

THE MILITARY LIFE of HOWARD ELWELL MYERS

WORLD WAR II

1943-1946

S/N 16157384
12th Armored Division
714th Tank Batt.
C Company
Combat Command CCB
Tank gunner

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PROLOGUE

Howard Elwell Myers was born about 5PM June 5, 1925 at home on Philips Avenue in Akron, Ohio. He was not expected to live but did survive on barley water and sucking sugar wrapped in cloth. He and his family moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin when his dad had a job transfer. Howard was just able to walk under the dining room table.

EDUCATION

After the usual grade and junior high schools Howard moved on to South Division High School in Milwaukee and graduated in June 1943. He had been vice-president of his junior high school graduating class, represented his high school at Badger Boys State in Ripon, Wisconsin, earned two letters in track, and was co-editor of the year book. After his return from the army he attended Marquette University in Milwaukee and graduated with a Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering degree in the class of November 1948.

MILITARY

In the writings following.

FAMILY

Sylvia June Slabey and Howard were married August 27, 1949 after a three year courtship. They began their married life two blocks from South Shore Park in Milwaukee paying a monthly rent of \$ 30. They had a great honeymoon out West seeing the Grand Canyon, Bryce, and Zion National Parks along with many other sights along the way. Their son (Robert) died prebirth in his fourth month. Seven other beautiful children took on the family name (Joy, Dale, Holly, Gary, Lisa, Cari, and Jon). Each has grown to become a stable and caring adult. Each has overcome life's disappointments as well as share in the many good things. Sylvia and Howard are proud of each one and they love them all for who they have become and how they continue to share their lives with them. Twentyfive additional foster children started on their life's pathway at Sylvia and Howard's home. As a family they ate together, traveled together, and shared their lives together. At this writing they also share their lives with twelve grandchildren and four great grandchildren. What a blessing. Sylvia and Howard have been married over fifty years. They show love for friends, family, and each other. They have become one to the extent that when one is hurting so is the other. Truly a marriage made in Heaven.

WORK

Howard's first job was selling the WISCONSIN NEWS paper on the corner of south 35th and west Burnham streets in Milwaukee. He made more money from the bonus he received for standing there than he made selling papers. He went to work with his neighbors who were the janitors of the Mueller Furnace Company on south 20th and west Oklahoma Avenue. He emptied wastebaskets for \$ 1 a week.

WORK (continued)

After returning from the war in 1946 Howard worked for a heating contractor during the summer waiting for Marquette to start in the fall. He earned 40¢ and hour. The next summer he worked for a deep well pump repair company earning \$ 1 and hour. After graduation Howard worked with his father as a manufacturer's representative. Together they covered Wisconsin and Upper Michigan selling valves and tanks and anything else that was needed in the plumbing and heating for commercial jobs. They worked together fifteen years. His father died in 1964. Howard continued the business another thirtyfive years adding pumps and water heaters to his lines. He enjoyed his fifty years of work and it was good to him.

RELIGION

Howard went through the usual religious training: baptized, confirmed, joined the church, church camps, choirs, church responsible positions. He found his direct relationship with God through chemistry in high school. In his school days there were only 92 elements and they fell into families. Each family has a certain quality but the elements with it is just a little different from its other family members. Through its number in the periodic table each element has moons that circle it. Each element has rings of moons beginning with 2, 8, 8, 16, 16, 32, etc. When an element didn't have sufficient moons to complete its circle it looked for more to complete it.....

Example:

Hydrogen #1 - has one moon
Oxygen #8 - has 8 moons - 2 & 6
Two hydrogen (2 moons) added to the
one oxygen atom (2 & 6) completes the
circles of 2 & 8 making the water
molecule or H₂O. This along with our
solar system of planets and their
moons to him could not just happen.

Many things in nature are beyond our understanding. We can breath air at 100°F and even to -20°F and not hurt our lungs. There has to be a higher planning power...we call GOD. Howard has no problem accepting the Trinity. God the father; Jesus the Son living on earth to show us how and with His life for the present ending on earth at the cross as a sacrifice for us all along with the promise of Heaven with Him and other believers: and the Holy Spirit now with us... Howard's life is truly blessed. His plans not always happen but God's route for him always works. There is fully peace in the eternal promise. Howard would pray for all readers not to experience fear; but instead, believe and live as though Heaven would be here today or tomorrow.

WORDS TO DEFINE

ammo - ammunition
ASTP - Army Specialized Training Program
billits - housing
bivouac - housing
purpgun - like a small machine gun
CP - command post- headquarters
details - work jobs
88s - German field artillery - 88 millimeters
felloout - lineup outside
GIs - soldiers
gigg - have extra duty
green outfit - have had no experience
half-tracks - armored infantry travels in them - like trucks
high points - each soldier received points for time in service
and time overseas that totaled to a sum of points
kilometer - .62 of a mile
KP - kitchen police - working in the kitchen
krauts - Germans
mess hall - dining room
PFC - private 1st class
platoon - 5 tanks
pullman train - sleeping cars of a train
PW - prisoner of war - captured enemy
reveille - morning wake up in line outside
tommy gun - a small machine gun
zeroed in - right on target

Reference to New Mexico A&M college - serving girls were
negros - there was segregation at that time - no blacks in
our units at any time - they were a different people.
They were not called blacks.. They are called Afro-Americans

During the war our company commander was Captain Charles Clayton.
He was 22 years old and a great leader. He was as cool as could
be in tough spots which kept us cool. He brought us through
the war with the least number of casualties of any company in
the division. He died in 1993

The 12th Armored Division Association was formed after the war
and continues. It has local and national meetings yearly. The
children of the veterans are joining (2nd generation). The
monthly newsletter - THE HELLCAT news - continues. Howard is
a lifetime member.

The 12th Armored Division has a museum at Abilene, Texas.
If it would ever be moved; its contents will become a part of
the General Patton Museum at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Howard's
name is on a paving block in the present museum walkway.

BEGINNING

WAR DEPARTMENT
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE

WASHINGTON

IN REPLY
REFER TO

AG 353 (4-30-43) OC-E

April 30, 1943.

