozen of the original passengers of the train on its long ride across Germany from no telling where, hauling the victims of Nazism to their death, either from starvation, beatings or overwork, it made no difference to those in charge. If they did not die on the trip, there was plenty of chances for their death after the arrival at Dachau. We had been told that everyone of those fifty cars had been full of dead and living when the first Americans reached the camp. Now, only the dead were left, the dying and living had been removed, in the hopes that many of them could be saved, but most of them were so weak from exposure, starvation and previous beatings that they did not survive long.

Here and there we came across the bodies of former German guards in the camp, several of them quite mutilated. They were the ones whom the prisoners had caught, the lucky ones died from bullet wounds, the unlucky ones did not.

We tried to enter through the railway gate, but a guard prevented that, although we carried a pass from the Corps Commander. All visitors must enter through the main entrance, this caused us to walk back nearly a quarter of a mile to the big gate, it was getting late and I was afraid there wouldn't be enough light to take any pictures if it took much longer to reach the inside.

The main gate was one of those huge arched affairs, painted grey with the German eagle and swastika portrayed in the top center. It looked quite impressive. I wondered whether any of the prisoners ever had seen that gate, or if there were other gates for them. I know there was, if they all entered by train as we had already seen that one. The street leading on through the gate to the inner confines of the camp was about 40 feet in

width, that wound in a great curve for nearly a quarter of a mile through a park. Really a setting for such a situation. Here also, we saw the bodies of former guards, not many, but enough.

First we went to a group of buildings that resembled barracks, one storied and not very attractive. These were hospital buildings we were told. They smelled htghly of disinfectant and other smells, not so pleasant, even if disinfectant could have a pleasant smell. I don't know what the patients in there were suffering from, the ones I saw did not resemble even in a small way, the bodies seen in the freight cars, or the prisoners seen later in the compound. It is my guess that this place was used for experiments, or to hospitalize certain patients for show.

It was getting late, so we couldn't spend very much time at any point on our tour and we left the hospital without going into more than one or two rooms of one building. So far we were rather disappointed at not finding more evidences of atrocities, as that was what we had been sent there for. That feeling was premature however.

Upon leaving the hospital, we walked through a tree studded, grassy park, through and around a few hedges for about one hundred yards, then as we passed through another hedge, we came to a high wire fence, inside of it had been the kennels for the watch dogs. A few yards from where we hit the fence stood an open gate through which we entered the yard. None of the dogs were alive, perhaps some of them had been loosed and were still living, but we saw several lying outside their kennels, dead, having been shot. I remember a beautiful looking brute, apparently a mastiff, that probably had weighed well over one hundred pounds, who appeared to be sleeping, but he wasn't, he was dead also.

Just beyond the kennels stood a long low brick building towards which we headed. The end towards us was the most sinister sight that we had yet seen. Hanging on racks were hundreds of dirty striped suits formerly worn

by prisoners. Maybe it was for the purpose of disinfecting them that they hung there, but the smell that was over the area was of chloride of lime, together with another smell, one that we had been much too familiar with back in Normandy, when so much dead stock was lying around. This smell didn't come from stock though. This building was the camp crematorium.

Capt. Anderson went on through the building someplace but soon came back, looking not too well. "I wouldn't go through that way, the smell is pretty terrific", he said. So we went back outside and walked around one side of the place to a big double door about halfway down the length of the building. It was the main entrance to the furnace room, about sixty feet square, that held four furnaces, two of which were burning, with, we could only imagine, but from what we had just seen, and would see, it wasn't hard to realise that it must be bodies in the glowing interior. I took a picture of the room from just outside the door, but it was too dark and all I got for it was the glow of the fire and a small portion of the furnace that was lit up by the glare from the open door.

Alongside the furnace room was another room, about thirty feet square that seemed to hold an attraction for many of the men. Few of them entered it however, only looking through the windows from the outside. We looked through too, and as long as I live I'll never forget the sight that met my eyes. Piled like cordwood, filling that thirty foot square room to a depth of five or six feet from wall to wall, lay the emaciated bodies of hundreds of men. I say bodies, but their appearance was more like a skeleton with ugly skin stretched tightly over the bones, sightless eyes staring at the ceiling. I could see those eyes looking at me for days after that visit. It took no imagination to know whose clothes those were hanging at the other end of the building. These and many others had left them there on this last trip, which was no doubt a grateful release from a horrible existence, if it could even be called that. All of us with

cameras tried pictures of that room, having to use time exposures because it was now quite dusk outside, a single electric light lit the room enough so that I got two very good shots of it, pictures that have caused some persons to regret having seen them.

Nearby was another large building that must have been used for the manufacture of plaster dolls, vases and dozens of odds and ends of trinkets, such as are seen in booths on the carnival midways. The objects piled on tables and benches here and there were pretty well smashed, probably by enraged soldiers, thinking of the forced work that was used in producing these pleasure-linked articles. We didn't spend much time there, having heard of a compound that lay on ahead someplace, we took off for it.

After a walk of some ten minutes we came to the corner of the camp compound. There was no gate nearby, so we went on. We were on a hard packed dirt road. On our right flowed a creek, confined between concrete banks. Here and there along it, the tops of concrete pillboxes were visible, entrance to them was from the creek side of the bank and from them firing slits looked out over the compound. The bottom seemed to be covered with small boulders, but as we looked closer, the boulders turned out to be faces, faces of bodies that covered that watercourse from bank to bank. It was only about fifteen feet wide, but we walked along it for a quarter of a mile and the sight was the same for the entire distance. Whether the bodies were of prisoners or of soldiers and guards, we could not tell. Running between the stream and the stockade fence was a V shaped concrete lined ditch about five or six feet deep to the bottom. Just inside that was the high barbed and woven wire fence, at least ten feet in height. Inside this fence, to make it almost impossible for a prisoner to even reach it unobserved by guards, was a several foot wide stretch of regular barbed wire entanglement, about four feet deep at the center. All this was watched over by guards from their posts inside concrete pill boxes from alongside

the stream and from other boxes along the fence line. Also at each main gate and each corner was another main watch tower about twenty feet in height from where guards could observe everything inside or out of the stockade. Here and there along the fence line there were portions of it smashed flat, as though the press of individuals inside had gotten too heavy and pressed it down. At each of these breaks stood an American sentry, well armed. We asked what the purpose was and one of them told us that it was to keep the prisoners from getting out and running wild around the vicinity as the powers that be were afraid of their actions towards the German civilians. He also mentioned that it was only a one way affair, in other words, anyone who was already out, could get back in through one of those breaks, but once in, would not be allowed back through to the outside. We could easily see the necessity for these precautions; crowded into a small space inside the stockade, hungrily watching the avenue to real freedom were several hundreds of the prisoners, their eyes watching every small move made by the sentries. I have no doubt that if it had been left unguarded for two minutes, it would have been impossible to stop the rush of poor unfortunates who would have been pouring through, although many would have been entirely lost once they did get outside. It was really the idea that now they no longer had the Germans over them, they could see no real reason for being held prisoners.

We walked along the fences and stream for nearly a quarter of a mile until we reached the main gate on that side. It was a duplicate of the big one seen as we entered the camp from the main road, except that this one had guard posts built on top and on the ground level. We had to show our pass again before we were permitted to pass through into the compound. Once inside, several prisoners crowded around us, speaking several different languages all at once. I was at a loss because no one seemed to be speaking English, but one or two of the boys understood Polish, so it wasn't long

before we began to get an idea of what their life had been. First we were taken to the huge shower house where every new batch of prisoners were taken on their arrival. It was large, about three times as big as the area covered by the railroad depot at Carpinteria, with steam pipes running here and there around the framework. About eight feet above the floor were six by six inch beams that seemed to be serving no real purpose in holding the building together. One of the prisoners was explaining the course of new arrivals to one of our boys who translated it to us. The new prisoners were compelled to strip off all their clothes as they were brought inside the shower room, after turning their possessions over to guards outside. If anyone was found trying to hide or keep an article, however small or valueless it was, he was tied up to one of those beams (the ones that we had wondered about) and left hanging by his thumbs until someone thought he was indoctrinated enough. To make it different, sometimes they directed streams of water on the ones tied there, or steam was turned into the big rooms while prisoners were crowded inside. We didn't stay too long in there as we wanted to see some more so we could leave and get back to our outfits before too late, so we moved out.

Another building aroused our curiosity because of the hundreds of bundles of clothing, both civilian's and prisoner's, that were piled and tumbled around outside. The polish prisoner told our interpreter that they were clothes from some of the civilians who had been brought in and others from dead prisoners. It did not sound at all good, and the condition of some of the bundles led us to think that the clothes contained inside might have been worn by pigs instead of humans, but actually many of these people enclosed inside the surrounding fences weren't human any longer. After a certain point, under certain conditions, humans forget about everything but just self preservation, with a feeling about it no higher than some of the lower types of animal life have.

We went on down into the area that contained the barracks, or huts would have been a more proper name for the buildings that were home for the hundred or so prisoners crouded into each one. They all seemed to contain beds, double or triple bunks, with bedding of a sort on them, all of which rather surprised me as I didn't expect to see the bedding at all. Each building was about the size of one of our regular Army barracks, minus the washrooms, and one story instead of two. Several of these were walled in, that is, a wall was built even with the front and back, leaving the building fronts and backs to make up its share of the wall. We were taken inside the area between two of these buildings where we saw a row of twenty or more bodies lying in a neat row alongside the hut. Several had portions of bandages on them and we were told that they were ones who had been hurt at work and in air raids. A pile of empty tin coffins inside the enclosure showed signs of having been used many times before, beaten up the way they were. I guess the guards hadn't had time to use them for these bodies in time. All of the bodies had tattood numbers on their wrists and one had two sets of them. The Pole said he must have been really tough, or a very special prisoner, because the second set of numbers indicated that he had been imprisoned at another concentration camp. He mentioned the one, but I don't remember which one it was. Somewhere along the line we picked up an English speaking, Belgian Priest, who took us to the little chapel that the camp authorities had finally allowed them to have. He said that there had been nearly three thousand priests, of all European nationalities imprisoned at Dachau, but of that total, there were only about 1500 left. The others died from cruelties or starvation. He himself said that he had been there five years, but he looked to be in fair shape for such a long stay, gaunt and underfed, he must have been a large man before his imprisonment, because he still stood as tall as I and probably weighed 175 pounds. One of their main complaints was that they had not been allowed to have a

chapel until only a few months before that, and then it was so small it would only hold a few hundred at one time and services were only allowed a few times a month, but as he said, "A little was better than none." We moved on again, this time heading for outside, as it was pitch dark and Capt. Anderson wanted to get on our way. As we retraced our steps up through the compound we saw the evening meal being served. A wagon pushed down the road running between the buildings loaded with tubs full of scraps and potatoes. The prisoners, served themselves generally with their hands from the tubs into tin plates, or sometimes just grabbed up a handful and started to eat. Every few minutes a score or more of the prisoners would push the wagon a few feet further down the street, so that a new batch could get their ration. We were accompanied to the gate by the Belgian Priest and several other prisoners who had followed us all through our trip. It was pathetic to see their expressions as we left them, everyone insisted on shaking hands and they hung on as if it was the last link with life that they might have. The Priest told us that the present number of prisoners probably was around 15000 but there had been as many as 20,000 at one time. I gathered that prisoners had been marched, or trucked out to nearby fields or factories daily for working and it was through this work that many of them had died, being undernourished like they were. (Starved was really the word for it, however.)

When we reached our truck, after a fifteen minute walk, we found one of the fellows that had started out with us, but soon found that it was too much for his stomach so he returned to the truck to wait. Everyone was present then so we took off in the dark for home, or rather for our position areas.

Soon after we left the town, it started to snow, not a nice snow, but part snow and part sleet. None of us had anything heavier than field jackets and were soon pretty well frozen, riding on top of the loaded truck

with nothing to break the wind in front of us. Our lights, such as we were using were practically useless, as only the black-outs were allowed and they were only good for warning an approaching vehicle of our presence. Somehow we got on the wrong road at a detour between Dachau and Munich and lost several minutes getting back to the right one. Eventually we entered Munich and I still don't know how Capt. Anderson (who was driving) found his way through the streets, because of the darkness and snow. At one point we were all startled to hear three shots blast out from a corner off to our right, but none of the bullets passed close enough for us to hear them so decided that they were not meant for us, so kept on going.

We knew that the Group had moved down south of Munich into a certain small village, so had to find our way out of town by another road other than the one that we had entered it on that afternoon. Again luck, or just a good man was with us, because the Capt. found his way to the Autobahn approach that led to Salzburg, Austria, and we took out on it. By this time we were using the truck headlights, because it was impossible to see in front without them and besides the weather was such that no planes could have seen us, even from a low altitude.

Sometime after leaving Munich we entered a thick wooded area and were challenged by a guard. After identifying ourselves we found that he was one of a small Engineer detachment stationed in the woods for security purposes. He invited us to go back to their hut, a few yards away from the road and have some coffee. That was one of the most welcome invitations that any of us had ever heard I think, and we all went back. My jacket collar and hair below my helmet were coated with ice and I was so cold that I couldn't hold the cup of coffee for a time, but we soon thawed out in the warmth of the hut. We stayed there for about half an hour and left. Personally I would have liked to have settled down there for the night, but we had to return to the unit before morning, because they might be

moving on again before we reached them.

When we arrived in the village where the Group was supposed to have been bivouaced, we found nothing but infantry. At the Regimental CP all the information they could give us was that some heavy artillery had passed through there late that afternoon. I got on the telephone and finally got through to the Corps Artillery switchboard, but he had no line to the Group. Then I called Operations there and asked for the Group's position (in code of course, luckily I had a copy of the current map coordinate code in my pocket). I really had to talk to get the information even then, telling who I was and what I did in the Group. When I got it and decoded the information we checked the map and found that we still had several miles to go. This time we made it, with no further trouble, except that it was still snowing and cold. It was 0230 hours when I got to our battery area and found the building assigned to the battery detail personnel. Bix, our interpreter and clerk, awakened long enough to tell me that our Capt. Anderson had left me a bottle of champagne. I wasn't interested in champagne right then, but mentally made a note that I would save it for VE day, and then turned in. One of the boys had unloaded my sleeping bag from the radio truck and hauled it in to our room, so all I had to do was unroll it and roll in.

The next morning when I woke up, I was as stiff and sore as though I had been in a good fight. I guess it was from having been so cold the night before. I had breakfast and then walked over to the 208th. Headquarters to get my camera from Capt. Anderson, I'd left it in his box of things in the truck when I got back from Dachau. That walk of a couple of miles limbered me up considerably and I felt pretty good.

We were located in one of those small Bavarian communities where the houses were pretty well spread out, not all huddled together like so many of them in the areas further north. The ground was nearly level, all covered

with a blanket of snow now, but there appeared to have been grain crops on it from the short stubble still remaining. It was probably too early for any spring plowing yet. Here and there I could see wooded areas, which seemed to be the general pattern as later on when we left Arget, which was the name of this community, nearly half of the country we passed through was covered with trees, not the tangled mass of undergrowth that is so prevalent in the mountains at home, but an area cleared of brush on the ground with the trees growing up from a pine needle carpet. Again I was reminded of the care given to the forested areas here. They seemed to give the trees every chance for survival that was possible.

The house assigned to our section was a big barnlike structure with the barn in one end, as usual. It was built on the traditional Bavarian style, with the upper story projecting out at the end, by means of a wooden balcony. Although the main house construction was of some kind of cement or stone, with a white plaster finish, the balcony was of heavy timbers finished in natural color. It gave quite an air to it. I found out that all those balconies were the same way and if there was no balcony, the upper area of the gable was almost always done over in that natural wood construction. The kitchen of this house was about twenty feet square, so I imagine that it served as the main family room during the winter months.

Rumors floating around on the grapevine seemed to indicate that we would be on the move again before nightfall and sure enough, about noon the Colonel took off with an advance party, even taking the big radio car with them. I was left at the rear this time, still as acting 1st. Sgt. in addition to my other duties. However I was kept busy getting the remainder of the vehicles readied and a few reports ready for the powers that be. Due to the fact that the battery clerk was the best interpreter in the outfit, he was always taken on the advance parties so that he didn't have much time to get out the necessary reports, besides he was always being

called away from his work even when he was in the area, to help the S-2 out of some difficulty with German civilians who wanted to know what the score was.

We departed from Arget about 1600 hours going back across the Munich-Salzburg autobahn and hitting a secondary road that ran parallel with it about four miles to the northeast. The ground changed from the levelness around Arget, to rolling, with our road climbing and twisting like some snake. I believe that this road was originally the main one between Munich and Salzburg and if it was, it was no wonder that something like the autobahn had been built because it was more like one of our second or third class roads at home, narrow (about twenty feet), with trees planted close to the pavement, giving practically no shoulders to drive off onto. The narrowness of the road was impressed on me in this move at one particular place, as a group of light tanks passed our column. I was in the Colonel's staff car following the CP van which was towing the Colonel's trailer. When one of the tanks passed the trailer, he swung a little too close and the treads tore part of the lower siding from the trailer. That portion of siding incidently covered one of the built-in compartments of the trailer. We and the CP van stopped, to survey the damage, which turned out to be of a minor nature. Talevi, (the Colonel's driver and orderly) was afraid that it was the compartment where the Colonel kept his private store of wine, but if it was, nothing was broken, so we went on, didn't even take time to see what his favorite brand was.

We arrived in the town of Bad Aibling just before dark, so had a fair chance to see what sort of a place it was without waiting until the following morning. A few miles out of the place, we passed through what had been quite an air base. For about four miles the road went through the ex-flying field and there were hundreds of planes scattered about, some in revetments, others lined up in a semi-formation as though they had been caught just

before taking off. Many of them were or appeared to be undamaged, others had been strafed and burned. Types ranged all the way from small trainers up to some late type fighters and twin engine bombers equipped with radar antenna.