Dear Sir:

It is a pleasure to inform you that you have achieved a satisfactory standing on the joint Army-Navy pre-induction qualifying test. You will be expected to present this letter and the inclosed card at the time you are called to active duty or inducted into the Army.

If you are between 17 and 18 years of age, you will render a distinct service to your country and accelerate your own military training by enlisting in the Enlisted Reserve Corps. This can be accomplished at your local Induction Station. In the event that you do this you will be ordered to active duty within six months subsequent to your 18th birthday. If you are over 18 years of age, you should come into the Army in accordance with the normal processes of the Selective Service System.

Your success on the qualifying test assures you of special consideration for the Army Specialized Training Program or the Officer Candidate Schools. During your basic military training you will be given every opportunity to demonstrate your qualifications for a position of responsibility and command. Your final selection will depend upon the combination of test results and the record you make for yourself during your training period.

The Army Specialized Training Program is designed to supply men trained at the collegiate level for important assignments with the Army Ground Forces, Air Forces and Service Forces. Careful consideration will be given to individual choices of type of service wherever possible, although final assignment must necessarily be governed by the aptitudes of the individual and the needs of the various branches for men schooled in accordance with those aptitudes.

A booklet "Fifty Questions and Answers" on the Army Specialized Training Program is now being printed. You will receive your copy in the near future.

You have my best wishes for your success.

Sincerely yours,


J. A. ULIS
Major General
The Adjutant General

1 Incl.

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Camp Grant, Ill.

July 8th to July 20th

Dad drove me down to Camp Grant early that morning of July 8th. When we got to the gate, that was as far as he could go. Off I went down those camp streets all by myself. On either side of the road I could see just what the army there was going to be. All of the soldiers were washing windows, cutting grass, picking up cigarette butts, or some such job.

I proceeded down the road until I got to the barracks I was to live in. After giving my orders to the First Sergeant I went upstairs to pick out my bunk. I was the first one of my bunch to get there, so I didn't have much to do for awhile. Before the day ended, though, I was dusting the rafters.

Next day we of my order list were all there, and we were up at 5:30 in the morning to start the day's work. After a hearty breakfast we began the process of getting our clothes (the uniform, that is), getting our physical examinations, tests, and movies. This took three days to do. After all this was completed we just had to wait around for orders to get shipped out. That put us in the same category as those boys I saw when I first came into camp.

Every morning after breakfast and every afternoon after dinner we fell out in front of the barracks to get assigned to some detail to give us something to do that part of the day. Garbage detail, coal detail, day room orderly, KP, guard, and many other jobs were open. We didn't get our choice. The man in charge would say the first ten go here, the second ten go there and so on till he got rid of all the men. In all the times I got jobs I never got a bad one. I never had to pull guard nor KP while at Camp Grant; nor did I get the garbage or coal detail. Some days I marched new men around, others I wielded a mop, or some other easy job. The longer I stayed there the smaller the odds became that I wouldn't get some dirty job. So after about a week of taking chances like this every morning and afternoon I got into the fireman detail. These boys have their own room and work about six hours a day, and they can't get any other job. So, into the private room with the other two firemen and our PFC boss. All I had to do was keep four fires going for my six hours. That meant I had to go out of the barracks once every hour or so---and the rest of the time I had to myself.

I failed to mention the incident of getting my hair cut. When I got into the barber chair on one of my early days the barber just started to work real easy on my hair. He trimmed it with great care. After a few minutes of this he asked in a whispered tone "Have you got any gas coupons?" When I told him "No" I lost what nicely trimmed hair I had.

After almost two weeks there--with two weekend passes home---orders came that I was to move. The night of July 20th found me on a train headed for---non of us knew but the train commander.

Camp Hood, Texas

July 22nd to November 2nd

The Pullman train carried us south through Kansas City and on down to Ft Worth, Texas. There we had a chance to leave the train and look over the town a little bit. Not to many hours later, though, we were on the train and headed into a desolate looking army camp. A band met us at the camp's depot, and after a speech by some big shot we were marched to a bunch of barracks to await further orders.

We were all boys in the late teens or early twenties and we knew we were going to college after we had completed our basic training in this camp. Under those conditions we could take anything, and we expected the worse.

We finally got moved to our regular barracks where we were to spend the next three months. They were in the tank destroyer section of the camp. Camp Hood was noted for its training of tank destroyers. Due to the heat our beginning date of training was postponed. The temperature was as high as 120° one day, and all of us being from the north wouldn't have been able to run around in that climate because we weren't used to it. Two weeks later we started training.

We had tank destroyer officers and our training began with tank destroyer training. At that time our boys were still fighting in Africa, and Texas is about the same they say. We got classes on map reading, different types of guns, pistols, military courtesy, and every other subject the army has to offer. We took these classes out in the sun on the desert-like terrain surrounding the camp. One day the commanding officer told us we were drinking too much water. He and the other company commanders started a contest to see which company would drink the least amount of water. Instead of bringing out the five gallon water cans filled up as often as we wanted them, they cut it down to only water after our meals. That went on for a few days, and then our commanding officer said we were going to win the contest and he had decided that no more water would be brought out to us. For the whole day we would have nothing to drink. And from the time he said that till about a week later when we moved to another section of camp we had no water all day long.

When we moved to the other part of camp we got all infantry officers. They tried to make our training as much of a game as they could. After our usual class training on the various subjects they would work out various problems for us to do to see if we had learned what we were supposed to. Sometimes a problem would last all day. It might consist of patrolling, or finding a place with a compass. This new method of training us suited us much better than what the tank destroyer officers had.

We were all issued rifles, and we had to carry them throughout the day wherever we went. We had to carry them over the obstacle course, on hikes, to every class we had, and anything else that went on.

Saturday morning brought the usual inspection. The officer of each platoon would inspect his men and gig the ones who weren't in tip top shape. Men that had never shaved in their lives got gigged for the little fuzz they had on their faces. They had to shave every day. I got gigged my first inspection because my belt was two inches too long--we had never been told anything about the length of our belts. That was the army though and we had to get used to stuff like that. For punishment for these mistakes we would get a detail over the weekend such as KP or guard duty.

The weekend of October 10th nine of us trainees went to Dallas to see what it was like. We had quite a time. After getting a room with nine beds in the Baker Hotel we went to the Texas-Oklahoma football game. Following that we had a big chicken dinner and then walked around the town. We were hungry again so a big ham dinner was next that day. The next day we slept late, had some more chicken, and went to see "For Whom the Bell Tolls". We just left there in time to catch our train and head back to camp. We stopped at Waco for a steak dinner and then went back to Camp Hood. It was a weekend well spent away from the army routine.

After our twelve weeks of training we were to spend three days at what is called the "battle-conditioning course" and three days on a "bivouac". The battle-conditioning course is what we all dreaded from the first day we got into that camp and heard about it. That is where they fire the bullets over our heads while we crawl underneath them. None of us looked with pleasure for that to happen. The day came for us to march out to the area where all of this takes place. Early in the morning we had almost everything we owned in our packs and were trudging along the dirt roads in Texas. After arriving at the area we set up our tents and got ready for things to happen. In those next three days we had the roughest time of our basic training. We had classes in dirty fighting, capturing a so-called Nazi village with all of us firing live ammunition for the first time with other men so close to us, and classes on how to make explosives. Also there was the obstacle course that we all had to go over twice. Once we could take all the time we wanted to in doing it, but the next time we ran it against time. We had to crawl under barbed wire, cross rivers hand over hand on a rope, climb up ropes, run on logs, and do almost anything that a combat soldier would have to do in combat. This was all done on the run. In fact, everywhere we went in those three days we had to run. There was no walking by even the officers. The infiltration course is where the bullets whiz over the heads. We had to crawl for a few hundred yards while this went on--crawling toward the machine guns doing

the firing. While crawling, dynamite charges were set off near us to help simulate battle conditions.. After crawling past the machine guns we had to fire our rifles to make sure they were OK. If dirt had clogged up the barrels they would have blown up. Lucky that all the rifles were OK. After firing the guns we dove into fox holes and tanks rode over us. After three days of this we marched back to camp to get ready for a three day camping trip. The bivouac was very quiet compared to what we had just been through. We just walked for 16 miles, and then ran the last two! We had everything we owned with us. While out there we dug tank traps. and did other things that might help us soldiers when in battle. We didn't have the mess hall with us so we had to eat rations. That was our first experience with the K ration, the C ration, and the D ration. The D ration was the worse because it was only a chocolate bar. We lived on those for a whole day. By the time we had eaten the first bar we were tired of it. Then we really knew what our boys in Africa were going through.

October 30th ended the basic training period and we began to get separated to be sent to the colleges throughout the country to begin our engineering studies. Rumors really flew concerning where we might go. One group left for New York City, another for Oklahoma, others to Texas A&M, but my group was still there. One November 2nd we left. Again, we didn't know where we were going. We could tell by the sun we were on our way west. Maybe, California, HuH?

After heading north and west for two and a half days we wound up at Albuquerque, New Mexico. We were told we had to wait for twelve hours around there till a train would take us the rest of the way. Our train commander told us to look the town over and be back in twelve hours. I had been in Albuquerque before and I remembered it pretty well. We had dinner in its quaint Spanish styled railroad depot. We were all back to the train in time for it to take us to our destination. The next morning we got off in a little one-horse town call Mesilla Park. We were a pretty disgusted lot. Some guys go to New York, some to Philadelphia, but where do we wind up? This little joint! It was still dark in the morning when we got off of that train and walked about a mile to the college campus and our future homes. We fell into bed when we got to our rooms. When we woke up after the sun had been up hours already, we looked over the place and saw it wasn't as bad as we had thought. True it was nowhere near a large city, but then we were there to study, not monkey-around. The campus is a very pretty one as some of the pictures show.

Our mess hall was run by civilians who got paid by the government. We could have all we wanted to eat. We could also have all the milk we wanted to drink---and you can bet we took advantage of that. All the time we were in Texas we got very little milk. butter began to appear on the tables too. Besides that we had cute little Spanish girls to wait on our tables. However, that didn't last long, because the GI's started to flirt with them. The fair-skinned Spaniards were laid off and a mixture of Mexican and Indian girls took their places. That didn't last to long either, because even some of the Mexican girls are pretty! What did they hire next? Negro girls! They were safe, and they worked there till we left the college. We no longer had to stand in a shower and wash our own clothes like we had to in Texas. Instead they issued us more clothes, and our laundry was sent to Fort Bliss to be cleaned. It was practically like civilian life again. We had no KP or guard. All we had to do was keep our rooms clean. That was fair enough.

Our day began at 6 o'clock, when we fell out for reveille. Then all we had to do was walk next door, when we lived in McFie Hall, to the mess hall to eat our breakfast. After breakfast we cleaned up our rooms and made our beds till time to fall out for our 8 AM class. Classes went on till noon, then dinner and a "Siesta" till 1:30. Classes then went on till five-thirty. After supper we could do whatever we wanted to till 7 PM, then we had to study till 10 PM. Lights went out at 10:30. Next day the same routine began. And so on through the week. Saturday we only had classes till noon. We then would take off for LasCruces, a town two miles away, or else head for El Paso or Juarez, Mexico. By the time that Saturday noon came we were ready for a vacation!

Our officers had nothing to do but give us military classes a few times a week. Their favorite pastime was having their daily inspection while we were in school. Instead of all of us cleaning up the room we had one of the four of us do it every day. Then, whoever was the room orderly was responsible for whatever the officer

found wrong. We'd get gigged for having oranges in our dresser drawers and such detailed things as that. Guys would get gigged for putting cigarette butts under the waste basket if they didn't have time to empty the ash tray. We'd come back from our Saturday classes and see a notice on the bulletin board that we were restricted until further notice. We never had to worry though. By the time we finished dinner the notice would be off the board. Our officer would always have a change of heart. He did like to scare us though.