Our quarters consisted of several pretty decent houses, all on the same side of the street and all connected to one another in one way or the other. Some had a walkway running along the rear, at the upper story level, another had a passageway running between it and the adjoining house. The actual living quarters in nearly all cases were upstairs, all of them being two or two and a half stories. The lower floor had been used for offices, bakeries or storerooms. We used everything, for sleeping, kitchens, storerooms and offices, as we couldn't leave the good (?) citizens in their own building where they might be in a position to give us trouble before we knew what was happening.

It seemed that when the advance party arrived in the town and took it over, demanding that the Burgermeister publish the military laws and operate it under our jurisdiction, it was full of military supplies of all kinds. The number of pistols, knives, swords and guns turned in ran into the hundreds. We all got at least one pistol out of it and there were knives and swords galore, even after we had all looked them over. In the few days that we were there, several wagon loads of contraband, guns and explosives, had to be hauled away. The civilians (and ex-soldiers) would bring the stuff in and pile it in a big pile out in front of our area, which was a good place as we could watch it there, but a bad place if someone wanted to throw a little grenade or some other explosive into it. For that reason we tried to keep it cleaned up before it piled too high.

One indication of how things were going in the war line about this time was that one evening after we had been here a day, was an order to unload

all trucks of organizational equipment, load on extra gas and oil and be prepared for them to leave the following morning at 0430 hours for a destination near Munich. They were to be used for transporting infantry units and supplies for those units who had outstripped their own supply lines in chasing portions of the beaten German army. Another indication of it was the appearance of long lines of German prisoners marching back through Bad Aibling headed for the airport above town that had been turned into a huge PW cage. From the road a mile away I saw them over on the far side of that place looking like thousands of ants. Day after day the lines came through, lines of men far different than the ones I had seen near Saverne last Thanksgiving. Those were young, proud, fine appearing soldiers, while these looked like the beaten individuals that they were. Mostly older men, they appeared worn out, dressed in illfitting uniforms, a few thousand guarded by not over a dozen Americans, generally from a well armed detail in a jeep in front and another in the rear, they straggled in. These men were from the units that were supposed to have guarded the gateways to Berchtesgaden and the areas from around Salzburg. Some few days later we were to see the lines of German Army vehicles loaded with men and some equipment, towing their own field kitchens, moving along the roads toward some PW enclosure, or stopped alongside the road for a night's bivouac or meal stop. These vehicles were transporting the men of the surrendered German Army from Western Austria and Southern Bavaria. The army that, after suffendering, was given the responsibility of moving themselves to designated locations, all handled and controlled by the unit officers. I saw columns of those vehicles; lumbering trucks, sounding like threshing machines, coughing out a cloud of deisel smoke, staff cars and volkswagen (the equivalent of our jeep), several weeks after the date of their surrender. I understood that nearly a million men in that army group had moved to our PW camps in that manner. One could tell from sound and appearance that

many of those vehicles had gone a long distance without proper maintenance. The lack of a decent light truck was quite noticeable, as there seemed to be very few of those. Their main transportation it seemed, was about a ten ton vehicle, top speed of maybe thirty miles an hour, far different than the swarms of faster, more maneuverable lighter trucks that we used for transport. Maybe they were tops in the field of track vehicles, but we certainly had them stopped when it came to trucks. Even our big heavy prime movers were faster and more maneuverable than theirs. I did see a few fire fighting trucks for airport use and radio trucks that had a number of handy gadgets that would have been appreciated in our work, but as a rule, our equipment seemed to have been engineered better, was more rugged and capable of as good or better performance. I speak now particularly of communications equipment, as it was in that field that I was able to see and judge the comparative workings of each.

As a "fighting unit" it seemed that we had seen our last days, for the present at least. With our trucks gone, nothing within range that we could hit with our guns except now peaceful towns, civilians that seemed to want to be friendly, but were prevented by the "non-fraternization" rule, it left us without much to do, except guard our battery area to see that we were not looted of eatables and equipment by those friendly civilians, wonder why the 22 hour curfew had been lifted by the 3rd. Division, under whose Military Government this area had fallen, keep our existing telephone lines in order to the battalions, send in reports and begin to wonder when we could ever get our equipment straightened out. We were busy, but busy in a far different manner than formerly. It seemed as though we were doing nothing.

Capt. Anderson ran across a gold mine one day, bringing back a case of 120 size camera film made by the German Voightlander firm. It was all fresh stuff and he allowed everyone having a camera that could use that

film to help themselves. I got ten rolls and then a few days later, eight rolls that I had ordered through a GI shopping bureau in Paris last December (and now it was the 5th. of May) came in by mail. Then I really had film. It came in handy sometime later though.

We had sent an advance party forward in the area east of Salzburg on the morning of the 5th. comprised of the usual staff officers, from our Headquarters and the two battalions, to see about getting into either St. Gilgen or St. Wolfgang, two of the most famous resort towns of the Austrian Alps area, both of which were located on St. Wolfgang See about 24 Kilometers east of Salzburg. It was known that we would have to be moving further east in a short time and the Colonel figured that either of those places would be fine for a semi-permanent setup, due to the recreation facilities and the scenery.

The night of the 5th. Capt. McCory, our air officer, who had been flying over our advance column east of Salzburg, returned with the news that the party had been ambushed and taken prisoners by a party of SS Troops, one man killed and several wounded, the most serious of whom was the CO of one of our battalions. The man killed was our interpreter, Corporal Bix who had been operating the radio that I usually worked when I went on those parties. Who knows, if our 1st. Sgt. had not been on leave at the time so that I had to remain back at the rear area as acting 1st. Sgt., it could have been me that got it instead of Bix. One never knows about those things however. The one bright spot in the story was that the army was scheduled to accept the surrender of all German forces active in the Austrian and Bavarian sectors on the following day and we hoped that our men would be turned loose by noon of the 6th. when the surrender was to become effective.

It was late in the evening of May 6th. when the party returned to Bad Aibling and we got the entire story from Capt. Anderson. The advance

party had been split up with the Captain taking a jeep ahead to reconnoiter the route. Previous to this, they had met and disarmed several small detachments, piling their arms into the jeep, they came into a camp containing about fifty men and demanded that they surrender. All went well until the SS Captain came on the scene and yelled them into becoming belligerant, taking Capt. Anderson and his driver prisoner, the SS Captain took over the jeep for his personal use. Alerted in this manner, the detachment figured that more Americans must be following, so they set up an ambush where the road wound through a narrow canyon, catching the remainder of the party in a bad cross fire as they came through. I saw the scene later and can't see how they failed to inflict more damage than was done, due to the terrain and their own advantage of surprise. Colonel White, the CO of the 203th. FA Battalion realized the hopelessness of the situation and not being desirous of endangering the lives of the men with the surrender scheduled on the following day, surrendered the party.

All the men and officers were taken to one of the nearby towns and held under guard until just before noon on the 6th. when they were released. None of them were mistreated in any way, except Capt. Anderson who was pushed around a little by the SS Captain. Part of that was laid to the fact that his jeep contained several Lugers and other pistols taken from the detachments encountered before the big one. If there was one thing the SS didn't like, it was our having their arms in our possession.

We had received orders for the Group to move forward as soon as our trucks returned from their detached service, so we began readying for that. Incidently the trucks returned the night of the day the move order was received, so we were scheduled to push out at 0900 hours on the morning of the 7th.

During our taking over of towns during the part short period we had become the possessors of two pretty decent civilian type cars, originally

the property of military commanders. One was a 1939 Buick sedan and the other a Mercedes sedan, both of which were in good condition. We intended to keep them both if possible, but especially the Mercedes, as the Colonel expected to turn in his Ford staff car and use the Mercedes for his personal use. On the morning of our move, when things had progressed to the point where I could leave Bad Aibling and go forward, I took off in the Mercedes with the Colonel's driver. The car really ran good, as smooth as a feather bed over the roads, and would have gone as fast as a plane if we had wished it that way.

Our route led down the autobahn nearly all the way, except for several places where bridges had been blown up over canyons. There were detours around these places, and at one of them where the bridge had been about 200 yards in length over a canyon possibly 200 feet deep the detour was about five miles in length. Not far out of Salzburg, we ran into trouble at an MP check station handled by XV Corps men. They stopped us because we had not gotten a 7th. Army permit for the Mercedes and no civilian type cars could be operated without it. Well we hadn't had the chance to get it before making this trip and I personally hadn't known about the regulation. They pulled us off into a parking lot filled with other cars like ours. We could get the car back if we got temporary permit from Corps and they would keep it there until we returned, (so they said). We flagged one of our trucks down and rode on into Wals, a little community about three miles out of Salzburg, where our new position was to be. The driver got a ride on into Salzburg and got a permit, returning to the MP station to get the car. It wasn't there and no one could give an explanation as to its disappearance. When the Colonel found out about it, things really began to pop and I guess he went clear on up to the top about it, because a few days later, he had a beautiful Maybach touring car for his own use. It was as long as a freight car with a motor as sweet running as a watch.

I guess he was well pleased with the trade, but no one ever did come through with an explanation as to where the Mercedes had gone.

Our deal at Wals was pretty good. We had an old hotel that housed a number of the men, provided dining room and kitchen space out of the weather and enough houses so that every section had plenty of room in nice quarters. The place assigned to Battery Headquarters was a six room, two story cottage, built in 1937 according to a sign over the front door. Age didn't mean so much however, as there was no running water in the house, the closest being at the horsetrough about 100 feet distant, also the toilet facilities were about the same distance in another direction. Aside from that small trouble it was fine, we had a kitchen that we used for the office and a bedroom adjoining that we used for sleeping. Incidently one of the beds was just about long enough for me to use without having to double up in. The house was also quarters for message center, several drivers and motor messengers.

Somehow in the shuffle, we had become the guardians of two or three Belgians, a couple of Poles and three or four Russians, the latter of which were girls. These had all been slave laborers used on the farms nearby and now that the Germans no longer had any authority over them they came under us. They worked as kitchen help, washing clothes and mending them for some time, until the Army got their displaced persons replacement deal working and then they were taken away for transportation back to their homeland. As I remember, it was nearly six weeks before the last of them were removed, even then we had three or four girls helping in the kitchen, as table waiters when I left to return to the States. Those were girls who had married German soldiers and no longer could, or didn't want to, return to their original homes. I believe they received their food and a small payment for their work. I know that one of them had all the washing she could take care of besides getting in a little ironing of

clothes once in a while, using a couple of electric irons belonging to the outfit for that.

A few days after arriving at Wals, a trip was arranged to visit Berchtesgaden and Hitler's layout there. I jumped at the chance to go because I had received word that I was elegible for one of the rehabilitation leaves that were being inaugerated. While there was no actual choice by the individual, I had the chance of getting to Nice, Nancy or Paris. Of course I preferred Nice, because it offered the longer stay, seven days, as against four for Nancy and three for Paris, also we would be taking the train for Nice at Nancy so I could see no advantage in a leave there.

We left Wals at noon in two trucks containing about twenty men for Berchtesgaden. I had three cameras with me, the 35millimeter Leica, the fast Arham and my little Kodak that used the 120 film. Our route led us through Salzburg and on up the valley of the Salzach river for several miles. The water in the river was a beautiful apple green, broken in many places by streaks of white, caused by rapids or shallow places. The hills sloped down to the road, which sometimes was cut back into the banks because of the narrowness of the canyon, covered with evergreens and patches of green sod, with here and there some flowers showing up through the green. Occastonally we would see, high up on the sides of a hill, some small chalet, white in color, except for the natural finish wood gable ends, or small overhanging balconies. It was along here that I longed for the first time for colored film in the Leica instead of the black and white. It was really beautiful, and what was more, quite peaceful in appearance.

The road climbed steadily, but not so steep but that the trucks could pull in high gear except for a few sharper pitches. Finally, after a run of about eighteen miles we arrived in the village of Berchtesgaden, a colorful medium sized village built in the bottom of the valley. The

streets, some of which were of stone blocks, resembling cobbles, except that they gave a smooth surface, were quite narrow, the buildings in many cases overhanging the sidewalks, which were only about two, or three feet in width at the most. In one place we had to navigate a narrow gate, originally one through a wall from its appearance. There were buildings on either side of it so I could not tell if it had been part of a continuous wall or not. I do know that it didn't offer any too much for our big truck.

Contrary to belief, Hitler's chalet was not located at Berchtesgaden, but on up a steep winding road several miles in length leading to the top of the ridges east of the village. In places this road was paved in rough stone blocks, chiefly on steep curves and extra steep pitches. Except for those places it consisted of a well graded, banked on the turns, macadam and concrete highway about 24 feet in width. From the location of the stone patches I believe that it was to give a more certain traction in bad weather.

It took about 30 minutes to climb the road from the village to the entrance to the chalet area where we left the trucks. A single track paved road led in through a small gatehouse from the highway and climbed gradually for about one hundred yards to a point where it doubled back on itself and pitched rather sharply uphill. From that point to the chalet itself was only about fifty yards. The scene all around here was one of destruction, evidences of fire were visible in some of the dwellings, all of which looked as though they had been hit by a hurricane, bomb craters were everywhere, the trees were bare of leaves and many of them remained only as broken chunks of limbs or trunks. The bombing given to the place by the British a few days previous had certainly hit the spot so to say. I first went to the chalet, as it seemed to offer the best sight. It had been entirely gutted by fire however and there were no signs of the furnishings or decorative scheme visible. There were guards stationed at stairways leading to a downstairs section so there must have been something there

that was undamaged and presented something of value. I would like to have gone there, but no chance. The main room of the chalet was about thirty by fifty feet with a ceiling some twelve feet high. A small stage had been located at the inner end of the room and the other contained the famous front window that was always featured in the pictures. It of course was gone, the intense heat had melted it, but it had been on the automobile window sort, so it could be let down into the wall underneath for closer communing with nature. At this window, the floor level was a good fifteen feet above the ground, due to the steep slope of the hill where the building sat. The window opening was at least 11 feet high and fifteen or eighteen feet in width, and looked out over a beautiful valley several miles in width from peak to peak. I can say this of the "old boy", he could appreciate scenic beauty. Far in the distance we could see a portion of the village of Berchtesgaden, the houses appearing as flyspecks on the green and brown background around it. Further away, on the sides of the hills we could make out tiny ribbons climbing around the steep sides. These were roads that led here and there to the houses perched around on the mountains. I took pictures with all three cameras from out that window including a couple from back inside, so that the window could frame the scene. Later I found that they all had come out fairly well.

Hobert Skofield and I wandered around over the ruined chalet looking for anything of interest, for some time, but aside from wondering what it had really looked like in its best, we could tell nothing. Parts of the upper floor (there had been three stories over a part of it, including the basement wing, which we understood had housed the kitchen) were inaccessable due to broken and tumbled masses of masonry. I would say that the outside overall length of the chalet must have been close to 100 feet, with an extreme width of about sixty feet. That width of course, only was at the point where the large main room had been, the rest of it was about

thirty feet in width. That was about all the impression we could get of the size, because the western portion of it had been hit by an explosive, probably a bomb, that tumbled it apart. Alongside the place was a huge door made of steel that would have opened up into the hillside if we could have persuaded the guard to let us in, but he wouldn't and the information he would give us, was that there wasn't a thing back there. Guess he didn't want to be asked a lot of questions, or perhaps even he didn't know.

We climbed on up over the hill stopping often to look back around at the damage inflicted by the bombing, and to catch our breath. It was quite a drag for us, unaccustomed as we were to mountain climbing at that altitude. There were sentry boxes all over the place, with communications cable conduits spiderwebbed here and there. We could trace that by their being torn out in places. About a quarter of a mile over the hill from the chalet had been three huge barracks laid out in a U shaped figure. Remains of huge camouflage nets hung from their roofs as well as from two other huge buildings nearby. The three in the U shaped formation we were told, had been barracks for the soldiers making up some of the guard detachment. One of the other huge buildings had been a hotel for the very minor visitors, while the other big place had been for the special SS detachment assigned to guard Hitler. We knew that from the Runic emblems still attached over the doorway. I don't know how many men the SS Barracks would have held, we didn't enter it, but judging from its size, compared to our US company barracks that held about 120 men without undue crowding, I would estimate its capacity at around 400. The other three were even larger, so there must have been close to 2000 men there when the barracks were all full. Signs of looting were everywhere. Outside the hotel we saw pieces of lamp stands, furniture and clothing. Occasionally German civilians, generally women, would pass, burdened down with everything from soup to nuts and furniture. They were checked by guards further down the hill who

removed anything of military value from their loads. I saw one guard remove a bottle of Schnapps from the load carried by one husky female. Of course that might not have had a military value but was put to use by the military.

Hobart and I decided to hike over to a hill lying across a shallow valley in front of the chalet to try for some pictures. It was the point from where most of the publicity shots had been taken of the chalet, but it was so far away that the pictures we took from there did not show much detail. All around the area, away from where the bombs had destroyed them, were winding walks, paved and camouflaged by green coloring, passing through clumps of trees wherever possible to confuse and break up the pattern from the air. Every two hundred yards along the walk were benches, some located right at the walk's edge, others as far as fifty feet above it. All the benches were located so the view could be best seen from that point. It seemed as though it were the site of a beautiful party instead of the stamping grounds for a bunch of troublemakers.