The months of November and December brought about many football games with other colleges and nearby army teams. Saturday afternoon we always had a game on our college field. After the game we'd have a dance in the gym. The seventycoeds in the college didn't did not allow for each of us to have a girl. That didn't matter. After football season basketball started. The dances still continued. However, with all the entertainment the girls tried to offer they still weren't happy. The men would still rather go out together on their one night off - Saturday. The girls complained that the rules were too strict around the campus and that our major should turn us loose for a change. We were then allowed to visit the girl's dorm; but that didn't even work out. The guys still went out together in groups -- without the girls.

I went to a young people's party one Sunday afternoon at one of the churches. I got to the party a little late, and there was one girl left over. She wasn't so bad so we got into the games that were going on. She introduced herself, and I asked her if she was any relation to the math professor at school. She said he was her father. I took her to the company's New Years Eve party. My math mark was pretty good. However, I never took her out after that and my mark dropped considerably. I don't know if there was a reason for it.

I spent most of my weekends down at El Paso; about forty miles south of the college. El Paso itself didn't have very much in it to do. Fort Bliss was on the outskirts of it and the city was always crowded by the soldiers from there. We used to go into Juarez, Mexico to look around. We had more fun buying the Mexican things after knocking down their prices. As soon as you cross the Rio Grande River you can tell you are out of the United States. Juarez is a typical border town that thrives on tourist trade. A streetcar runs between the cities of El Paso and Juarez. They are right across the river from each other. All money has to be changed into silver dollars or paper two dollar bills before entering Mexico. Bills of higher denomination may be counterfeit and the Mexican takes too much of a chance on that being the case. Juarez is a wild town. Every Sunday afternoon they have bullfights in the arena. We always had to be back in school by 7 o'clock so I could never stay in Juarez that long to see the fights. One of the many strange sights on the streetcar is the Mexican crossing the border into El Paso to buy a broom, and the American crossing into Juarez to do the same thing. Each thinks he's getting the bargain.

In February a measles epidemic broke out. We were all quarantined for two weeks until we got over it. That was really tough staying in those two weekends. We played basketball, football, and baseball to pass the time. One thing I could never figure out was how the officers were immune to the disease. All of us school boys were quarantined but the officers went out every night. They must have gotten a special measles shot. I don't think we ever got such a shot among the many we did receive.

Along about the end of February the rumors started to fly that the ASTP program was going to close because there were so many casualties in the war to our men in the combat units. We would be needed in the fighting areas. The 20th of February we found out that was true. It was a month later that we were shipped out to fighting units. This time we had word that we were going to Texas to join the 12th Armored Division. We were on our way back to Texas.

When we found out the ASTP program was ending we all signed up to try to get into the air force. On the Saturday we were to take the air force test a notice went up on the bulletin board that the bus would not be there to pick us up for the test...the fighting forces needed more men; not the air force.

The engineering ASTP program would allow for an engineering degree in 18 months. The first nine months were general engineering courses. The last nine months were the engineering specialty. The schooling was based on the quarter system with a new course of study every 12 weeks...three quarters making up 9 months. Each six weeks the class was cut in half. The program ended when I was in the last half of the second quarter. The class had been cut 3 times. I don't know how far I could have gone until being cut or if I could have become an engineer in 18 months.

During my stay in New Mexico I had been lucky enough to get a week's furlough between terms and I had three days of that at home in Milwaukee. At least I had a warm winter in the South. I would have rather been closer to home... And now back to Texas.

Camp Barkely, Texas

March 21st to September 5th

The 12th Armored Division was finishing up its training here at Camp Barkely. The medics were also in training at this camp. As is the policy in the army, every time we moved we were interviewed to see what we wanted to do. We got into the camp about 6 o'clock at night, had our supper, got a physical exam, were interviewed, and in the barracks where we were to stay for the night by 9 o'clock. That was pretty fast. You can see that all of it was just routing. When I was interviewed the officer asked if I wanted to get back into the infantry. I told him no. I didn't want the medics either. I wasn't tall enough for the field artillery, so he said there is only one thing left for me--- tanks. I didn't like the idea of going into them either. After spending those months in Camp Hood, the tank destroyer center, I had seen how easy it was to knock a tank out. Anyway, the tanks were better than the infantry so that is where I went.

We spent about two weeks just drilling and catching up on things we had forgotten since our basic training. We had to fire almost every gun that we hadn't fired before. In this camp we had to be experts in almost everything we fired, because we had to be able to take care of ourselves when we got overseas.

When that period of training ended we were sent to our regular companies. I was assigned to "C" company of the 71st tank battalion. There were thirteen of us new fellows assigned to it. Right off the bat we hit KP and guard duty. The men in the company knew we were former school boys and decided to give us all the details. It took quite some time till they softened up and really accepted us as a part of the company.

This outfit was altogether different than what we had had in basic training. Here the men knew they were going overseas and they were more like brothers than anything else. When we were actually taken as a part of the company we all worked together.

The work in the tank company seemed so easy compared to what I had learned about the infantry. We cleaned the tanks almost every afternoon. They were spotless. Tanks are all enameled white on the ~~insides~~ ^{interiors}, and that is what keeps a tank light on the inside. Anything but white would make everything dark. All the time, day after day, we cleaned the tanks until they couldn't be any cleaner. Every once and awhile we would go for a ride out to some firing range and fire a few rounds of 75 mm ammunition at some target, and then come back into camp again. Then the next few days we'd spend cleaning the tanks again. We did have classes on map reading and things like that to keep us in practice. We began having night problems a few times a week. We'd take the tanks out on a road march, and maybe ride all night. The tank commander and the driver were the only ones in the tank who had to stay awake. The gunner, assistant driver, and the assistant gunner could sleep because they had nothing to do. As time wore on the problems began to last for days and nights. Soon we were out on maneuvers for two weeks, and in camp for two

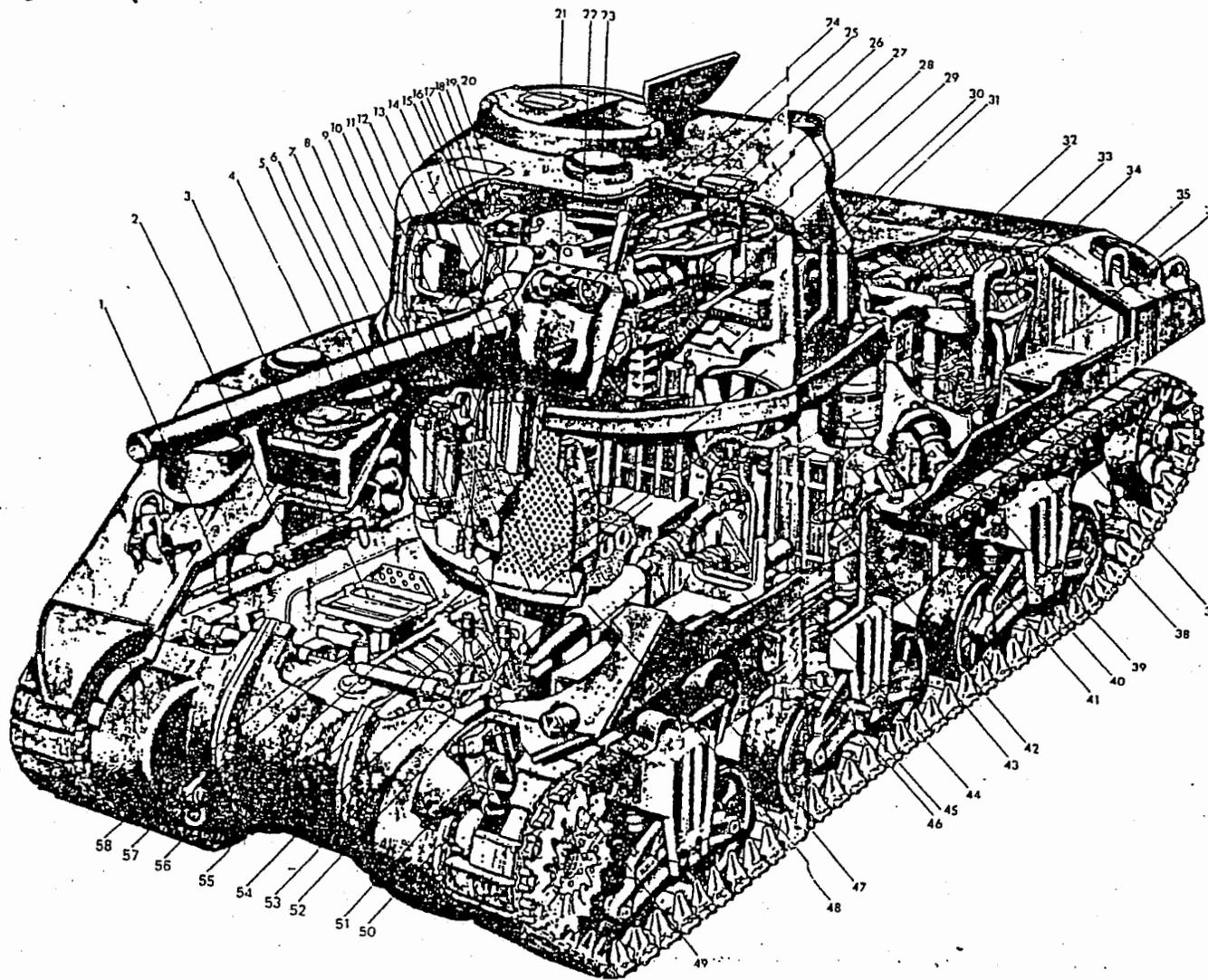
weeks. That kept us up until time came for us to get things packed for we would soon leave for either coast to go overseas.

The maneuvers were just like actual new problems. We didn't fire any live ammunition, but we had two sides. Umpires would determine the outcome were we under actual fighting conditions. It all got to be a game. We began to do things automatically. That's what is supposed to happen. Everything is supposed to come natural, so when we got overseas into the fighting we'd know what to do without having to think about it.

One of our final tests before going overseas was to "fight" the 13th Armored Division in a camp about six hours from our camp. We took all of our equipment along. In the daytime we we imitated war against the 13th Armored Division and they against us. After a few long fighting days like this we were taken back to our camp in trucks. We were told a general was coming from Washington DC to inspect the area at camp. The barracks, kitchen, everything had to be spotless to the point paths were made in the sand and lined with rocks that had to be whitewashed. By the time the sun came up we were really tired and when finished we laid on our bed springs to sleep. We were immediately awakened and loaded back in the trucks to go back and fight our war with the 13th Armored Division. We wee told later that the exercise was to see how we would react if we suffered a defeat in battle...if our morale would have broken. We must have done OK since we did get the boat ride to Europe.

After a fifteen day furlough at home the end of August we were just about ready to leave Camp Barkely as a unit and go overseas to fight alongside the other fighting outfits there.

We didn't know where we were going; but we figured it would be Europe because that is the only area armored divisions had been sent before. We piled into our trains at Camp Barkely that rainy and chilly afternoon of the 5th of September not knowing where we were headed or what the outcome would be.



(Sherman V) 1943

The M4 series of Medium tank was known in the British Army as the Sherman Mk I (M4), Mk II (M4A1), Mk III (M4A2), Mk IV (M4A3), Mk V (M4A4), Mk VII (M4A6). There was no M4A5, this being the US designation for the Ram, manufactured in Canada.