On our hike back to the meeting point where we were supposed to rendezvous for our return to Wals, we looked over what had been a finely constructed three story dwelling house. It was quite beaten up and most of the fixtures had been removed, but there was enough left to get a good idea of what it had been. All the finish carpenter work was excellently done, in a sort of open grain light colored hard wood. I couldn't figure out what it might have been though. The walls had all been covered with tapestries, but they were gone. I could see edges of it, where they had been ripped away however. It looked like good material, although I am no expert on such things. I saw one or two electrical fixtures, pretty well damaged, but it seemed as though they had been of the very best. In one of the several bathrooms I saw a beautiful lavatory that was undamaged. I would really have liked it for my own house but I thought it was a little

too big for loot.

Due to our taking that hike over the hills to take pictures, we didn't have enough time to make any more of a tour around the chalet area. Some of the fellows that did get around a little more, found an underground apartment building several stories deep, all under the ground. It had been pretty well damaged but it still had furniture and some of the furnishings remaining. A few of the men that got down into it came out with some pieces of linen. They said everything was of the finest material and make. I don't think that those were used by Goebbels or any other special visitors that frequented the place because their private dwellings were on the hill side not too far from the chalet. One of the bad things about our visit there was that no one was around who actually knew where each place was and who had used it, with the exception of Hitler's chalet, we all knew where it was.

In spite of not being able to get much first hand information about the various buildings there, I was appreciative of the chance for the visit as the chalet and its surroundings had been so highly publicised. I imagine that the area covered by all the buildings was around fifty acres but on the hills below this main community we could see what appeared to be stables, or sheds for storing military equipment, and more dwelling houses. They were in all likelihood connected with the chalet in some way or other.

We did not have time to get on up the hill to the famed "Eagles Nest", Hitler's lookout point, situated on the highest peak around. It was only a mile or two further, but none of us knew much about it and there wasn't enough time to make a thorough reconnaisance of the chalet area and then get on up to the retreat. I got a chance sometime later to talk to Sgt. Miller, who went up there on a trip when I was at Nice and he was able to get to the Eagle's Nest.

At a point several hundred feet below the crest of the hill where the retreat was located, there was a tunnel door opening into the mountain.

The road ran back into the tunnel to an elevator (which was sealed off and guarded) that in normal times was used to carry persons to the top. In addition there was a trail winding around the hill nearly one half mile in length that had to be used at this time because the elevators were not operating. All up the elevator shaft were different floor levels, probably used for sleeping, no one knew for sure about that though. I don't remember all the details about the house on top, but it contained a huge dining or conference room with a great oval table in the center. All the woodwork was as near perfect as it could be, but in spite of its perfection, it was plain. Much of the exterior walls were of glass and the view, in all directions was beyond description.

Our group reassembled and made the return trip to Wals without seeing any other things of interest except another chance to see the scenery along the Salzach River above Salzburg.

A day or two after my trip to Berchtesgaden I was told that I would leave for Nice on a certain day, I don't remember back that far about dates. History always did slay me. Sgt. Rios, who had been my wire Sgt. for nearly four years, and I, would go from the group and I would be in charge of fifteen men from our two battalions. The trip was to begin by truck to Nancy and from there to Nice by train. Capt. Anderson allowed us three full days for the ride to Nancy and we were due to leave there on the morning of the fourth day after leaving Salzburg. That was fine, because there was always the possibility of vehicle trouble on such a long journey. (It was slightly over 400 miles.) Then too, he thought we might like to have a little time in Nancy if the truck didn't give any trouble.

Sgt. Miller had returned from Nancy where he had been on a four day recreational leave, about the eighth of June, altogether he was gone from the battery about twelve days during which he was in Nancy about eight. There had been some delay in getting out because of transportation. The

night he returned we opened up the bottle of champagne that Capt. Anderson had given me back at Arget and feasted on it and sandwiches made of lobster and crab paste from a package that had come for him while he was gone. That bottle of champagne was to have been broken open on the night of VE day but I decided to wait for his return, so it was a couple of days late.

We left Wals about 0800 hours on June 13th. in a 6X6 truck with four days C rations and either a sleeping bag or a couple of blankets per man. Luckily it was good weather because the truck did not have the top bows in it, consequently there would have been some wet passengers if there had been rain. Our route led us back along the autobahn plus all of its detours to a point near Stuttgart where we had to forget about any of the more respectable sort of roads for some time. The leg of the autobahn leading north from a point south of Stuttgart was entirely closed. But we got into the city OK, filled up with gas at a transient fuel dump and then spent some valuable time finding our way out via a secondary highway. I managed to get a couple of pictures of the Stuttgart Cathedral, which appeared to be undamaged, although much of the area nearby was completely smashed by bomb raids.

The highway leading from Stuttgart to Heilbronn had been hard hit and added to that, we got off the main traveled road and hit one stretch that was nothing but one way (used by two way traffic) and decrepit bridges over a sizeable stream. I remember crossing one that weaved and swayed as though its time was at hand, but it remained standing after we crossed. I was relieved that the truck had no tarpaulin on it when we got out on the bridge and saw how bad it was. If it had caved in, the men would have had such a better chance of getting clear the way it was. I passed through the same way two months later and that particular bridge was down and had been replaced by a more solid engineer built one. Whether it had given way accidently, or been done away with, I didn't find out.

We arrived in Heidleburg at dark, hoping to find a place to stay for the night at the Red Cross there, but except for getting some welcome coffee and doughnuts, the stop was a failure. No room for combat soldiers on their way to the rear areas. At least that seemed to be the idea. There were too many echelon men stationed around there for us. About the best information we could get was for us to continue on until we hit a huge transient depot operated by the Rear Service Command Headquarters.

They said we would get put up there in good quarters and be able to get a good meal. That sounded good, but its one thing that I never forgave a certain Red Cross girl for. After a half hour drive we came to the right place but it was far from the way it had been described to us. They did not serve meals, except to unit personnel, although there was a dining room as large as a good sized barracks, the only place that we could sleep was on the slatted floors of a tent. That was our reception, which would not have been so bad if the little girl back in Heidleburg had not given us such a rosy picture of it. We decided to go on, at least we could always sleep in some field, which wouldn't have been any worse than those tent floors.

It was so dark when we arrived in Heidleburg that I couldn't get much of an idea of the town but it seemed to follow the pattern of all German towns. Streets not too wide, paved with stone blocks and macadam, lined with shade trees here and there. It was in a valley with the river on the lower side and the upper side being built on successive layers one over the other as the town had stretched out. The road that carried us through the main portion of town, was only one street from the river front, so it ran on a level from one end to the other. I looked for some sign of the University but couldn't see anything of it. All along the river just before reaching town, it was bordered with trees leaning out over the water which ran without too much current. It would have been an ideal spot for boating

and I guess that was one of the student recreations during their spare time before the war.

It was nearly 2200 hours when we arrived in the outskirts of Mannheim, where we saw some guards at a big building. I had the truck stopped and went to investigate the chances of holing up for the night. It turned out that the house was the headquarters for some special rear detachment, most of whom were gone at the time. The staff sergeant remaining in charge let us use all the available beds and floor space there was. One thing about it was that it was warm and we had running water to wash in. Also, even though some of us slept on the floor, it had rugs on, so we made out pretty well. I know that all of us were pretty tired after riding over the rough roads that we had for more than twelve hours.

The next morning we got away early and managed to get some coffee at a transient truckers' mess not far from Mannheim. That, and some C ration biscuit rations made a filling breakfast. Our road didn't let us see a great deal of the city, but nearly all the area that we did pass through was a mass of rubble. I don't know whether all of it was as bad, but I don't believe it was because there wouldn't have been any city left at all if it had been. The road passed through stone and rubbish stacked up higher than the truck sides. Evidently it had been cleared away just enough for a passable two-way thoroughfare, because all in behind that was still just a tangled mess of wreckage. The bridge across the Rhine, which was about 150 yards wide at that point, had been built of wood timbers by our engineers. Upstream from it a short distance, were several of the large motor propelled river barges, one or two of which were sunk, or partially so, only being kept in sight by resting on the steeply sloping river bank.

We were now in the fine farming country of Germany, between the river and the mountains on the west. Here it was perfectly level. Fields of beets, hay, clover, garden vegetables, grapes and small orchards covered

the area on both sides of the road for several miles until we began to climb up out of the valley. Now the scene changed to one of nothing but vineyards and a few orchards. Even being so far above the river level the soil was a sandy, easily worked loam, a good thing, because all I saw there to pull farm implements were some horses now and then. About the middle of the morning we came to the mouth of the pass leading from Kaiserlautern and were on the same road that we had traveled in March when the XV Corps broke through to the Rhine plain. This was familiar territory. The spot that had been a scene of wreckage where a German column had been shot up and dozens of horses were wandering around among the dead ones, was all cleaned up and hard to recognize now. We made good time and were down near Saar Bruken a little before noon, where we nearly got lost. In fact, after we crossed the Saar River into France and the French section of the city, there were no good road signs and we took off on the wrong tangent. It took the efforts of a couple of French Gendarmes to get us on the right road headed for Nancy.

We could have taken a road to Nancy from Dieux Ponts that led through Saarguemines but thought it was closer by going a little further west and then dropping down by Saarbruken. It was a good idea, but we lost some little time by doing that, because none of us were familiar with any of that route until after we got down into France a little distance, and all the road signs had been torn down around Saarbruken.

One thing that we all noticed, was the terrible condition of the roads in France. I lay that to the heavy traffic that went over them during the winter season when the frost was in the ground. It seemed to have given away underneath the pavement, which then went completely to pieces. Sections of the road that I know were in fair condition in February, were now entirely unpaved and gangs of German PWs were working on them to keep them in somewhere near passable condition.

It became dinner time before we were able to reach Nancy, so it was necessary to make a "chow stop", which was done in a small French village, more or less scarred by war. One of our passengers was a Frenchman whom we had picked up at our breakfast stop in Mannheim on his way to Nancy and he busied himself in going around with his canteen, offering everyone a drink of his wine. It was as sour as vinegar, but we all told him how good it was. That seemed to please him immensely, but I think we were all glad that the canteen wasn't too large.

We reached Nancy about 1430 hours and went to the depot to check on the train to Nice. They didn't seem to know much about it, hadn't received any orders as yet, so naturally the individuals in the Rail Transportation Office were as dumb as posts. Then I went looking for a Housing Officer, so we could all get put up at some transient quarters until our train left. We were in luck, got assigned to rooms, four men to a room, in the University of Nancy, a huge, rambling four story building about a mile up the hill from the main portion of the city. It was much better than we had expected, after our experience in Mannheim and Heidleburg. The bunks had straw ticks on them, but some of us at least knew the trick of making them as comfortable as a Beauty Rest mattress. One learns that after he sleeps on one of them for a time, as we did in Ireland. For messing, we went back downtown to a transient mess hall, staffed by civilian French and German PWs for the dirty work. Pretty and semi-pretty French girls waited on the tables, the main service being cafeteria style, but they took care of the coffee, water and clearing away of dishes. I feel safe in saying that nothing less than 2000 men went through the place for each meal. It was only for unattached personnal, passing through, and every man was checked for credentials, being turned back if it seemed that there was a place for him to mess in or near Nancy.

The following day, Rios and I walked over the greater part of the town and did a good deal of window shopping. There was quite a bit of stuff

displayed, but all at a good stiff price. We were hanging on to our money, for the chance of spending it later, so they didn't get much out of us.

Our train was to leave the station at 0430 hours, so we all got up about 0300 hours and went down to the station. The train pulled in about on time, but didn't leave until about 0515. It turned out that it was made up in Aachen and picked up men there, at Luxumbourg and Nancy. Altogether there were about 40 cars of all descriptions and ages on the train, hauling around 1200 men and officers. We got spotted in an ancient 3rd. class German coach, wooden seats and all the rest of the discomforts imaginable. We didn't mind any of them however, as we were all headed for a vacation and thought we could stand anything. This particular coach was in two compartments, each of which would seat about 15 or 20 men, but most of the others on the train were the small compartment style with doors opening from the sides onto a narrow running board alongside the coach. Those compartments held eight men if it were a single one and 16 if double. The first trouble came after a short stop at some junction and not long after we started again, we became aware of a peculiar sound from our car. We investigated and found that the brakes had locked on one truck at that stop and the wheels were not turning, but just sledding along the rails. We finally got the train stopped and they got that fixed, bled the brake valve somehow and we went on.

We could not leave the sights of war, even here, because all of this area had been covered by fighting at sometime or other since the landings in Normandy, either by some of the 3rd. or by the 7th. after its landing on the southern coast of France. True it was not like the ruins that we had seen so much of, but showed up through blasted bridges, railroad and highway, bombed and machine-gunned locomotives, sometimes with hundreds of yards of burned out cars still standing behind them on some section of track. At one place near Dijon, we passed a yard that must have held well

over one hundred torn and rusty locomotives, all of which had evidently been pulled in from some other place, where they had been caught by planes and fired upon. Some of them only had a few cannon or bullet holes some place through the boiler or cab, others were a complete wreck, cabs gone, boilers a mess of piping and rust, some were all muddy, as though they had been derailed in some marshy place. This yard held more, and worse damaged engines than the one back near Toul, that I had passed several times going to Verdun for Signal supplies.

At times when we passed over one of the badly damaged bridges and happened to be hanging out of the carriage somehow to see the passing country, it was quite a shock to have the rails and ties drop out from under you as suddenly as they could, giving the impression that there was nothing under whatsoever. That was caused by there not having been a complete trestle built over many of the canyons after the original bridges had been destroyed. Instead piles had been driven immediately underneath the rails to support the cross ties and that was all. I noticed the train slow down whenever it came to one of those kind of bridges and after I had taken a first hand look at one as we passed over it, I knew why.

The signal system, alongside of ours, seemed to be quite antiquated, being of the lever controled type. At every station, dozens of steel wires ran out alongside the tracks, gradually dropping to one or two, even those disappearing finally at some signal post a good distance from the station. I wasn't quite able to understand the complete long range system, as it seemed to me that it couldn't have been very dependable. However I read some statistics showing that before the war, France had had some of the fastest short run trains in existence, over these same lines. So I probably didn't get the complete picture. One of the pictures that I did get was of some very dirty enginemen every time that another locomotive passed us, or we them. I suppose they burned soft coal and briquets, firing with a

shovel and it seemed as they didn't know what water was, from the looks of their faces.

Sometime in the middle of the afternoon we stopped on a siding near a large transient messing set up. It had to be large to feed the mob that piled off the train for chow and to wash up. As I remember it, we were there about one and one half hours and were served a good hot meal, with seconds if one wished to go back in line for it. There was even a mess hall so we could sit down and eat. We didn't have to use our mess kits either, trays were provided and PWs to wash them. It appeared that some of the stories that we had heard of this rest area deal were going to turn out OK. I don't have the slightest idea of where we were but it was called "Merrie Messing Center" and was operated only to service the trains carrying men to Marseilles for embarking and to Nice for rest furloughs. Of course most of us still had a few C rations left in our bags someplace, and had been working them over whenever someone thought about eating, but all of us were hungry enough to take on a complete meal, especially when it could be had with so little effort on our parts.

It is not too difficult to describe the terrain over which we passed, down to this point, because it resembled so closely the miles of rolling hills covered with evergreens or scrubby trees of unidentified variety, or orchards that we had passed through between Normandy and the Rhine River, that it seemed as though we had been here before. However, shortly after leaving the messing center, we began to parallel a wide smooth river, the Rhone it turned out to be. Like all the other large rivers in Europe that I saw, flowing through semi-flat land, this one had wide sloping banks, covered with grass and trees, almost always sloping up to pasture or farm lands above it. Here and there though, it ran through heavily wooded places, where the trees formed a tangle down to the water's edge. The fishing must have been good along it, because we saw a good many

fishermen, or would-be ones, along its banks. It is true that I didn't see anyone carrying home a large string of pan fish, but then one can't expect to see so much when he is just passing through.

It must have been about five o'clock when we came to a large city. It turned out to be Lyons, among the largest in France. Of course we were delayed in the yards for some time, but finally got the green light and pulled on into the station, where we stopped again, probably for orders, as none of us on the train had tickets for Lyons. It did look like quite an interesting place however. Some enterprising Frenchman did a land office business for a few minutes, in selling soda water from a small traveling stand at the station. I guess it was far from what the boys figured it should taste like, but they bought the old man out, before the train pulled away at that. I was quite interested in looking over a sleeping coach belonging to the Continental equivalent of our Pullmans. I remember the name "Wagon-lit" painted on gold letters over a blue background, on a big long heavy looking coach, heavily glassed in; through that wide expanse of glass I could see a luxurious interior that I would like to have made a better acquaintance of, especially that night when we all tried to sleep in our compartment. Alongside our old wreck of a third class coach, it looked like heaven, but we soon forgot about having seen it. Such things were not for soldiers to ride in. We thought we were lucky not to be riding in some "forty and eight" pullmans, although there was almost one on the train. It was a baggage car, minus any seats of course, but the several fellows in it had picked up a few bed springs someplace and had it pretty comfortable, much more for sleeping than the rest of us did in the coaches.

As we pulled out of the city, the train passed over the river and I was able to get a good camera shot upstream, that showed several smashed bridges, one after the other, lying as they were left when first blown up.

Soon after leaving the more densely populated area surrounding the city, we started down a narrow canyon, the walls of which were of sandstone. Here and there were small cleared places holding a house, out buildings and generally some fine looking gardens, full of vegetables, probably being grown for trade in the city. Except for the highway, also following this narrow valley, the frequent clearings and occasional hills given up to farming, there was little to see through here, although it was quite different from what we had been passing through or over during the rest of the day. It became dark while we were still in the valley, so I don't know what kind of country the train passed into when it left there.

All of us in our compartment were able to get some sort of sleep that night, even if it was makeshift. One of the fellows climbed up over the seats and bedded down in the baggage rack. It was all right for him, as he was small, but the rest of us used the floor and seats. At daylight when we woke up, the train was standing in the yards at Marseilles, so we were down at the extreme southern end of the journey, but still had a few miles to go eastward before arriving at Nice. I had hoped to get to see some of the Navy yards and Military installations there, but like all railroads, this one missed the things of interest and went through the older dirtier part of town.

The terrain east of Marseilles was quite hilly, with little vegetation on it, resembling greatly, much of our own southern coast of California. Here and there, were olive orchards standing in small terraced plots on the steep rocky hillsides, that looked like they were all of several hundred years old. As we got closer to Cannes, the road stayed close to the ocean, still passing through and over rocky, rough ground. Here, along the water, it was almost like the rugged coastline around Carmel and Pacific Grove. Nearly made me homesick too.

The train stopped at Cannes, where all the officers, bound for their own rest area, piled off. They were due to remain there, while the en-

listed men went on to Nice. A short time after we pulled out of the station, a Frenchman came into our car with a travelling bag full of our hotel reservations. He handed each of us an envelope (after we signed our name on a register, and paid him fifty francs) that contained a map of Nice and a description of what we might find there on which to spend our time (and money) during our stay, the rules and regulations that were to govern us during our stay, the hotel at which we would stay, our meal ticket, new clothes and PX slip and a slip that would entitle us to have our clothes pressed free at the GI plant in Nice. Maybe I have missed a few of the items that were in that envelope, but anyhow it contained everything that we would need to know initially to get started on our vacation. Even a general price list of what should be paid for wines and other drinks.

It seemed that the Army had made arrangements with certain of the establishments in Nice to keep their drinks down to a minimum price, which was posted in some of the literature. In case any of those places were found to be over charging the men, they could lodge a complaint with the management so to speak and that place would find itself closed up. The many places that had no arrangements as to price control, could charge all the traffic would bear, but the soldiers didn't have to go to them if they didn't like the prices.

We arrived in Nice about 11 in the morning, unloaded onto an embarcadero sort of place, where we listened to a greeting from the CO of the Nice Recreational Area. Then we congregated around various civilians who held up big charts with the names of various hotels on them, each of us going to the group intended for the hotel asigned on the train. Rios and I had been slated for the Regina and so found our way to that group. We had to walk about half a mile to its location, on the main street running back from the ocean. Many of the groups were taken in busses, but they went to

hotels much further away than ours. I can't say too much for our appearance while walking down the street, being all grimed up from the thirty hours ride in semi-open cars behind soft coal burning locomotives, but it didn't take long to get cleaned up after getting assigned to rooms in the hotel. Both Rios and I had included a change of ODs in our luggage, so had something clean to put on after our baths. That saved us an immediate trip to the Quartermaster depot, where we would have been permitted to exchange our old clothes for new ones.

The first thing we did after cleaning up, was to go out to the little French restaurant, (serving the French cooked GI rations), at which we were scheduled to eat our dinner. Some of the larger hotels had restaurants in them, but as ours was a small one, it was necessary to go out. It was a fair deal for chow, breakfast was served from 7 to 9, dinner from 12 to 2, and supper from 5 to 6:30. No one but soldiers could eat there, then only by using their mess cards assigning them to that particular restaurant.

From that time on, we walked miles, from one section of the city to another, from the hotel down to the beach, along the beach front for miles it seemed, then back to the hotel for a rest, or the restaurant for meals, then it was all over again. We spent some time at the Red Cross Club at the beach, which used to be the big Casino, built and operated by a Gould syndicate before the war. It was a beautiful place, rather bare of course, compared to the way it must have looked originally, but as long as there were plenty of chairs to sit on, we didn't mind. There was a "coke" bar where one could sit and guzzle "cokes" all day if he wished. The place also boasted a large dance floor and theater of average size. We saw a very good mystery drama there one evening, put on by one of the touring Special Services units.

I found out that Nice boasted of some 450 hotels, of all sizes, of which the Army had requisitioned at that time, about 80. There was one,

the Imperial, on the hill above town that was all of two blocks long and one square and had a big pillared rotunda in the center of the lower floor, that reached upwards for about four stories. It was the headquarters for the Area, so there were all sorts of information bureaus located in it, but it also quartered a good many soldiers on leave.

One night the city was visited by a good rainstorm that caught us in a theater a quarter mile from the hotel. Being old campaigners, we took off in the rain, dodging from one canopy to another and made it without getting more than slightly damp. We had made reservations for a boat trip along the shore for the next morning that was to have taken us as far west as Juan les Pins and Cannes, but when we walked over to the Port of Nice, a couple of miles east of Nice proper, the boatman wouldn't take his launch out. He said there was too much current out beyond the breakwater. I guess maybe he was right, because before the day was over, a good hard wind was blowing, that and the next day were the only ones when I saw any surf rolling in on the beach. Generally it was nearly as calm as a bathtub. The beach differed greatly from ours here in California, being of gravel, some of it as large as pigeon eggs. It lay nearly fifteen feet below the level of the promenade, which was a vantage point for spectators. At several places along the promenade, there had been bathhouses built under it, lighted from the sky by heavy glass ports in the walkway.

We did make reservations for two motor trips out of Nice that weren't canceled on account of rain or something. One was an all day trip to Grasse, the perfume making center some distance inland from the coast, and the other was through some of the famous parts of the city and then east over the Grande Cornich, (roads that had been laid out in Napoleon's time for a route through the mountains into Northern Italy).

The trip to Grasse took us out through rolling hills similar to the

area over the Casitas Pass to Ojai at home, even the growth on the hills resembled that, being low and dull in color. Here and there were small olive orchards, terraced on nearly straight up and down hills. It beat any of the lemon groves at home by far, probably because the labor was all done by hand here. At one point on the trip we saw an ancient watch tower built of stone on the top of a hill. The guide told us that it had been used in olden times for relaying warnings from the coast to the inland villages in case of an invasion by the Phoenicians or any of the old warring nations. Grasse was in the center of a flower growing area, the blooms of which were used in manufacturing natural scent perfumes. We were taken through one factory where we all had the opportunity of buying something "smelly", not unsmelt either, because we were priveleged to whiff from any one of dozens of bottles to see just what sort of smell we wanted. It was no use trying to tell from the names, because they, except in a few cases where they were the natural flower smell, didn't give the slightest indication of what they were like. We were also told of the methods used in extracting the flower oils from the blooms, which in the case of some flowers seemed to be quite exacting, using such things as beef fat to catch and hold the aroma. Some flowers were merely crushed and gently heated to drive the oil off, while others were mixed in solutions (I forget what they were) that would catch and hold it until it could be distilled off. I remember the guide telling us that in one process on a certain type of perfume how hard it was for the women working in it because they all liked to chew bits of garlic, but couldn't, because that particular perfume was capable of picking up any other odor nearby. It was all very interesting but we had to leave for the return trip to Nice which was made by another road than the one taken to get to Grasse. As to the scenery, it was similar to that seen in the morning, except for a short stretch along the ocean front. It took us through one of the quite select

residential areas of the "cote de azur" (Blue Coast) of Southern France, where in more peaceful times, the ultra rich of several countries had maintained huge chateaus.

The second trip to the Grande Cornich was rather short, being an afternoon one, and the weather favored us again, it was clear and nice. We went out on what was called the Middle Corniche, lying about halfway between the top of the ridge and the ocean. It was one of three separate roads, the lower running along the beach and the upper traversing the ridge top. At several places we could look straight down for several thousand feet into bright blue bays below us, or back along the coast to the points lying beyond Cannes. Several places the road had been tunneled through a bluff in order to get by, but on the whole it was a good paved road, as good as any of our average mountain roads. Of course it had been improved a great deal from the time that is was first laid out, but it wasn't hard to realize the difficulties that confronted them when it was first built. We stopped at one place for a rest, from where we could look up at the tiny village of Aze, built by the Phoenicians, on a small hill that dropped straight down to the water, walled around the top, seeming to be the means that kept it from breaking off in pieces and sliding down the stretch below. We were told that in all the years since it was built, there had been no supply of water there, other than what was caught from rains, or hauled in, until in the 1930's, when an American engineer managed to get a pipeline in from a spring somewhere in the hills nearby. Our return trip was back over the upper road, and from it, we could see down on the tiny village in a few more places. It looked almost doll-like from that distance and I guess maybe it wasn't much more than that from what the guide said.

Rios and I took in all the moving picture changes in the city during our stay, but were nearly obliged to go to an American show in French

dialogue before some new ones got in. We had seen them all and there weren't quite enough places so that we could go to a different one every night. One night after we had been down at the Red Cross, we decided to take one of the horse drawn cabs back to our hotel. Cost us 250 francs ($5.00), but the cabbie wouldn't give us either the horse or the carriage for that selling price. It was fun tho, even at the stickup price. We learned later that a sort of raid had been pulled on many of the cabbies in Nice, because they had been almost doublecharging. Some MP in GI clothes, together with a French Gendarme, dressed the same, started engaging cabs to take them different places, and if he quoted the wrong price, he was hauled in. It didn't take long for that racket to die a good death.

One morning we spent some time looking for a GI clothes pressing place, run by the QM and staffed by French, where we could get a real steam press job on our clothes. We walked back and forth along the street on which it was supposed to be, several times, but failed to see it. Finally we thought to ascend a flight of stairs leading up to a higher level, onto what should have been part of the railway yards and there the place was. It was a "pressed while you wait" place, but took only a few minutes. It was quite thrilling to have on a decently pressed pair of slacks again, after the weeks of wearing them with the usual barracks bag creases. We hardly knew how to act, all dressed up like we were.

The chief feature that we found so enjoyable during our stay at Nice, was the privelege of doing exactly what we wished, being able to feel relaxed for the first time in months. We could stay in bed as long as we wished, stay up as long as we wanted (or until curfew at 2 AM) and there was no "policing" of quarters or anything connected with work. Our time was our own, to enjoy as we wished. Some of our time we spent sitting in some of the many outside cafes, watching the passing parade of soldiers and French civilians. More time was spent in window shopping, but not much of it in actual shopping where the cash was laid out on the line.

Prices were high, men's shirts amounting to twenty or more dollars, women's dresses, equal to what might have cost ten dollars at home, were listed at fifty here.

Our seven days soon drew to a close and we found ourselves gathered outside the doors of the Regina Hotel one evening at 1800 hours, with our baggage, ready to hike back to the station. Our guide, who had brought us down to it, was there to see that we took the shortest route back. Arriving at the depot, we found another train, the equal of the one that brought us down, waiting for us. The car that we were put in was slightly more comfortable than the one coming down, even though it had wooden seats like the other, but was of the compartment type, holding eight men per single compartment and sixteen for the double one. To avoid over-crowding, there was only supposed to have been six men to the compartment, so we could have a bit more room for sleeping, but ours managed to have 7 men, due to one man not wishing to be separated from his own group. A couple of cases of C rations had been loaded in each double compartment for our meals (and between meals snacks) on the way back, so the hidden away cans that Rios and I had in our bed rolls from the trip down were not very important. Our rolls hadn't been disturbed during our stay at the hotel, where we slept between sheets and real covers. Early in the evening I laid claim to the baggage rack on our side of the compartment for a sleeping berth. It was about five feet long and perhaps eighteen inches wide, which wasn't too roomy, but turned out to be much more comfortable than the floor, or the seats. I got in several hours of good sleep, before the train stopped about 1:30 AM at the Merrie Messing Center, where we had another good hot meal. As I remember it they served us chicken and some of the fixings.

The return trip was uneventful, no frozen wheels on the coach or anything else. We arrived in Nancy about 12:30 PM and I had to trot over

to the quartering office to get lodging permits for my bunch. It was to be the Cite Universite again, so we had that mile hike up the hill with all our luggage. I needed a bed after all that. Even for the sleeping that I had done during the trip I wasn't feeling rested, because it had been more work to sleep than rest. I began to think that it was well worth the seven days at Nice, because it was so much labor to get to it.

I went down to the transient mess for breakfast the next morning and met one of the drivers that had brought us in to Nancy from Salzburg. They and the truck had been in Nancy all the time, reporting to the RTO for duty. It turned out that their truck had been turned in at Ordinance for some repairs and was not due out for a couple of days. Accordingly I went down to the depot office to check on it and was told that it would be a couple of days before it was ready. That was OK, it would give us a chance to rest up before leaving on the last leg of the journey. Rios and I took in all the various parts of Nancy that we had missed in our first stop-over there, even to seeing the moving picture "Wilson" that happened to be showing in one of the houses there. On the appointed day, I went back to Ordinance again, was told that it was not quite ready, some parts had not arrived for it. The depot was nearly 2 miles from the business center of Nancy and it rather wore me out making that trip down there. Besides, we were getting rather bored with Nancy and wanted to get going. I found a truck from our group that had come in to pick up some men at the Corps rest camp and they had room for about eight of my group, so it was reduced that much. Those men were quite eager to get back anyhow, because they thought they might be near the top of the list for returning home on the point system from their outfits. We took in a couple of more movies as well as an evening's entertainment in the Nancy Opera House, consisting of some good orchestra and hit music by a group of Italian musicians that had been touring the ETO under the auspices of the USO and the Army. We had seats

in the fourth tier of the place and almost needed to look straight down to see the stage, but it was a fine place as far as the music was concerned, as we could hear everything.

I suppose there were a thousand things that we could have seen there if we had been a bit more familiar with the French language, but as it was, we saw what we ran across and what others could tell us of. There were two pretty good Red Cross Clubs there and whenever we couldn't think of anything else to do, we went there for some good American coffee and doughnuts, as well as to pass some more time.

The payoff came when I went down to the Ordinance Depot again when it was supposed to have the truck done and it still had not been finished. I began to ask too many questions to suit someone and they took me out in the parking lot to see the truck. It wasn't there, we looked all over without finding it, then got in a jeep and started a wider search. Finally the missing truck was found with a load of duffle bags belonging to some company that was shipping out, using our truck to haul their baggage to the train. Things really began to hum then, the dispatcher was called in, raked over the coals for dispatching a truck that was in for repairs and then everyone from the section head down, got called on it. By that time I was merely an innocent bystander, the pot was bubbling by itself now. Anyhow they got the truck moved in and started to work on it. I was to check on it again in the evening.

I had been contacted the day before by a transportation sergeant from the 3rd. Division Ordinance who had brought three trucks into Nancy to pick up 3rd. Division men who were returning from Nice. He offered to take me and my men back to Salzburg if I wished it, as they would have some extra room. I had accepted the offer with reservations, but when I found how things were down at the Ordinance Depot, I turned it down, as it looked like our own truck would be OK about the same time the others would be leaving for Austria.

That evening I took the relief driver with me and went down after the truck. It had been reported OK after a road test so we accepted it. That is we accepted it after picking up a log chain to replace the one that had been in the truck when it was left there, also the two side plates for the hood that seemed to have been removed. I doubt that the chain or the side plates were the same ones, but they were similar items, so filled the bill.

We contacted all the men of our group and told them that we would be pulling out in the morning and for them to be ready. That was fine, all plans made and ready to be carried out. Late that evening, the regular driver came looking for me in a stew, it seemed that he had been down to the depot to see about some tools that had been in the truck, and down there they told him that the truck was to be brought back in, they had some checking to be done on it. Things didn't look so good for our leaving then, so I made a call to the 3rd. Division Sgt. and left word that we would accept his transportation the next day.

Early in the morning I went down to the depot again with the driver and found things in a real stew. It seemed that the CO of the base had gotten wind of the affair and to save possible embarassment from investigation by someone from our outfit, he ordered a complete overhaul of the truck to make sure that it was in tip top shape. It was then that I found that it had made at least one trip to Belgium and several shorter trips after it had been turned in for repair. The CO was just getting his neck pulled back in after someone else sticking it out for him. When they finished going over that vehicle, it looked like a good long job ahead for someone, so I was more than glad that I had reupped the deal for our transportation.

It was just after noon chow that we all pulled out from Nancy, divided up between the three trucks with 3rd. Division men to keep us company.

Our route was to be back through Luneville, Saarbourg and Strassbourg, to the Rhine River, then on through the Black Forest and the plains beyond to Ulm and Augsburg, where we would hit the Autobahn for Munich and Salzburg.

It was nearly like a homecoming for us to travel through the Luneville country and on through to Phalsbourg, the Saverne Pass and the city of Saverne on the Rhine plain at the eastern slope of the Vosge mountains, just north of Strassbourg. We had spent so much time near Luneville the fall before, then on up through the same general route that we were following this day, that we were kept busy picking out the few small changes, that had taken place in the seven months since we last saw it. I remember looking for the tag-ends of several wire lines I had last seen dangling down from the eves of a cottage in Marainviller, that had housed our Group CP for a couple of weeks and had been clipped off to save untying a mass of tangled wire, too short to be of any use. It was gone, I suppose some French woman was using it all for clothesline now. Buildings that showed fresh scars on the timbered frames still showed the same scars, but they were bleached out to a white color now. The change in color seemed to make it more dreary, the passage of time causing the damage to appear so much more permanent.

At the top of the Saverne Pass I saw the remains of some of the big guns that had been emplaced there to prevent us from reaching the Rhine through that gap. Their long barrels were rusty, the brown and grey paint chipped from them in large patches. To my mind there is hardly anything more lonesome than an abandoned, knocked out gun or tank. Things that can be so alive at one time, are silent and dead when abandoned.

We reached Strassbourg shortly after 1700 hours and unloaded at a 3rd. Div. transient camp, that consisted of a huge three story, old fashioned house, bare of furniture, but possessing running water in a shed outside, where we got cleaned up. Our bed rolls were laid out on the

floor, then, after breaking open a can or two of C rations, we took off for town. That meant a two mile walk before we reached the main part of it, but as Rios and I had never been there before we didn't mind, besides it gave us a chance to get the bones limbered up after that truck ride.