Length 19ft 10in
 Width 8ft 7in
 Height 9ft
 Weight 32 tons
 Ground clearance 17in
 Crew 5
 Engine Chrysler Multibank, 5-unit water-cooled petrol
 Cylinders 30
 Power 425hp
 Max speed 26mph over roads
 Range 100 miles
 Armament 75mm MG
 (97 rounds)
 2 x .30in Browning MGs
 (4,750 rounds)
 Armor 25-76mm

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Support pillar | 31 Fuel shut-off valve handles |
| 2 Cal .30 MG | 32 Chrysler Multibank engine: five six-cylinder engines on a common shaft |
| 3 Base of gunner's seat (assistant driver) | 33 Exhaust outlet |
| 4 M3 75mm gun | 34 Fire extinguisher nozzle |
| 5 Firing switches | 35 Air vent |
| 6 Gyro-stabiliser pump and motor | 36 Left-hand fuel tank |
| 7 Turret basket | 37 Fuel filler cap |
| 8 75mm gun foot-firing pedal | 38 Carburettor |
| 9 Power unit oil supply tank | 39 Auxiliary generator |
| 10 Clutch | 40 Volute spring |
| 11 Power unit oil cooler | 41 Carburettor air cleaner (two) |
| 12 Traverse drive motor | 42 Transmission oil cooler |
| 13 Radiator | 43 Fire extinguisher |
| 14 Co-axial cal. .30 MG | 44 Batteries |
| 15 Gun cradle | 45 Bottom spring seat |
| 16 Synchronising rod | 46 Generator |
| 17 Combination mount M3A1 | 47 Return roller |
| 18 Stabiliser control box | 48 Shaft cover |
| 19 Indirect sighting device | 49 Drive sprocket |
| 20 Stabiliser oil reservoir | 50 Accelerator pedal |
| 21 Periscope | 51 Clutch pedal |
| 22 Turret seat | 52 Propeller shaft |
| 23 Turret ventilation | 53 Turret floor |
| 24 Stabiliser | 54 Steering levers |
| 25 Elevating mechanism | 55 Gear shift lever |
| 26 Periscope | 56 Parking brake lever |
| 27 Recoil cylinder | 57 Breather |
| 28 Breech ring | 58 Power train (final drive and brake system) |
| 29 Body guard | |
| 30 Turret ring | |

In this day and age, when our cars feature disc players, computers, portable FAX machines and telephones, let's look back for a minute and reflect on what we once thought was the 'height' of technology - if not luxurious - it was at least efficient. Remember, they told us this was the "masterstroke" of J.S. production, far better than anything the other side had to show at us.

Too bad the Stateside "experts" couldn't have come along to

see the real match-up. Them vs. us.

But it did have its advantages. Bedroom, bath, study and rec room, all in one. Marvelous view - always changing. As a mobile home it may have lacked a few of the refinements - no washer and dryer - but you can't have everything.

But no TV!

Photo Courtesy of Charlie Wallman [A-17]

Camp Barkely, Texas to Bar La Duc, France Sept 5th to Dec 11th

Our train went east and north through the southeastern United States and then up through New York City. For most of us it was our first time seeing New York. Our train only stopped in the railroad yard for a short time, and, of course, we had no chance to leave it to look around. We could see the back of our Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building from there. As the train moved on we passed through the tenement district of New York. Wash lines from windows are just as pictures show them. The end of the day found us about forty miles north of New York City at a camp called Camp Shanks. We left the train just as we had gotten on it....with everything on our backs. From there until we got to England we had to carry everything on our backs...and that amounted to quite a few extra pounds of additional weight.

At Camp Shanks we spent about three days learning how to abandon a boat if we have to, got some more shots in the arm, and took care of everything essential to enable us to leave the country in the best possible shape. After our three days were up we could get twelve hour passes and go to New York City. I managed to get three of them. I got to see quite a lot of the city. I saw the Statue of Liberty from the front when on its island, Rockefeller Center, Empire State Building from the top, and Central Park. The Stage Door Canteen was one of the stops on the night pass. I saw all I wanted to when the passes were cancelled and we left on the train once more to take the bigger trip across the ocean.

The train took us to New York City once more. From where we got off at the end of the line and got on a ferry that crosses the river. The ferry headed for the largest ship in dock..could have been the Queen Mary or Queen Elizabeth for all I know; but the ferry turned before we got there and all our hopes for the big ship dropped. We wound up on a little ship that later we found out bobbed around like a cork...called the Marine Raven.

Our company had guard duty all across the ocean. It wasn't the detail of watching the men; but, instead, we had to watch for submarines. Almost every/ ~~had some~~ job it had to do. Ours was the best, because we could go anywhere on the ship. The ship pulled out of the dock and sailed down the river with all of us below deck about a day later. We had to be inside so enemy agents wouldn't know the ship had troops on it.

Miles out to sea we came on top to take our last look for a long time at the United States we were leaving behind. You all have heard that the soldier was down in spirits when he left the country, but that isn't the case. With a group of men all receiving the same fate, we all looked to the future as to what would happen next. No one was sad.

The guard shifts were four hours long with three men dividing the two posts they had to watch. We each had to pull two hours and forty minutes each. The first few days weren't bad at all on the ocean; but about the third day we began to feel it. The mess hall wasn't attended by everyone anymore. I didn't get seasick, but, my stomach was insisting on the idea and my mind was saying no. It was a continual fight between the two of them. My mind won out. Life aboard the ship was very dull. We'd get up early in the morning and go outside on deck. Records would be played from sun up till sun down. Most of them were transcribed programs from the States. We got to know what was coming next when they would play a record. We heard them so often. The days were nice that time of year and we had the sun with us almost every day. Sleep, eat, bask in the sun while listening to records or play cards is all that we had to do. There were piles of magazines for us too..

About ten days out we heard there were enemy submarines in the area. Because it was our job to look for them we had to be extra wide awake. The time this was happening I was on the guardpost at the immediate front of the ship. It was quite a sight to be way up there as well as quite a feeling. The ship would go up and down, up and down. I didn't get sick. About noon of that day our destroyer escorts left their positions and the convoy was split up from the other ships...each on its own. But by evening the destroyers were back and the ships were in formation again. We never heard if there had been any trouble. There would be no smoking on deck at night. The match light-up would look like a torch in the darkness and an enemy submarine would see it.

President Roosevelt died while we were in the middle of the ocean, and, we heard vice-president Harry Truman became our new president.

About thirteen days away from the States we sighted land when we went on deck in the morning. We knew it was England because by that time the news was out that that is where we were headed. The sun was shining brightly on the yellow cliffs not real far away. That was the first land we had seen in days and it really looked good. We kept going along the coast that Saturday and Sunday and we finally had land on both sides of the ship. We all pulled out our little map that gave us information about the people we would meet in England. We were headed for Southampton's harbor, a port on the southern coast.. The land on the right was the Island of Wight.

We stayed in the harbor the rest of the night. We debarked, and went to a railroad depot to load on trains. American Red Cross girls were there with coffee and doughnuts, which tasted pretty good. The Red Cross gave us coffee and doughnuts when leaving New York also.

Once on trains we raced through England with whistles blowing as though we couldn't get where we were going quick enough. The trains were like those in the movies with individual little rooms. The windows were blacked out so we couldn't see out or anyone in. About two hours before daybreak we got out of the train and walked a short distance to a camp where we ate breakfast. Then on to buses and we were on the move once

more. The busses were loaded down so heavily that some times we had to get out and walk up the hills otherwise the busses wouldn't have made it. When we got out of them we were only about twenty miles from Southampton where we had started. They were just trying to fool the enemy as to where we were going. We were all pretty tired so at this camp we were told we could sleep. We moved into huts and slept on the cots that were there. We didn't notice we were at an airport till we got out of bed late that afternoon. The airport was used for a bomber base by the British, and there were also some glider planes there. The scars from D-Day were still on them. We only stayed there two days and then off to another camp we went.

The next one was located near Tidsworth, England. It was large and we lived in large buildings there. Each platoon had its large room and we all set to work fixing it up. We went all over the rest of the camp digging up tables, chairs, and anything else that would make the room better. The fact that one of our boys brought back the colonel's set of chairs and his large table had us on the spot for awhile. When news got around that the colonel was looking for it we set it outside in front of another company's building so the blame would go to them. We never heard another word about it.

We got our tanks at this camp. They were filled with grease and the preservative they used in the States to send them over the ocean to keep them from rusting. It took almost a week to clean them up.

After they were cleaned and ready to go into action passes to various parts of England were given out. I spent two days in London looking over the sights, as well as getting the chance to see Winchester, Andover, Oxford, Salisbury, and Bath. I saw everything I wanted to see except Shakespeare's home and the Windsor Castle before we left.

We tested the tank guns on the coast, and were then ready to leave England for France and the enemy. LSTs carried us across the channel, up the Seine River past La Havre to Rouen. We drove the tanks from there to Auffey, France, and then stayed there to await further orders.

As usual we had to clean the tanks upon arriving at Auffey. We had rain, rain, and more rain. Barns were our homes, and we slept on straw in them. We had our Thanksgiving dinner at that place. That day was as rainy as could be. Already we had ankle deep mud. We had turkey with all the trimmings, but water filled the mess kits before we could eat it all. We would have walked back to our barns, but they were too far away. We had ten gallons of cider too, so the men were all pretty happy in spite of the rain.

The order finally came for us to move up to fight. We drove the tanks across France for about twenty hours a day. One would think the war was going to be over before we could get there unless we hurried. Three days and we were at Bar La Duc, where we sat down to clean the tanks once more and wait for further orders. They finally came after two days

They finally

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TO MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY EXPEDITIONARY
FORCES:

You are a soldier of the United States Army.

You have embarked for distant places where
the war is being fought.

Upon the outcome depends the freedom of your
lives: the freedom of the lives of those you love—
your fellow-citizens—your people.

Never were the enemies of freedom more
tyrannical, more arrogant, more brutal.

Yours is a God-fearing, proud, courageous
people, which, throughout its history, has put its
freedom under God before all other purposes.

We who stay at home have our duties to
perform—duties owed in many parts to you. You will
be supported by the whole force and power of this
Nation. The victory you win will be a victory of all
the people—common to them all.

You bear with you the hope, the confidence,
the gratitude and the prayers of your family, your
fellow-citizens, and your President—

Franklin D. Roosevelt

THE FIGHTING WAR FOR ME BEGINS

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We left the French barracks at Bar La Duc for our first battle----to crack the Siegfried line. That was quite an assignment for a green outfit. We had never seen a captured German let alone one that was still able to fight. No one knew what to expect----but we all expected the worst.

When we got up to dangerous territory we got into line formation and used the tactical ideas we all had learned back in the States during training. The weather was sunny and warm, and the snow had melted leaving the fields green and soft. We headed toward Beteweiler, the last French town before hitting German soil.

To me it seemed we were having a dry run (a problem where no ammunition is used). We crossed field after field and not a shot did we fire nor did any enemy fire. Every once and awhile someone would call the captain on the radio and point out a target. The captain would always say it was probably so-and-so on our right and not an enemy. No one fired at us so he must have been right. I thought it was just a practice problem and the captain was the only one who knew it. We could come up to a pill-box and shoot a few rounds of armor-piercing ammo into it, but not a thing ever came out.

We finally approached Betewwiler after two days of moving through the Siegfried line. Orders were to take the town, so off we went in line formation across the field toward it. We sprayed every nearby bush that might contain a German, and fired every big gun at every church steeple and house that might have had an enemy in it. Still there was no opposition. By dusk we were about 300 yards from our objective. A section of tanks took off to try to cross the creek between us and town. The section was ~~was~~ being covered by the rest of us. They got stuck in the creek. Other tanks tried to cross in other places---all got stuck. I was in one that did. The remaining tanks had to pull us out. If the Germans had been there every tank would have been lost. Stuck, we were helpless. Those not stuck would have stayed with us to fight back.

That night, after we were all pulled out we moved into position to guard ourselves in case of a German counter-attack. Engineers came up to build a bridge across the creek. When it was completely dark---the only light coming from the fires we had started during the day---a mortar barrage hit us. Mortar shells fell around and among us. About every half hour a new barrage would start. It wasn't safe to get out of the tank. Mortar after mortar came in all night---we had a man on guard in every tank turret. Next morning we found that a mortar shell had come in Sgt. White's tank through a half open turret hatch. It happened while two men of the crew were changing guard. White and Blackard were killed, two others were badly injured, and the fifth was shaken up quite a bit. Those were our first casualties.

That afternoon we moved into town across the now built bridge. Just an occasional sniper's bullet whizzed through the air. Otherwise there was no opposition. The snipers were soon rounded up and sent to the rear as prisoners. The tanks moved into outpost positions overlooking the surrounding fields to guard against any counter-attack. Our crew parked next to a barn; faced our gun toward the open fields below us, then a few of us went inside to find a place to sleep. We found a room partly filled with beets, piled straw on top of them, and got set for the night. Two men stayed with the tank at all times---one on guard and the other asleep. Mortar shells came in all night long. Between shells our ammunition trucks brought up ammo so we could fill up our empty racks. It was a dangerous job for those truck drivers as well as for those of us who carried the ammo from the trucks to the tanks, when any moment a shell might fall on us.