The huge railroad depot had been severely damaged, and showed quite a tangle of rusty iron framework sticking out from various places in the roof, but it was situated in a large square, all alone, and there was only a little damage to buildings away from it. We walked and walked, up one street and down another, looking for a movie, but the only one that we found was an all French talking one and it didn't sound interesting. A large canal wound through one section that we visited and we watched several fishermen, hoping to see them make a strike, but even that was poor entertainment, the fish just weren't helpful. By this time of course all the shop windows were tightly shuttered and whether there had been anything in the show windows to see or not, we couldn't tell. Finally decided to stroll back to the quarters and get started to sleeping, by the time it got dark. I would have liked to investigate a huge, long pile of dirt, sodded with grass and studded here and there with heavy steel doors, set in concrete frames, on the edge of the city. It had all the earmarks of an old fortress, but seemed to be out of bounds, so I didn't even get to look it over.

I got a good night's sleep on the soft (?) boards of a room on the second story of the old house and was awake soon after daylight the next morning. We had another C ration meal and hung around waiting for the convoy to leave, while one of the drivers had a flat fixed.

Everything was ready and we took off again about 1000 hours, clearing the city and crossing a section of the Rhine-Rhone Canal, which had its beginning near the city. It was as wide as the average river. In fact, I thought it was the Rhine for a few minutes, even if it did not seem to

be as wide as it had looked when we crossed it in March. A few minutes later I found out why, we came to the Rhine then and crossed on a double treadway bridge. I acted true to form and in taking some pictures with my Leica managed to leave the lens cover on for the first two. By the time I found it out we were across the bridge and I had to take them as we departed, not getting a very good shot of the river, which was about 150 yards wide and flowing a good current at this point. I did not see any of the big bridges that the Germans blew up to keep us from using, so we must have been upstream from them, as they were near the main part of the city and we went slightly south as we passed through it earlier.

Fruit trees and tree shaded yards were plentiful as we crossed the plain eastward, heading for the hills and the Black Forest. It was an agricultural section and the field crops appeared to have been good. Our journey was slowed considerably for a time by getting in behind a convoy of French Artillery moving along the road. I say French Artillery, actually it was American, pulled by American trucks and manned by Frenchmen in American uniforms and they really took up the road. French MPs were at all intersections and refused the passage of any vehicles other than their own. They helped, it is true, but from their actions there, it appeared as though they were the only ones that had anything to do with it all.

The Black Forest proved to be a disappointment in a way. The name had led me to expect huge trees, thick as the proverbial flea, perhaps it was in the day when it got its name, but now, except for a few sections where the trees seemed to be slightly larger than in others, it consisted of miles and miles of hills covered rather thickly it is true, with evergreen trees about six or eight inches in diameter. It was pretty, more from the standpoint of good forestry management than from any grandeur, but in general, it did have a certain charm. Here and there, huddled back in some tiny clearing would be seen a typical cottage, sometimes with a cow

or two feeding nearby, but for the most part, there were few dwellings. A few times we passed through a small village compactly built in the bottom of some canyon, along and around a stream. There was where we saw the livestock. Ducks and chickens took their chances in the streets along with the civilians. Here and there a team of milch cows ambled along pulling a small hayrack, or a tankful of that odorous tankage on its way to some field of vegetables, to smell up the fresh air during the time of its application and for several days after, whenever the wind was in the right direction.

I remember little of anything special during the remainder of the trip, it clouded up and gave us a thunder shower not long after leaving Ulm and we had to pull the big tarp over us for a few miles, but it soon blew away and turned cool. Then it got dark, and the trip began to be a grind, especially as we were getting closer to Salzburg all the time and wanted it to end.

We had come through the Augsburg area while it was still light and I kept a sharp lookout for trucks from the 515th. Artillery, as I had heard that it was stationed around there and wanted to try and check on it. However I saw none at all, which wasn't surprising as I learned a few days later.

It was about 2100 hours when we arrived at the Division motor pool in Salzburg and I called up our outfit at Wals, some few miles away for them to come after us, which they did soon enough to keep us from completely freezing while waiting in the cold air. Twenty one days it had been since we left for a seven days leave at Nice. A trip that might have taken twelve or thirteen days had taken three weeks, but we hadn't minded really. Transportation troubles had caused the extra delay, and actually it was no worse than some of the groups being gone for twelve days on a four day rest trip to Nancy alone. At least it was a great experience and one I

wouldn't have missed for anything.

Maj. Shaug, Capt. Anderson and Capt. McCory had left the day before we had, by car for Grenoble and Nice, but when we returned they hadn't shown up yet, so we did not seem to have done so badly. It turned out that Capt. Anderson had entered the hospital in Mannheim for an infected tooth and been delayed for several days on the return trip, so they had a real excuse, as we had with our truck troubles.

Things seemed to be rather quiet when I returned. My wire sergeant had been brought back from Lyons (where he had been on a rest leave) by plane, taken to some air field in France and presumably flown back to the States, the first man from our outfit to hit the return home on the point system. Anyhow, nothing seemed to be worrying anyone, so as soon as Capt. Anderson showed up, a few days after we returned, I asked him for leave to go and hunt up George, who was with the 515th. some place in Germany, (so I thought),whom I hadn't seen since Sarralbe in France. He had just missed me at Bad Aibling, having come into town the morning that we left there,on his way to Rosenheim, a few miles to the south where the Corps maintained a gasoline dump. He saw our trucks and asked about me, but I had already gone.

The permission was granted and I took off one morning with a jeep, driver and an interpreter. The interpreter had been the captain's idea as he wanted us to bring him back some cognac. As it turned out, the driver and I could have done as well because what we finally managed to get was potato schnapps (color of water) and we did that without his help. He took us to a place near Bad Aibling where he said we might be able to get something. It turned out to be a German farm and he knew the people there quite well, having worked for them as a slave laborer before the liberation. He was supposed to be an ex-Greek soldier whom we picked up at Wals when we took over that place, but some of us later got rather skeptical of his

stories and he finally was given his walking papers. For the present though, he was with us, as we worked our way through southern Germany, Bavaria really. At this farm, he asked for something to eat, as we dragged him out of bed without his breakfast when we left Wals. The woman wanted to know what we wanted and told him what she could give us, and all I could get from him was that she had "haun mit" and two or three other items. I decided to try the "haun mit", which turned out to be stewed chicken, evidently having been canned, laid out on a huge platter, cooked up with eggs and some sort of sauce. That with a loaf of coarse bread, tasted mighty good, even though I had eaten a good breakfast about three hours before. I'm not sure whether it was because I was slightly hungry again or because it was really good, but the three of us polished off the platter of meat and the bread. The old German woman seemed pleased that we had enjoyed her offering.

In Augsburg we failed to find a trace of the 515th. FA, so I went to the Artillery section of 7th. Army and found that they had moved ten days before to Orhlingen, up near Heilbronn. I hadn't specified when I might be back so decided to go on up there to see if we could find them. From there on, we followed the same general route that we had in going to Nancy nearly a month before, except that we tried the autobahn to Stuttgart, running into trouble, because it was blown up at every bridge for several miles below the city. We finally got straightened out, going through a few dozen small villages, each of which we had to be directed out of in the right direction, before I finally hit familiar ground. That was near the river with the very rickety bridge over it where I had expected it to fall in as we crossed it in the truck. I noticed that the old bridge was replaced by a good solid one, so maybe the old one finally gave up altogether.

We got along fine after passing the place where the bridges had been worked on and made the run into Heilbronn without any trouble. This was the same road that I had been on before, so things worked out pretty good. The

street entering the town was lined on both sides by rubble, it looked like the place had been burned badly, that plus the wreckage made it seem pretty desolate. Orhlingen was still several miles further on, so we didn't waste any time looking over Heilbronn. I snapped a picture or two as we passed some of the worst wrecked areas, but after all it was so similar to the many places that I had seen before that it was rather common.

I have forgotten the names of the two or three small places that we went through before reaching Orhlingen, but at least one of them was really wrecked. I doubt if a single building had been left unscarred, in fact scarring was the least that had happened, most of them were just skeletons of brick, stone and dust.

The first persons that I saw after pulling into the town, were Sgt. O'Banion and Minette, who had originally been with the 144th. Regiment at Ft. Lewis. We passed the time of day and they told me where I would find George, who of course was at Service Battery's area. So we back-tracked and soon found the area. George was quite busy doing nothing, but was a real surprised boy when we walked in. I guess he thought we were several hundred miles from that place. Actually we should have been, because it was close to three hundred miles from Salsburg to Orhlingen the way we had to go, on account of having gone to Augsburg first.

George got some coffee and eggs from the kitchen and fried us up a tasty dish of grub. It was really good too, because we hadn't had anything but a K ration for lunch since eating the German woman's chicken back beyond Munich. It was eight o'clock when we got there but it was still pretty light, so we were able to look around a bit before having to get a place to sleep. In that, we were lucky as several of the fellows in the outfit were away on leave, so we used their beds.

We took off for home (as it were) about 0900 hours the following morning. There was no point in remaining longer as George had work to do and it was a long run back. This time we stayed far away from Stuttgart and

went down through Schwabisch-Hall and a dozen or so smaller towns in a more or less direct line towards Ulm, where we hit the autobahn and had clear sailing on down to Munich. The interpreter thought he knew ofaplace where we could find some cognac, so instead of going straight through, we turned off. Not knowing any of the streets in that place was nearly like going into a huge warehouse when it was pitch dark, it was hard to find our way around. They ran every way and some of them were closed off with bomb rubble filling them. To make a long story short, the interpreter failed to find the cognac, as usual, and we managed to find our way back to the through route, leading to Salzburg. So far, our shopping for the captain had resulted in picking up eight bottles of potato schnapps, for eight marks a bottle. That amount would have provided lighter fluid for a good many cigarette lighters for a long time and my opinion was that it would have done a much better job in those lighters.

It was nearly 1800 hours when we arrived back in Wals and were greeted with the news that the outfit was to move the next day up beyond Salzburg, on the highway to Vienna. Things did happen fast when they happened, I'll say that much. Of course I had been away for the two days, so missed much of the packing and getting ready. When an outfit has remained in one place for as long as we had that time, it is something more than a few minutes job of getting ready to pull out again.

From what I could find out, it seemed that we were headed for a pretty good deal. In that I remained slightly pessimistic, because I had heard of good deals before, when they turned out to be just the opposite. Besides I hated to leave a place that had been as comfortable as this one had been.

Some of the vehicles left during the morning, but it was nearly 1400 hours when I finally left in a jeep with Lt. Sanders. He knew the way, which was a good thing because we also convoyed a couple of trucks and I hate to have any other vehicles along when I'm not sure of where I'm going.

We followed the autobahn for a few miles until it just naturally quit, just after passing over a long, high arched bridge that carried the road over a wide canyon. For a short distance we travelled on the graded embankment and then switched over onto the regular paved highway. This stretch of autobahn was the beginning of the one that was to have led to Vienna, but never got beyond the starting stage. I later saw a graded stretch of it ten or twelve miles ahead of that point where we left it, not far out of Salzburg.

It was eighteen miles to Thalham, which was to be our new stamping grounds and when we got there I found that my previous pessimism had been unfounded. We would be on a small lake, the Wallersee, about two miles long and half or three quarters of a mile wide. It had been a famous resort hotel area in the days before the war, but was slightly run down now. The hotel, at the upper end of the lake was three full stories high, with an extra half story, that is it was a full story high but only consisted of three rooms, whereas the second and third floors had about eight or ten small rooms on each floor. The first floor had the greatest floor space and held the kitchen, dining room and what had been the tap room. It was made into the officers' dining room. Down along some two hundred yards of lake front were several small cottages that we also had and they were assigned to the wire sections, maintenance and supply, and the dentist establishment. Myself, being in between a section and battery headquarters, had a room on the third floor together with Sgt. Miller. The climb up and down the stairs should have reduced the accumulated weight on my hips, but only seemed to increase it. All the various offices were in the hotel, so our local wire lines were short, only having to leave the switchboard and run up one or two stories and maybe the length of the building. Commercial power was available so there was no having to fuss with the power unit all the time, except when we had a picture show in the mess hall, we used the power

unit for that, because the outside power was 220 volts.

Wonder of wonders, we had maid service. I don't know what the deal was, but along with the hotel there were two or three women who kept the halls cleaned and made up the beds daily. I stood by my old sleeping bag and didn't bother anyone as far as having a bed made up. Both Sgt. Miller and I kept on using our bags and each morning would roll them up and lean them in a corner. Then we used the beds as couches to sit on during the day, provided that we were around the room any time. There was a full length balcony running along outside of the three top floors, so if we wanted a breath of air, we just wandered out to get it. Every room in the place above the first floor looked out over the lake, so I can well realize that it must have been quite famous at one time. As to facilities, there was one bathroom (with tub) and two toilets (with running water) in the entire hotel. Maybe the original visitors there kept clean by bathing. There was a large bath-house down below the hotel, part of the whole deal, but it was very badly in need of repair. We didn't need it anyhow. When the boys went swimming, they changed in their rooms.

Included in the lease, were several pretty decent row boats and two canvas kayaks. I managed to get in a little rowing at one time or another. Three or four of us might start out and row, taking turns, down to the lower end of the lake and back, or just around the upper end. The shore line sloped out quite gradually and was only four feet deep at fifty feet out. I don't know how deep the lake was at its deepest, but I doubt if it was very much.

Fishing was fair, sometimes someone would go out and get a few perch and then everyone went out to try their hands, but generally got nothing. One or two boys went poaching over on the far side of the lake, in a small stream that flowed into it, coming back with a fine mess of trout. They kept that a pretty well guarded secret however and none of the others got into that preserve.

There was one thing about it and that was that I didn't have too much to do during our stay at Thalham. My duties chiefly were to see that all the communications were maintained, switchboard operators kept on the ball and doing the things that they were supposed to at the time that they were supposed to be done, signal equipment to be checked over and all the shortages filled by requisition before the period wherein they could be charged to "combat loss" expired. We were pretty well off on our equipment and it was only a few of the small things that needed to be taken care of other than the expendable supplies. We had one line from our CP to each of the two battalions, each line being about six miles in length, another line to the air field about half a mile away, six or eight local lines, the longest being about 260 yards in length and a line that went back to Salzburg that connected us to Corps Artillery. It was of field wire for about half a mile and then went into the commercial system. None of the telephone exchanges were operating here except for military use, but for a line in the communities having doctors, that line was for use in emergencies involving sickness or some similar reason. All of the exchanges had operators who were on duty at some period of the day, but they had no real work to do, as their lines could be plugged through in nearly all cases. Of course the lines used for military use were wired around the board and the operator had no control over them. This line of ours that went back to Salzburg went through a junction box with some dozens of other lines a few miles out from the switchboard. Then it passed through three or four of the small local exchanges before reaching the big board at Salzburg. Occasionally there was trouble along it, due to other units tapping in and using a portion of the line for some of their own lines, or equipment of some sort or other running amuck and knocking a pole or two down. We spent two or three days working on a terrific hum that nearly prevented conversation over the line and finally found a pole where some outfit had used one of our wires and another one, for a line of their own. As soon as it was cut, the hum vanished

and things were rosy again. The chief trouble in looking for noises like that on such a long line was that we had no wire circuit diagram of the system and only knew the exchanges that it passed through. It was a matter of going to each exchange in turn and testing out from there.

One other line that gave us trouble once or twice was a line that ran east out of Salzburg to St. Gilgen, a village on St. Wolfgang Lake, about 25 miles east of the city. The Group maintained a rest camp there in one of the lake hotels, and the Colonel spent quite a bit of his time there, as well as some of the other officers and men. It was a beautiful spot for a vacation and I could well understand why it was called the heart of Europe's Vacationland before the war. This line of ours went in a cable from Salzburg to Bad Ischel, 50 miles east of Salzburg, then by open wire line back to St. Gilgen where it was wired past the switchboard and on up to the hotel. The line went out and I took out to repair it, but as it had been put in while I was away and the information regarding it reached me via other persons (the Sgt. who had put it in originally was gone at this time), I spent all one afternoon in a pouring rain trying to find the trouble between St. Gilgen and Salzburg. From one exchange to another I went, climbing poles at all the damaged places on the line, but every time we checked in at any place we got some other outfit. Then I went down to the main exchange at Salzburg and got hold of the wire chief, who told me that that particular line went by cable to Ischel and then reversed its route and returned to St. Gilgen. It was somewhat different than what I had been told. I was looking for a point someplace between Gilgen and Salzburg where the line passed from a cable to the open wire. It was late by this time and the Colonel was out at Thalham so I returned there myself, to go out again in the morning to fix it. Knowing what we did, we went to the exchange at St. Gilgen where we had no trouble in finding what we were looking for, then went over every foot of the line up to the hotel and finally found the trouble where the line went through the wall into the

hotel. It was a portion of the regular installation and for some reason it didn't work, so we ran wire of our own into it and our troubles were over.

So many stretches of the existing lines had been damaged and repairs to them had only been what was necessary to get rapid communications through, that they did not hold up too well as a semi-permanent job. By now it had been over two months since we had those lines in use and they were needing some maintenance at times, due to the almost constant rain fall. I liked that sort of work, even in the bad weather, because the country was so pretty and I never tired of travelling through it. One road that we used to reach St. Gilgen passed through the village of Mondsee and skirted the lake of the same name. It and the surrounding area have been mentioned in articles in the National Geographic Magazine, depicting resort life in the Salzkammergut, which is the name give to this area in the heart of the Austrian Alps. Incidently the name means "Salt crown land" from the many salt mines scattered through it.

The day that we finished repairing the line at the hotel in St. Gilgen, we spent the remainder of it out on the lake in the motor boat. It was the first time that I had had the opportunity of being out on that lake, never having enough time before to do it. I heard after leaving Austria for my return home, that the King of Belgium had been staying in one of the hotels at the upper end of the lake and that had been the main reason that our group and the battalions had not moved up there when we left Wals and went on up to Thalham. All I can say is that it would have been a real treat if we had been able to have been there, but as it was I enjoyed myself in the places where we were sent.

On top of a hill in the center of Salzburg was a huge fortress-like building that I always wanted to visit, but as it was occupied part of the time by Division Headquarters, or so I heard, I never went up to it. After returning home I ran across an article in the Geographic that mentioned it.

The place was built several hundred years before and had been occupied by the various Archbishops that ruled Austria, or the country surrounding Salzburg, up until the latter part of the Nineteenth Century. When it was first built, there had been no road up to it, but in later years a small inclined railway, powered by one mule, had been built up the side of the hill, to carry supplies to the dwellers there. Then later a winding road had also been put in and I suppose it served them more than the railway did. I was able to get one or two pictures showing it fairly well, but it was situated so that a good view was impossible because of the congested area around the foot of the hill. The group of buildings surrounding Mozart Place, a cathedral, theater and an opera house, as well as several others, none of them small, prevented a close view of it from one side, while the Salzbach River and other buildings, all built on winding streets, closed off the other approaches.

We were quite excited one evening by the rumor that about fifteen or more of the high point men from Group Headquarters were going to get sent home on points. That was enough to start more rumors, as there were quite a number of us that had well over 80 points. I had over ninety, so thought that I might be one of the lucky ones. It turned out that all the rumors were true, seventeen men would leave on the ninth of July from the Salzburg airport. I was among the top number on the list. From then on work was out of the question, we couldn't settle down enough for that, even though the date was over two weeks off.

There was some signal equipment that needed to be turned in up at the big Army Signal depot near Nurnburg, so when it was ready I left in a weapons carrier with a driver to take care of it, intending to continue on and visit George over at Ohrlingen again, to tell him the big news. We had a good trip, turned in the stuff and were able to get to George's place just after dark. Again he was surprised and pleased to see us, so

much so that he fried eggs and made coffee again. The fact that we hadn't eaten since having a couple of K rations for lunch had something to do with that too I think. One interesting thing concerning the trip was that we passed through a couple of the villages where we had been several weeks before, just after the drive down through Nurnburg. It looked quiet and peaceful now, all the more so because we knew that there were no hidden bands of German soldiers scattered in the wooded areas along the highway, that was something that we weren't sure of in our first trip through there.

George put us up again in borrowed bunks and we had a good visit and sleep before getting ready to leave the following morning. George's outfit was busy getting ready to move too, but they were leaving for the coast of France and not home. In fact, the tractors were leaving that morning for a town north of Ohrlingen where they would be loaded on flatcars for the trip. If I had been a few days later in my visit, I would have missed seeing George there.

It was impossible to stay too long there because I was to go down through Ulm and try and find the outfit that Capt. Anderson's brother was in. The Capt. commissioned me to see if I could get his brother a pass to come and visit him up at Salzburg. He was so busy that he had been unable to get away to see the brother. I wasn't too crazy about the job because it meant going to the CO of an entirely strange outfit and requesting it. Everything turned out OK though, although we had some trouble finding the place. After leaving Ulm on the west side of the Danube River we found that the outfit was on the east side and we thought we weren't going to find a crossing until we reached the Swiss border. We finally did and arrived in the town where the headquarters were located. I didn't waste time going to the boy's battery commander, but went straight to the Battalion CO, didn't even look up the kid to tell him what was going on. To my surprise my request was OKd, so we then went to find the battery and the boy. He was pretty well surprised, but almost didn't want to go because he thought that

he might be getting on a list to go home and he didn't want to miss that. It was too late to think of starting out for Salzburg that night so we unrolled our rolls on the hall floors of the building they were using as headquarters and barracks.

Early the next morning we took off for "home", arriving there in the middle of the afternoon. We had always been accustomed to stopping at a Red Cross set up in an abandoned service station along the autobahn near Augsburg for coffee and doughnuts, which made a welcome place to spend a few minutes, especially on a cold day. However this day was cold but it turned out to be lemonade day for the Red Cross instead of coffee. That wasn't too good, but we ate doughnuts and had some lemonade anyhow. They couldn't suit the drink to the weather, because their supplies weren't that flexible, so when they were supposed to have coffee they had it and when they were supposed to have something else, they had it, regardless of the weather.

That trip, to turn in signal equipment and to see George and go on down to Ulm, covered well over six hundred miles, of which most of it was necessary. I did go about eighty miles out of my way to get to Ohrlingen, but it was worth it.

A few days after that trip, we received word that we would not leave from the Salzburg airport after all, but would leave from Munich (the railway depot) on the 4th. of July. So we wouldn't have the thrill of flying out after all. The 4th. was soon as hand, so to make sure that we would reach Munich in time, the Colonel ordered that we would leave Thalham on the afternoon of the third. The last day or so were real busy ones. We finished turning in clothes, lightening our bags as much as possible, filled out customs tags for our various pieces of semi-legal and legal loot such as pistols and cameras, and spent the rest of the time wondering if the time for departure would ever roll around.

The Colonel seemed to be genuinely sorry that we were leaving, he had

us all in the mess hall to say goodby and then shook hands with all of us. The group leaving then had been under him ever since he took over command of the Group back at Ft. Lewis in 1942.

We piled in a big truck and pulled away from the hotel shortly after noon on the trip, being buzzed several times on our trip down the autobahn for the first few miles by Capt. McCory and one of the other pilots in two of the L-4 planes. It was their way of saying"goodby" to us. It was cold, and we all rode much of the time huddled under our rain coats.

Upon reaching Munich we spent some time finding a place to bunk down, the town's official transient sleeping quarters were well filled up, so we were directed to a huge vacant building that looked inside like it might have been a music conservatory, to make ourselves a home for the evening. It was two storied in height, but each story was as high as the ordinary two story building. We "scrounged" around and found bunks of sorts to sleep in and ate some of our four days supply of C rations. The fact that we had been required to have that many days supply with us, didn't look as though it were to be a very speedy trip out to Compiegne, France, which was where our orders read for. This building that we were in was just across a semi-vacant area from what had been the huge Munich Central Depot, but it was a worse wrecked place than the one at Strassbourg. After supper Sgt. Miller and I walked down the length of the depot, which seemed to be a good quarter of a mile in length, through a part of the yards to where our train was sitting. Our fears were realized, it consisted of some forty or fifty box cars, the 40 et 8 of the German railroads. A number of the cars were filled with men, who had decided to sleep in them, rather than try and find other quarters in the city.

Well, we would have ridden in a wagon. All we wanted was to get started on our road home, and as much as we would have liked more comfortable accomodations, even these looked good to us, considering what they meant. The next morning we rode down the streets of Munich in style in our truck

for the last time, and unloaded in the yards near the train. Valenzuela, our driver had been prevailed upon to stay over for the night so we wouldn't have to walk down with our gear in the morning. It wouldn't have taken too much for him to have gotten on the train for a ride home too, as several of the men on it would be going back to Santa Barbara and it made "Val" pretty homesick.

Our group of men were assigned to two different cars, adjoining each other in the train. Our car had twenty-five men in it and all our bags and rations. It left just enough room so that we could all stretch out flat when it came sleeping time. It was eight o'clock when we arrived in the yards and it was shortly after noon when an electric engine hooked on and started us out on our journey. This was real style. Sgt. Wertz and I had been playing cribbage all morning in the door of the "coach", sitting on ration boxes, and kept the game up for the first few miles until the rushing wind kept blowing the cards around too much. Then we stopped and relaxed, just to watch the scenery go by.

Of course I had my Leica unpacked, together with film, and I was able to get several good shots as we passed through areas of excessive bomb damage along the tracks, or if I caught sight of some prominent building, of which cathedrals were the main attraction. In Ulm, the yards had been terribly damaged by bombs. I saw yards of trackage, torn and twisted, locomotives and coaches splintered and torn apart as though by some playful giant, of the many tracks that had originally made up the marshalling yards here in Ulm, there were only two in use at present. Hundreds of German prisoners were busy filling bomb craters, relaying reclaimed ties and rails, in order to get more of the lines in use. As this had been one of the key rail points in Bavaria, one that carried much of the traffic that was diverted into Northern Italy, it had been high on the priority list for bombings, and had gotten them too it seemed.

We reached Stuttgart in the middle of the afternoon and spent a long time sitting in the yards waiting for another locomotive, or something. We would lose our electric one here. It seemed that the electric lines were not yet repaired from this point on, or the power houses weren't in operation, anyhow, we would get a steam locomotive. As we passed through all the stations along the line we were greeted by hundreds of German people, waiting in silent (or almost silent) patience for something that could carry them and their few belongings to some place further on along the line. I suppose they were all homeless, ones that were now trying to get to some place that could take care of them. It was pitiful to see them, the old and young, crowding the yards, but by this time all of us had seen so much of the misery caused by this same race to other peoples, that we couldn't let it bother us. Many of them attempted to board our train, but were prevented from doing so by the German police details that were present along at each station. The railroad workers, as they passed along the train at halts, were so busy watching for cigarette "snipes" thrown from the cars, that they could hardly do their work. Once I saw some sort of foreman, a man that evidently took the German defeat quite hard, literally chew apart one of the workers that went after a snipe. I think that he thought it was much beneath their dignity to lower themselves in that manner. The yards here in Stuttgart had not been too badly damaged, although we could see considerable wrecked buildings nearby.

I don't remember how long it was before we pulled out but I know that we were passing through a river valley several miles west of Stuttgart before dark where the vineyards clung from the steep walls of the valley like they had grown there. If they could be, they were on terraces narrower and with steeper rises than the ones that I had seen along the Main River near Worth, some months before. I got a couple of pictures of them as we passed through.

Nightfall found us west of Stuttgart, winding through a fairly wide valley, covered with a great deal of wooded areas. I would like to have seen the next stretch of road, as I thought it would take us southward, towards Strassbourg, and it might have gone through another section of the Black Forest, but if it did, we didn't know it. We all slept too soundly, and when daylight came the following morning we were across the Rhine River and headed for the yards in Strassbourg.

It took some little time for us to realize that we were actually in France, there being no villages that we could check by, and so we all occupied ourselves by telling each other the reasons why we couldn't be in France. The main thing that mixed us up was that we had rather expected to enter France further north, through Mannheim and on to Nancy, or even further north than that. Finally we saw a tiny station alongside the tracks as we steamed by and it was a real French name. That gave us a clue at least, we were in France, but where, none of us in that particular car could tell. Then we saw a large town in the distance and the train came to a halt on a siding not far from its outskirts. One of the trainmen told us that it was Strassbourg, so then we were all acclimated, so to speak. I still don't know why the route did not take us through the city, but it managed to by-pass it somehow. Where we crossed the Rhine, none of us knew either, except that it was someplace south of the city, probably at one of the rail bridges closer to the Swiss border.

One rather amusing thing always happened whenever the train made a halt, regardless of the length, because none of we passengers ever knew whether the halt would be for ten minutes or several hours. As soon as we ground to a halt, soldiers all along the length of the train were out building small fires with K and C ration boxes and scraps of paper and kindling, to heat water for coffee. Sometimes about the time that a nice little blaze would get going, the train would give out with a toot and take off. It was a good thing that it never got going with the rush that our trains in the

States did, or some of the boys would have been left. As it was there was always time to get aboard, even if the fires did not get extinguished. I have one picture snapped in the yards at Stuttgart, looking down the length of the train, showing groups of squatting men scattered all along it around little smoking fires. I call it "Hoboing through Europe".

Some distance out of Strassbourg we went through a quite long tunnel, bored through the solid rock (I believe it was limestone) of the backbone of the Vosge mountains. It must have been a couple of miles in length and we were first hand spectators of it all. I personally inspected every foot of it, as well as could be done in the darkness. Not being closed inside a passenger coach, we didn't miss much and this tunnel was no exception. As we entered and left the tunnel, we had a good look at the elaborate system of static defenses that the Germans had to protect the tunnel from sabotage. There were huge pillboxes built into the portal walls and right at the entrances were more small ones for riflemen. I could not see any bomb damage to it, so evidently the air corps had missed using it as a target in their sweeps over France.

The train made a long halt up near Saarbourg near noontime and we were given the opportunity of washing up and getting a good hot meal at a large transient mess, similar to the one that fed us on our Nice trip. It was a welcome change of fare after our cold and semi-cold (sometimes we managed to warm up one of the cans of meat) C ration meals.

I had passed through all of this particular area at other times, only by truck and jeep, in our moves during combat, the fall and winter before. This was slightly better, being much safer and infinitely more comfortable, even though we were riding in box cars. Out across the fields we could see tanks, sometimes right side up, other times rearing up in front like a pawing horse, or lying on their sides, with tracks missing, turrets knocked off or sometimes no evidence of damage seen. These had probably been blown

up on the inside from a shell hole not visible to us. There was hardly a mile of the journey across the area from Strassbourg to north of Nancy a good distance, that we could not see some evidence of the war that had passed through these parts seven months and more before. Much of this had been covered by a fast moving warfare too, so the damage was small compared to what it would have been if we had been opposed very much. Also, large amounts of the damaged equipment had been repaired and sent back into combat, sometimes within hours of its happening. Only the stuff that was entirely beyond repair had been left to enrich some farmer's grain field.

That afternoon we passed through Nancy and headed north. Most of our time was spent in predicting just where we would go. Of course our official destination had been Compiegne, France, but we always figured that we might get sent someplace else. It seemed that we were going in a great circle route across France to get to where we were going, but as Paris was only a dead-end, that is no train tracks crossed Paris from one side to another, it meant that we must be routed up around it following a sort of zig-zag track up and down in order to move from one side to the other. Well, they had told us that we would probably be on the road four days, so we weren't surprised.

About nine o'clock that evening we were side tracked someplace north of Verdun, and our engine took off down the line, alone. There wasn't anything else to do, maybe the engine men just wouldn't pull the train any further that night, so we in our car, built a nice fire out on the right of way and made ourselves comfortable. Eventually we went into the car to sleep and sometime before morning an engine came by and took us off with it. I don't remember where we were the next morning, but we figured that we had only covered a little over one hundred miles in the past twelve hours. Of course we all figured loudly that any of us could have walked it in that time, but it didn't do any good, at least we were still on our way.

We zigged and zagged for the next several hours and finally about

four o'clock that afternoon, after spending about sixty hours on the train, we arrived in Compiegne, France. It seemed to be a pretty little place, what we could see of it, as we piled out of our boxes and stood waiting for something to happen. It wasn't long, we were herded out on the street, where we loaded our luggage (I like that name, as regular GIs, it wasn't luggage, it was merely packs or duffle, but now that we were getting closer to being civilians, it was luggage) into trucks, were divided into groups of about 150 men each, and started hiking up through the streets. We walked about two miles and then went through a gate into a big dusty drill field, surrounded on three sides by small barracks, each of which would hold about 100 men. There we received our bags and stood around while the long lists of travel orders were read off. As each man's name was called, he went to a specific group, which consisted of men eventually to go to one particular section of the United States. He would eat, sleep, and receive his processing as a part of that group while at that depot.

During the next four days, we had a physical examination (to see if we were able to stand the long trip, and strain of getting back to the States) had a couple of inspections, went to the PX and then fell out on the drill field in an extended formation and dumped the entire contents of our bags out onto the ground. Officers came through and checked our stuff as the allowable articles of clothing were called off over a PX system. Those things called off were placed in one pile and when they were through, each man had another pile in front of him containing all his cameras, pistols, and other legal and illegal loot, that is, all the stuff that he might not have previously cached away in his pockets. They were looking specifically for ammunition or other explosives, as well as powerful binoculars and several other items that were forbidden. That done, our processing was considered finished and we expected to be leaving any time from then on. Inquiries on our arrival led us to think that we should get out of there within two or three days. We stayed four and left on the fifth day. That

was a great moment, our group thought we were really getting away for some-place, instead we were piled into trucks and hauled some fifteen miles out through the Forest of Compiegne, a place that was famous for years as being the resting place for the "surrender car" of World War 1. That, we didn't see. All we saw was the paved road ahead of us and the big trees all around. After a little ride we turned into some more woods and finally wound up in front of a big stone chateau. It was a fine looking piece of architecture, towers all over it and built of finely dressed stone blocks. Again, we were divided into groups and marched down into the woods and assigned to squad tents, that were to be our home again for a few days. Of course we all asked how long we might be there. The answer was "about three days", and again we believed it. It turned out to be about five I believe, and we finally left on the sixth day.

Here we were given all the clothes that the inspection back at the other camp had found us short on, went to an orientation class several times where we were told how to act when we became civilians again, got some foot drill, volleyball and baseball, all to keep us from getting bored and to keep us in good trim for the heavy trip ahead. The food was pretty decent and the serving was all done by German PWs, so no one had to stand any details of any sort. We did have a police period daily, to keep our area clean of the cigarette butts and stuff that normally litters a battalion area every twenty four hours.

I was quite amused at Blaney, who had stripped his clothing down to an absolute minimum, not wishing to carry any more back across the ocean than he had too. The result was that he was issued quite a pile of clothing, more than any of the rest of us, because we had not turned in quite as much back at Wals. Anyhow he had a duffle bag two thirds full now, when before, he could have stuffed nearly all of his issue clothes in his pockets. He was really a disgusted person, in fact none of us could see why we had to be issued nearly as much as we had carried across with us in the first

place. It just didn't look right, but again, what we thought, carried no weight.

The main objection from all of us while here at the camp, was that we were sleeping on canvas cots, with no bedding other than three blankets, it was cold, with a capitol C, and all of us that had raincoats in our luggage used them for pads between ourselves and the cot. It helped a little, but we were still cold.

One evening several of us walked down to the village of Pierrefonds a few miles away and visited the Castle of Pierrefonds that was there. It was very interesting, especially as it was the only one that I had been able to see at first hand. We learned that it had been built around 1390 by Duke Louis of Orleans and was partially destroyed on orders of Cardinal Richelieu in the year 1617 because of depredations to the surrounding country by the garrison of the castle. In 1838 it was rebuilt by order of Empress Eugenie who wished it to become an historical memorial to show the future a good example of mediaeval architecture. Accordingly it was reconstructed on the exact lines of the original castle, being finished in 1870.

It was about 100 yards long and the same wide and the height from the lower side, where the outside wall started on the side of a slight decline, was a good 100 feet to the top, plus the higher towers at the corners and at various other strategical places along its length. We entered through the main gate and crossed the lowered drawbridge across a moat about twenty feet in depth and fifteen wide. This moat was only across the end where the gate was located. The smooth walls rising 75 and 100 feet from the ground before any openings appeared, gave enough protection for the other three sides. In addition to the scant protection offered by the moat, there was a rampart or screen built over the entrance, that provided the main defense area for the castle. It was from here that the defenders were able to throw hot stones, boiling pitch and other close defensive materials,

onto anyone attempting to approach the gate. It was about sixty feet directly above the driveway immediately inside the wall, and commanded a perfect view of the area inside and outside of it. After looking over the screen, as it was called, we went through a door into one of the two lookout towers that flanked the front entrance, and inside a little distance, it was circular, about ten feet in diameter where we started up, but about two thirds of the way up, it decreased in size to eight feet and from then on up, I nearly got dizzy, it twisted around so sharply. The steps were of single slabs of hewn stone, and in the lower portion of the tower they were hung from the outside walls, making an open well a few inches in diameter down through the center of the tower. From the spot where the smaller section of the tower began, the steps were hung from the outside wall, but the inner end of the step was laid on the inner edge of the one immediately below it. This caused a round column of stone to appear up through the center of this section, around which we swung as we climbed up. This lookout tower was 60 meters above the ground level in the courtyard of the castle, which meant that we were well over 180 feet up when we came out on the open, low walled top. It gave a wonderful view out over the surrounding country side, but I imagine that it was a cold spot in winter time during the times that it was necessary for it to be manned by those living there. At least, anyone attempting to approach from any direction except one, where heavy woods now came down to within a half mile of the castle, would have been observed first at a distance of several miles. Also from the top of the tower we could look down into nearly all of the inner court, which was entirely open.

All of the inner wall was of wood, being windowed and columned in a continuous procession all around. I could see no provisions anywhere for the stables that must have been present for the horses, so concluded that they had been in some other building immediately outside the main walls, or inside in one of the downstairs rooms that we did not get into. There were

enough of them too, to have housed horses enough for a squadron of mounted troops. We went back into the tower and descended the 186 stairs to the ground floor, where we were guided across the yard to the Hall of Festivals, where some of the former recreational periods must have taken place. It was 60 meters long (190 feet), 30 feet wide and 40 feet high. There was not much to see in any of the halls or rooms as none of them were furnished, except for stone carvings or statues in some of them. From this hall we went down into the main cellar that had stored the provisions for the castle. It was a great, high ceilinged place reached by two separate flights of stairs that carried us below the outside ground level by several feet. I would say that its entire capacity was equal to a room sixty feet square and twelve feet high. It was not regular in size, but seemed to have been built to conform to foundational necessities, having huge pillars and walls built here and there. Down another flight of dusty stone steps to a musty sort of cellar with an open hole in the floor which the guide told us was the food entrance for the dungeon prisoners. I guess it had just been dumped down that hole and the inmates did as well as they could as far as eating it was concerned. Even then it was gloomy, with a single electric lamp hanging from the ceiling. I could well imagine what it must have been in the days when the only light was furnished by a torch or something equally inadequate.

From the guide sheet that each of us had been given, it seemed that we had seen about all of the place that was ordinarily shown to visitors, so we prepared to leave. The courtyard was paved in cobblestones laid quite level and smooth enough so that an automobile would not have been jolted much in passing over them. All of the stone work of the towers, especially those in the outside wall, were of dressed stone, laid so finely that a knife blade could not have been easily inserted between them. As we passed out through the gates I took two or three pictures of the front of the castle and then further out, got one that showed the front of it as

could be seen with the narrow gates and short curved driveway leading to the drawbridge in the foreground. It had been quite well worth the long walk thatwe made to reach it, and the several hundred francs in tips that the group turned over to the caretaker's young son, who had been our guide through it all. Although there was no published admission fee, we gathered that the income of the caretaker was derived from the tips left by visitors, just as in the case of many of our own famous points of interest.

Eventually the great day arrived, and we departed from our camp in the woods for Compeigne where we entrained for Antwerp, Belgium. Prior to leaving the camp, we were assembled on the field in front of the chateau according to the separation centers that we would be sent to on arriving back in the States. I found myself in the Ft. McArthur group, in charge of twenty one men (including myself) and when I reached the train, received a small wooden box about one foot square that held all the records of my group. I really looked into it at the first opportunity to see if my own records were there. They were.

This train was made up more for our comfort than was the one that brought us from Munich. There wasn't a box car in it, but some of the coaches resembled the third class affairs in which we rode to and from Nice. I think there were nearly one thousand men boarded the train altogether, and the order of boarding it was according to our group assignments. I was lucky, it came that my group was split up between a third class coach with slatted wooden seats and a more or less beat up second class coach with comfortable spring ones. I will admit that several of the cushions were missing, but in the end of the coach that I got, they were all present. As group commander, I tossed my luggage in the second class coach and when the remainder of my group arrived, managed to install five more of them in it. We were really thankful for those cushions before we reached Antwerp.

It was nearly evening when we pulled out of the station, but darkness didn't fall until about nine thirty, so we covered quite a distance before

it really got too dark to see the scenery. The train made an hour's stop at a transient messing center near while it was still light and we had a good hot meal. I was glad of that because we had not been issued any condensed rations of any kind for the trip.

Soon after leaving , the road started up a long slope and the engine travelled slower and slower, until it finally stopped altogether, the load being just too much for it. I guess we sat there on the main line for nearly an hour as it got darker and darker, when finally another train came up the grade behind us. I guess it had more power, or probably wasn't quite so heavily loaded as we were, because when it nosed up behind our last coach, we went on over the hill without any more trouble.

I slept good that night and was awakened just at daybreak the next morning as we pulled into Belgium. It seemed that we were to get breakfast there and could wash and shave if we desired. Most of us did. I guess the officials in charge of the port trains didn't trust the homeward bound soldiers so much, because we were paraded a couple of hundred yards to the mess center and were not allowed to leave it until they were ready to walk the entire group back to the train. The center was inside a large courtyard that opened into a huge building used as a dining room. A closed gate and high wooden walls prevented the adventurous ones from leaving before the main group did.

Belgium looked to me to resemble France, the buildings were the same stone type as we had seen the evening before, villages were as close together and there were the same vacant fields. This surprised me, as I had always heard of the high degree of cultivation practiced in the Low Countries. What crops, mostly consisting of hay, that still remained in the fields, looked to be good, but as to the other varieties I can't say. Probably I saw so much and kept no notes on the travels that I forgot what I did see. I do remember that the hay was not piled and wrapped up around posts and

triangular frames to dry, as it was back in parts of Germany and particularly Austria where the frequent rains made that method of drying a necessity.

We stopped in the yards at Brussels for a short time, to change engines I guess, so had a good opportunity to look around at that part of the city. Rail yards always go through the most uninviting parts of a place I think. I could not see that much damage had been done to these yards by bombing and neither did there seem to have been much damage to the city, what we saw of it later, as the train pulled on through it. I was able to get a fairly good shot of the cathedral there as the train passed across a street that led up to it, but we were quite too far away to get much good detail. I could tell that it was a fine piece of architectural beauty and would like to have gone closer, but that was impossible.

Early in the afternoon we arrived in Antwerp, detrained and waited for nearly an hour until my group could be loaded. Trucks were coming and going all the time, but they had started at the front of the train and it took some little time before they reached us, as we had been about two thirds of the distance back along its length.

On our way out to the camp we passed through a long tunnel that had been built to carry vehicular traffic under the Scheldt. It was nearly a mile long, well lighted and walled with what seemed to be a sort of marble, but which might have been just the manner in which the walls were finished that made it seem so. I'm surprised that some heavy shell or bomb didn't blast a hole down through the river on top and flood the tunnel during the fighting for this port city, but there did not seem to have been any damage done to it whatsoever.

We travelled on a good wide paved road for a distance of three or four miles out to Camp Lucky Strike, one of the huge camps that mushroomed here and there on the western coast of Europe for the purpose of gathering and holding homeward bound troops for shipping out. It consisted of rows and more rows of the same style of tents that we had lived in back in the Forest

of Compiegne, but here the only trees that could be seen were some small ones, resembling sycamores that had been planted in the parkway section of a piece of two lane highway that ran through our portion of the camp. Every bit of this camp had been built on filled in ground, sand it was, not good solid soil, but plain ocean sand, pumped in from the Scheldt a couple of miles away. The camp was strung along the road for a distance of two miles and consisted of areas able to handle about two thousand men, complete with mess tent and headquarters. A staff of static personnel handled all the administration for each one of these secondary areas that were in turn under the main camp headquarters, on up the road a short distance. There were a couple of theaters and PX's within walking distance of our area but I never had the nerve to visit one of the shows as the buildings were of corrugated iron and the weather was hot, so they were more like ovens than theaters. Besides I had several reports to submit daily, customs slips to get made out and a sheaf of other details to oversee about the men's customs slips, articles to go in declared and undeclared, foreign money to collect and turn in to finance for changing into real United States greenbacks and my own little details to take care of. Then there were a few medical examinations to go through and a lineup for chow three times a day. It kept us pretty busy. When I collected the foreign money for exchange, I received two thousand dollars in U.S. currency for the wads of French and Belgium francs, German marks and Austrian schillings that I had been handed. When it came to the settlement, I was short seven dollars, I guess I miscalculated on one of the accounts, as the bank had not credited me with as many schillings as I allowed for. There was no way of rechecking by then, so I made up the difference, which did not seem to be bad considering the different amounts and denominations handed me by my group. Those consisted of anywhere from one to one thousand franc notes, but were not so bad for the other country's monies, as marks only went as high as 100.

I believe we had been in the camp for four days when our group was posted on the main bulletin board as due to depart, together with the name of the ship, the SS John Hathorn, a Liberty ship. Well, our hopes of the Queen Mary, or even some good Army transport went overboard, but at least it was gratifying to know that we were getting closer to the time. We lined up with several hundred other men and took our final physical examination. All of our records had been checked, customs tags and reports filled out with my name and initials on all of them, so we were ready to go. Then I was called over to the area headquarters and told that our ship would not load on the specified date. That really dashed our hopes, but life went on as usual, we ate a little sand with our meals and roasted ourselves in between them for another thirty-six hours, then took another pre-embarkation physical and we were ready again. This time, after staying in Lucky Strike for seven or eight days, which was about three days longer than ordinary, was the right one according to the news that we picked up from some of the static personnel, and we loaded on trucks shortly after noon one day, rode back through the tunnel and over to the docks slightly north of the city, where we loaded on the John Hathorn.

It was nearly evening by the time everyone was aboard and we had been located in our bunks. There were between five and six hundred men, besides the crew aboard, which meant that some of them had to sleep on mattresses laid on the floor of number four hold. There were bunks in number one, two, and part of number three, with the dining room, or rather, dining area, in number two and the officers' dining room, hospital and officers' sleeping bunks in number three. I came out with the top bunk of a four bunk tier, which wasn't so bad as in most cases the top bunk gave more room than the ones in between.

Departure time was supposed to be sometime after midnight, but everyone that we asked had a different answer, he had just heard the captain say

that we would pull out at 0400 hours, or the bos'n told him that it would be about daylight. The next morning I woke up, or something woke me, so I dressed and went out on deck. The ship was moving down the canal that ran between Antwerp and the Scheldt estuary, pulled by a couple of little tugs. Several times we passed one or more semi-derelict ships tied up along the banks that looked as though they had been burned out or something. I imagine that they were ones that had been hit by planes and towed in to wait for repairs.

I don't know how far we travelled up the canal before reaching a set of locks, that separated the canal from the Scheldt, so I was right there on deck to see them operate everything to get us out in tidal waters. Just before we passed out into the main channel I saw a large battleship plowing down the estuary from the direction of Antwerp. I think it was a British ship, but we were too far to make sure. I know that it was really moving though.

We went on our own power as soon as the tugs dropped us at the locks but the speed was only about six knots I think. At this point the estuary was nearly a quarter of a mile wide and as we passed on down it, the width varied from two or three hundred yards to a mile or more. About noon we stopped in an extra wide spot and could see about ten ships altogether, moored in front and off to one side or the other. The word went around that we were waiting to form a convoy before passing on out through the mine-fields that had been laid close to the coast. The halt was for about two hours and then we started out in single file, with a good quarter of a mile apart.

The land along on both sides of the estuary was quite some lower than the water level and a few times I saw one of the famed windmill pumps sitting up on the bank. Other times I saw drainage canals leading off from the main body of water that seemed to be a part of some large reclamation system.

probably hooked up with some big electric or steam pumps nearby. Dairying seemed to be the main occupation of the farmers, but there may have been others, I couldn't tell because generally we were too far away to make out whether any other crops were being taken care of.

Early in the evening the banks drifted away until they were nearly out of sight on our right and the one on the left was over two miles from us and they seemed to be just sand dunes by that time. Here and there we could see the lights and outlines of some beach town, but had no way of knowing which it was. For some reason the boat seemed to be pitching a great deal and shortly after dark I thought I was going to spend an uncomfortable night. There wasn't a great deal of wind, but the bottom wasn't far below and it didn't take too much to create a good disturbance on the surface.

Contrary to my pessimistic thoughts, I spent an excellent night, the bad feeling only lasting an hour or so, just long enough to get me nervous. The next morning I was out bright and early, hoping to see the White Cliffs of Dover or something, but there was nothing in sight but water, we had even lost the other ships that had been in convoy with us the night before. From the later speed of our Liberty, I privately believe that they ran away and left us. From the ship's log I gathered that our ship had passed through the Straits shortly before daylight. It was a beautiful morning, the water was level as a floor, the little storm that had caused the shake-up the evening before had probably been a local one, but then I had always heard that the North Sea was rough, because of its comparatively shallow depth.

All that day we travelled in a north westerly direction, once in awhile we caught faint glimpses of land off to our right which proved the direction of our travel. Other than the fact that we were headed for home and that it was announced over the loudspeaker that it would take us about twelve or more days to reach port, there was no excitement.

Early the next morning I got up, went out on deck and saw what I thought were red lights just barely visible off in the distance. I thought it must be radio towers on the southern coast of Ireland but thought nothing more of it until later in the day when the ships paper mentioned that we had passed Bishops Rock, which was the last point of land that we would see until we reached the U.S. and that was 2600 miles away. There was a large map in the officers' hold, that was used to plot our route and daily position on and we would always have to look in on it to see how far we had gone since the last position had been posted. Sometimes it didn't seem that we had done so good. I forget the best day's travel, but on that particular day we were moving about twelve knots, which should have figured out somewhere around 350 miles. I do remember that we only went about 260 miles in several days. The ship wasn't very heavily loaded, allowing the screw to stick up out of the water nearly one fourth the length of the blades and as it pitched in heavy swells the screw would sometimes lift nearly out, making it quite hard on the engines. The only time we could maintain a good speed was when the ocean was almost perfectly smooth. Then when it was smooth, we seemed to run into bad fog, so there was no gain there at all.

A detail of special service men was aboard and they had as part of their equipment, a motion picture outfit, a phonograph with public address system and quite a few records. During the day we heard the records and at night we gathered on number one hatch to see the cinema. Several times during the crossing we had abandon ship drill and fire drill, which didn't differ very much as far as we passengers were concerned. Other things that kept us partially busy were gatherings on deck every morning for a roll call and orientation lecture. We ate two full meals a day, one in the morning and the other in late afternoon and at mid-day we were served what was called "half a meal". It generally consisted of soup, coffee, bread and butter

or crackers and maybe fruit of some sort. The soup always smelled so good beforehand that by the time we got served we were all raving hungry, so the half a meal hardly ever satisfied anyone.

Occasionally we sighted other ships, sometimes headed in our direction, but most of them were going towards the ETO. I took a picture of one as we passed it late one afternoon, a Liberty ship, heavily loaded, it seemed like it might plow through the waves instead of over them. Once or twice we had heavy winds that lashed the water into foaming waves, even causing small breakers, like we used to watch on the beach, to form and break. The deck wasn't a very good place to be on, especially the forward part and several times some of the men got soaked when a good one hit us slightly sideways and dashed up over the deck, clear back to the base of the bridge.

In nice weather we saw schools of porpoise that passed us from rear to front or from one side to the other. On my outward bound trip in the winter I had not seen anything on that order whatsoever, as the weather was so cold and we travelled so much further north. Also we saw whales several times, once one swam past not a quarter of a mile away. One day while I was standing along side the rail (where a lot of us spent our time, just watching the water pass by) I saw a large shape lying just under the surface of the water, seeming to look up at us as we passed. It took me several seconds to realize that it must have been a big halibut all of four feet in length. It would have been quite a catch for some of our pole and line men.

An ocean crossing, on any troop ship gets rather boring because of the crowded conditions but none of us minded too much, being content to read and do a good job of loafing except when it was time for the chow lines to form. It was common for the line to wind completely around the ship as every man on it seemed to automatically fall into it, even though he knew he would get fed if he waited and joined the line when it got shorter.

I wondered several times how the things in my duffle bag were standing the journey. We had been ordered to take them to a certain very small hatchway back in one corner of our hold and drop them into the darkness beneath. Actually they dropped down onto some of the cargo that was stored there, but the distance was a good thirty feet down to it and I just visualized the two cameras and the small bottle of souvenir cognac getting all mangled up. When I dropped mine down there I looked over the edge and tried to pick a soft looking spot but when it hit the bottom there was a sound like the bursting of an over ripe water melon. I needn't have worried, because the day before we were due to reach port we all climbed down the ladder and unearthed our individual bags. I checked over mine as soon as I got it back up to my bunk and there wasn't a thing had suffered.

Our port was to be Norfolk, Virginia instead of New York or Boston. That suited us as well as any, after all we had left from Boston, some of us had been to New York before leaving, so we might as well see another part of the east coast. Nearly every one on board had contributed fifty cents to the anchor pool and had been assigned a time, drawn from a box as he paid his fee. Twenty four hours had been broken down to minutes and the winner of the pool would be determined by the time the pilot was taken aboard the ship to guide it into the bay. I believe my number was some time very early in the morning, before daylight. Anyhow we picked up the pilot at 1220 hours and the lucky man drew $350.00.

We were told the night before that we would probably dock sometime the following day and everyone was out on deck at daylight, but no land was in sight. All morning we seemed to crawl along and finally about 1000 hours we were able to make out the shoreline, low sandy colored hills, with small communities scattered along them, the beach towns of the Virginia and Maryland coast. Lunch that day was sandwiches and fruit just about the time we picked the pilot up. It seemed to me that we never would get into

a narrower part of the bay but finally we could see it beginning to close in on us. I remember seeing two ferry boats cross our course, headed for we didn't know where, as at the time there was no land visible on either side.

Eventually, about 1430 hours, the boat dropped anchor off the customs house and we were boarded by the officials. Then I was kept busy for awhile, turning my records over to transportation corps men that boarded us too. They checked the records as we moved on up the bay in tow of a couple of tugs to the Army docks. During this later part of the trip a launch cruised a few hundred yards off loaded with some WACS and soldiers. Whether it was a welcoming party or not I don't know, they were too far away to do any effective business about it anyhow. There were a number of WACS and an army band on the docks as we pulled in and of course we all wanted to get ashore, but it seemed that certain preliminaries just had to be taken care of. What they were, I never found out, but finally the units started to move off. We were assembled in the order of our group, by rank as we appeared on the roster, and when our group was due to start, I was the first man of it to take off down the gang plank. A pretty WAC was waiting at the foot of the plank to say "hello" to each of us as our feet hit the solid ground again and others told us where to go. That involved going through a sort of loading pen sort of arrangement out into the big covered dock and into waiting railway coaches.

The train pulled out soon after we got aboard, it hadn't been waiting for us alone, our group was just pretty far down the line to leave the ship. It was good to know that so much of our trip was over as we moved out through the city and into pine tree covered flat country broken frequently by clearings for small farms. There were people standing on loading platforms of the warehouses along the tracks that waved as we passed, the houses were American for a change instead of the German or French ones that we

had all been seeing for many months.

We must have travelled some fifteen miles before we pulled onto a siding at an Army Camp and unloaded. Now for the first time on our trip home, we were formed into ranks, more formally than we had gotten used too. However even this wasn't bad, we marched into camp behind a good big band and into a theater where we got the low down. They told us that we would probably leave there within twenty four hours, which none of us from the group under me believed because we had heard similar stories before at the other camps. Altogether we remained in the theater about half an hour when all the group leaders left to go to headquarters and the rest of the men went out to the mess halls.

At the leaders' meeting in headquarters I suddenly realized that they weren't fooling us by idle talk when they said we would not remain there long. I received our travel orders, giving the departure time, (which was to be at eight o'clock the following evening, just 26 hours from the time we hit camp), coach, and destination. Our train would be the seventh that would leave during the day, the first one to leave at 0800 hours in the morning.

After we got all the dope, we were dismissed to go find our barracks and eat. The mess hall was one of those huge ones capable of feeding several thousand men at a clip and the meal served to us was splendid. All the cold milk we wanted, steaks, pie, fresh bread, lettuce salad and I don't know what else. I did pretty well at it, even though I had thought I wasn't hungry. Then I went to the barracks, told the few of my group that remained around, what I had found out so far,and took a good shower in fresh water. We hadn't had much of that sort of thing on the boat. After I got all cleaned up I ambled up through camp for half a mile or so to the main telephone exchange where I placed a call home. It took three hours to get it through but I was able to hear perfectly. I didn't know Jerry's number

in Yuba City, so only called folks in Carpinteria. I had filed a telegram to everyone from the boat, so knew that Jerry would get the news soon.

The next day, we went to the supply depot and drew a clean suit of khakis to wear on the train, but aside from that, we had nothing special to do until I had to report for final instructions at a group leaders' meeting an hour prior to our departure time. Then I left the group in command of Sgt. Wertz to get them assembled and moved up to the assembly area in front of headquarters. One thing that nearly all of us did on our own was to have a session in the PX barber shop, where nearly all of us got rather a skinning. For my own part the barber was one of the kind who put stuff on and did things and then asked if you wanted it, by then it was too late. Well the average bill ran about $1.75, because most of us didn't quite feel like arguing about it and raising a big ruckus, although under normal circumstances we would have. Now we were only too glad to be back and be able to get a shampoo and decent haircut and the barbers knew it.

The big moment finally arrived, our train groups were assembled, the band led us down the street again and we were aboard Pullman coaches for a change. Travelling had improved since we took our last train ride over in Europe. The coach was full, the usual three men to a compartment with me having the upper and Blaney and Wertz on the bottom of ours. I moved into the upper berth of the compartment occupied by the car commander, a captain, and gave my berth to Wertz, or rather he and Blaney tossed for it and he lost.

The train had a kitchen car on it manned by Transportation Corps men, but we had to furnish a couple of serving men for each meal. That only took a short time and relieved the monotony. The greater part of the time, Blaney, Wertz, Criss and myself played "drop the card" or fan tan, and read. Of course we looked out at the scenery too but when we needed a change, we went to cards.

I think the eastern mountain country is pretty, but it lacks the rugged

beauty of our Sierra Nevadas, or the Cascades. The trees differed greatly from ours in the western hills, consisting of more deciduous types rather than nearly all evergreens. Distances, even here in the hills between towns, were far and the train was constantly coming into small villages. In one, several of the civilians held up newspapers showing huge headlines "Japan asks for Peace" or words to that effect. We had been expecting it from some of the other reports that we had picked up, but it was good to see it in print.

We crossed through Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, crossed the Mississippi River at St. Louis and from then on for a time I rather lost track of our route, but the morning after we passed through St. Louis, we pulled into Ft. Worth, Texas. During the preceding night it seemed that our locomotive had sprung a leak near Sherman, Texas and our train sat on the track for some time awaiting a relief engine. It didn't bother me at the time because I was enjoying my sleep and heard of it in the morning. With the exception of part of the trip through West Virginia and Ohio, it seemed to me that hundreds of miles of our travel was through identical scenic area. After we ran out of the hills into the level country of Ohio it all seemed to be similar as to crops, towns, tree covered hills and grassy meadows until we hit the oak studded rolling hills of Missouri. We passed through Rolla, Missouri, the little town near Ft. Leonard Wood, where I had said "goodbye" to Jerry nearly two years before. Of course when we reached Texas and Oklahoma, there were occasional oil fields to relieve the monotony, but the almost flat land was only broken by scrubby oaks and dry washes here and there. I do remember passing down through a shallow canyon for miles and miles someplace in Texas, the sides of which were covered by trees and the bottom of which boasted a trickling, poisonous looking stream of water and oil. I never did see a sign so don't know what river it was.

Although much of the trip lacked the scenic beauty of other places, it

was very interesting to compare such a portion of our country with the more familiar western area. I believe that much of the railroad passes through some of the most uninteresting portions of the country, or perhaps it was that way only to those who weren't interested in what it had to offer. After all, we were on our way home, every mile of travel that was left seemed to be twice the distance that it should have been.

In El Paso, which we reached before seven one morning, we were told that the train would not pull out until near noon. Of the original train that left Norfolk, there were only the kitchen car and three Pullmans left. The others had been dropped off here and there to carry men to several other camps, two of them being taken off at El Paso for Ft. Bliss. Most of us decided to take breakfast in the Harvey House Restaurant, but when we ordered bacon and eggs we found that it was a meatless day and so got no bacon. We went on up into town and were wandering around looking the place over, window shopping for the most part, when some civilians told us that our train was to leave in half an hour. Of course we took off for the station, gathering everyone we saw as we went. Arriving there it was found that the train conductor had managed to get our four cars hooked onto the Golden State Limited, pulling out at ten o'clock. That was swell, as we had expected to get onto the Argonaut, which reached Los Angeles several hours after the Limited. That was swell, except that no one could find the officer from the transportation corps, who was Army Train Commander. Of course it wasn't his fault, they had told him that we couldn't leave before the Argonaut. Anyhow our cars were unhooked from the Limited, after it waited 30 minutes as it was. When the Lieutenant finally showed up, he got some dirty looks, but it didn't faze him much.

Not long after the Limited departed, a troop train pulled in, and somehow our cars got hooked to it. We pulled out around noon, so everyone was happy again. The more I saw of the New Mexico and Arizona countryside, the

more I was pleased to know that I was headed for California and the traditionally familiar orange and lemon groves, not to mention the bean and grain fields. The rough rolling hills that seem to cover so many miles of those two states have a beauty of their own, especially just before dark, when they turn from the glaring brightness of full daylight, into light purplish tinges deepening into darker and darker shades until it finally goes off into the blackness of night. That is one thing that I never failed to appreciate, the beauty of desert and semi-desert land at evening. It is far different from the shadows that lengthen into full darkness in the mountains, but does resemble that color sometimes seen in the highest unforested mountain peaks where solid rock takes the place of evergreen trees and chaparral brush.

I remember standing for what seemed hours, in the open door of my coach one evening going through Arizona, just looking out at the changing shades of color that passed over the hills away in the distance. Even after it became dark, I still stood there, although by then there was nothing to see except the block signals appearing ahead of our train, as red, yellow, and green points of light, far down the track.

One amusing incident lighted our trip out from El Paso. While our train was waiting, and we were wondering whether we would leave on the Limited or via some slow passenger, one of the men in our group had come into the yards, obviously having visited too many beer parlors in the short time he had. Alongside our train was another, filled with Air Corps men on their way to a field someplace in Arizona. That train was ready to pull out; at the conductor's shout of "all aboard", this cheerful man of ours climbed onto the wrong train. Some of the men there attempted to get him off, but all he knew was that a train was on its way towards California and his was supposed to be pulling out, and as he stood well over six feet tall and weighed about two hundred pounds, he stayed on that train. When it was

reported to me, I had to turn him in to the car commander, who didn't seem to be very much perturbed about it. We learned shortly afterward that the two trains would be following the same tracks to Douglas Arizona and then the Air Corps train was to go north. Late that evening when we arrived at the junction our missing man boarded our train feeling pretty foolish. Of course we all had a laugh over it and about the only thing that might have happened to him if he had showed up late at Ft. MaArthur would have been a few days delay in his discharge, as I carried all the papers for the group.

We were travelling across the desert east of Yuma about nine o'clock at night when one of the trainmen came through the cars with word that the Japs had surrendered. It didn't call for any outburst of entiusiasm, I guess it had been expected too much, then too, most of those men on the train hadn't stood to gain or lose much as we weren't on our way to the Pacific, and had already gone through a little war of our own. The two peace days had caught me unable to get in on any good celebrating, VE day, celebrated at Wals, Austria was just another day, except that we were able to dispense with blackout shutters, we had been leading up to that for a few days previous so that when it did come, there wasn't any sudden quiet hush in our sector. Our big guns hadn't had any targets for several days, and we had been out of touch with small arms fire for some time before that. Then now, on VJ day I found myself on a train out in the middle of a desert. Anyhow, a great sense of peace seemed to pass over the entire car full of men, but no one said very much for a long time.

The next morning we reached Yuma, finding the town shut tighter than an unopened can of milk. We couldn't get so much as an ice cream cone or bottle of milk at any place near the station. It was at this point that a little Captain in charge of the troop train ahead of our cars, got into a slight muchus with some of our men. It seemed that those other troops were

from the 86th. (I believe it was) Division, one that had arrived in Europe just in time to get committed to battle for a few days and then was pulled out, right after VE day, spruced up and returned to the States to parade in New York as one of the conquering Divisions. A great number of the men on our cars returning for discharge, were from the 3rd. Division and two or three others that had spent not days but months in actual combat and who were now celebrating their future release from the army, by leaving the train minus ties or caps and also minus leggins. Every man from the troop train had to be dressed in a full GI manner and the little Infantry Captain would get himself the biggest MP he could find and come down the length of the train of over twenty Pullmans and kitchen cars, ordering all of our men back onto the train who were not attired as he thought they should be. It involved a run in with the Transportation Corps Officer in charge of our cars, who as much as told the little Captain that he was in charge of his men and if their dress suited him, it was OK. Also he remarked that if he and his men had been overseas in combat as long as his had, they might be glad of a chance to relax too. Of course the Captain intimated that he would make a full report of the affair to Washington, but it didn't bother our Lieutenant one bit, he said afterward that he didn't intend to make a career of the army anyhow and could stand a little raking over the coals if he had to.

From Yuma on, was rather familiar territory for many of us, as we had taken part in some of the desert manuevers on the California desert. On through Indio and up the San Gorgonio Pass with three huge locomotives pulling us and the blistering heat of the dry desert burning our faces. Then as we topped the pass at Cabazon and started to drop down into the Riverside area, covered with the citrus orchards, it cooled off somewhat and we could really enjoy our sightseeing. There wasn't a door that didn't have several of us hanging part way out of it, looking for familiar landmarks

or just at the scenery.

We pulled into the rear entrance to the Union Station sometime after 1600 hours, unloaded our bags and transferred them to trucks for a shift onto PE cars for the run on down to San Pedro. I went with the truck that was to unload the kitchen and car and rode down to the Fort on it, beating the rest of the men by nearly half an hour.

It didn't take long for us to be assigned to barracks and to eat, but by then it was quite dark. I don't know what the others did, but after I cleaned up I went to bed for some more sleep. The next morning we were assigned to groups and started on a two day round of physical examinations, turning in clothing and drawing some new stuff, seeing a classification section and then spending the greater part of the second afternoon hanging around the paymaster building wondering when we would get paid and receive our discharges. That was done by group again and finally we got the big payoff about six oclock, just forty eight hours after arriving there.

The night before I had called up Loran in Glendale and he and Ethel had driven out, picked me up and hauled me back to their place to spend the night. On the way we stopped to eat, at least they ate and I ordered a great big malted milk (I had eaten at the Fort), that was the first one I'd had for years. It really tasted like something. They drove me back to San Pedro the following morning in time to get caught in the final processing prior to our discharge.

Jack Grimes and I took off from the post carrying our duffle bags to hitch hike home, he to Santa Barbara and I to Carpinteria. I know that I arrived home about 2200 hours the night of August 20, 1946. It had been 22 months since I last was there, during which I had travelled several thousand miles in all sorts of weather and in all kinds of transport.

Now that I have arrived home again, I wonder if I gave proper space in my story to the shattered villages of France, the dusty roads of all

Europe that I covered. Or perhaps I failed to mention the nights and nights that were spent in pup tents, or just spent, in the cold drizzly rain that fell so much of the time. I think too, of the huge orange colored slugs that were always found crawling around in the damp woods of France, particularly near the Seine River where I practically slept with a few one night. Something causes me to think of the detail of German PWs that I saw one hot day repairing a broken spot in the concrete paving on the autobahn south of Nurnburg. They had a pile of small square stone blocks about six inches long and three inches square. With them, a little stone mason's hammer apiece and some ordinary sand, they were patching the road. The sand was used to fill the grade up to levelness with the concrete and to fill the minute cracks that separated the little blocks. It turned out to be the same sort of block paving job that I had seen in so many villages throughout Germany and which seemed to stand up under all kinds of traffic. The blocks were not laid in straight lines across the streets, rather they were put down in curved lines that seemed to run into each other and then start anew making the whole job seem a series of short curves interlocking into a solid covering.

Another incident is also brought to mind. It was in the village of Mondsee through where I passed one day on my way from St. Gilgen to Thalham. It had been raining for several days and on this particular day a portion of a tank battalion had chosen to move out and pass through the village on its way to other fields. Of course they carried loads of sticky mud on their tracks and wheels for a good distance and as they passed through this town of Mondsee, much of it fell off. When I came through, the local fire and street departments were out hosing off the several hundred yards of paved street. I wondered what they would have done if they had known of the other group of armored vehicles that even then were nearing the outskirts of the village, each of whom carried as much mud as any of those that had already passed through.

I doubt that I have even touched hundreds of incidents that might have proved interesting to others, but as I look back on what I have written, I think that I have pretty well covered the highlights, at least of much of my work and travels in Europe, with my outfit having covered nearly 2000 actual combat miles, from the date of our landing in Normandy at Utah Beach until VE Day at Salzburg, Austria, nine months packed with enough activity to last anyone for the rest of their life. That was the culmination of the years of semi-active military service as a member of the California National Guard and the three years of active service since we were first mobilized in February of 1941.