Next morning three fellows from a cavalry outfit attached to our division moved in with us. They had a stove and a radio that they hooked up to their half-track battery. We hooked up a light to ours. There were many chickens walking around when we first came; they didn't walk long! We fried chicken on the stove three times a day. Eleven geese were walking in a row one day. Next morning only three were able to quack! When our mess truck came to town the cooks couldn't figure out why the company didn't eat. Chicken and goose was better than anything our cooks could fix us. Yep, chicken three times a day, a radio playing music from London, plenty of heat on those cold winter days, and electricity for our electric light at night. Who said there is a war on?

After five days we moved closer to Germany leaving Bete-weiler behind. We lined up behind a fence to await an expected German attack. We were covered with our tank camouflauge nets. The attack came sooner than we expected and we had to move out and leave the nets behind. We soon pushed the krauts back into their fatherland and took up position on a high hill looking into Germany. We sat there till the morning of the 24th waiting for a counter-attack. None came.

The morning of the 24th we moved back a few miles behind the front lines and set up for indirect firing (like field artillery---guns can't see the target). The liaison plane would give us a target and we'd knock it out. This went on all day.

At midnight of Christmas Eve every artillery and tank gun on the front opened up. They each fired three rounds of ammunition at targets the guns had previously been laid on. Our tank gun was among the many guns. That was America's Christmas present to Hitler and his people. I wrote on one of the shells "Merry Christmas from the crew of C-2". We all signed our names and sent it on its way. The "C-2" meant the crew from the second tank in C company.

Christmas afternoon the counter-attack we had expected finally came. German troops were massed on the roads in their still held territory just waiting for their orders to attack us. Our liaison plane spotted them and gave us their location. Shell after shell was fired there in a hurry. We broke up the attack just in time. The enemy had intended on giving us a surprise Christmas present. They got the surprise instead!

Christmas night we were relieved and sent back for a two week rest. Our first battle was over, and we had a Christmas dinner with all the trimmings to get.

We left the front late Christmas night. The tank developed engine trouble on the way back to Hirshland, the town where we were to have our rest. We had to wait along the road until our company maintenance section came to fix us up.

About 6AM we pulled into Hirshland. Everyone was asleep in houses except the guards. It was a cold morning and a Frenchman came out to invite us in to get warm. We went in. Slutsky, our gunner, could talk French, so we got along OK. We got our coffee out of the tank and had the woman of the house make some. They hadn't seen coffee for months - or maybe years. She only put a little bit in hot water. When Slutsky poured the coffee in, the old lady thought we were wasting it. We offered them some, and at first they wouldn't accept the treat. They finally consented to drink a cup with us. We spent the rest of the day washing and shaving, writing letters home, and talking. The elderly couple had a son in the German army fighting on the Russian front. He had been forced into the German army, when the Germans retreated through their town.

We made this our home and they were glad to have us. We brought our meals back from the kitchen truck and ate in the warm and simple dining room of that humble Alsatian home. There was always wine on the table for us, but I didn't like it. I would not drink the poured glass full until I was ready to go outside, because a half-filled glass would immediately be filled by the man of the house. They soon caught on to my system of drinking little and began to call me the "klina-kin"..meaning little one..

We brought our late Christmas dinner back from the mess truck and ate it in style in that dining room. I think we were the only ones who ate our dinner at a table. The rest of the company ate in vacated houses that had suffered from the war. We had turkey and all the trimmings...so did our hosts.

At night three of the five of us would be on guard. The other two would get the featherbed upstairs. It was so hot in that bed that the perspiration actually rolled off during the night. Each night the old man would bring a bed warmer - a round heated stone, and put it at our feet. The three men on guard slept on feather ticks on the floor downstairs. They could easily be awakened for guard. It was soft there too. The feather bed was the first bed I had slept in since I left home on my furlough the August before. I had it ONE night.

We couldn't leave the house for breakfast in the morning until we had our cup of warm milk...Although, I don't like warm milk it did start the cold days off right.

At their insistence we skipped our mess truck lunch and had lunch with them. Potato soup, fried potatoes, and brown bread with home made butter made up the meal. It seems potatoes are the only food they had to eat. It was nice of them to share the little they had with us. We had given them some hard candy that we received with our Christmas meal. You have no idea how happy they were to receive it. They acted like two little kids.

One afternoon we held a memorial service for those who had been killed in our first action.

After five days we went to Mulcy - we moved the very day we were to have our clothes washed by the old lady.

Mulcy was a French ghost town that had seen the war. We slept in rooms of vacated houses. There was only one davenport in our room. I got it.. The rest of our crew slept on straw on the floor.

We spent the days cleaning the tanks and cleaning our clothes and ourselves. At night we wrote letters and talked. Our electric light was a hook-up from our tank. We put a stove in every room. You could always tell where a GI lived; there was a stove pipe sticking out of a window with its elbow curved upward and more pipe going to the rooftop.

New Years Eve was perfect....as far as weather goes. A thin sheet of ice covered the ground and a full moon really made it shine. The dark ghost town really stood out among the bare fields that night. Inside, we were warm; thanks to our stoves. I was asleep by midnight. That was the first year since I was a small boy that I ended the year asleep. We had our New Years dinner that afternoon because we expected to move back to the front at any time. The orders came and everything was thrown into the tank in a hurry. In less than an hour we were on the road once again...on our way to the next battle with the Germans.

In late December when in reserve some of us had a chance to go to Nancy, France for a rest period. The United States had just about taken the whole town over. We had as much to eat as we wanted; movies to attend with current US films, a place to sleep at night. The town was filled with soldiers taking a break from the war. When the group I was in went to the movies we each bought a loaf of German rye bread and sat in the movie and ate it...no butter. It was surely good. The next day we went back to war.. The only cost to us was the bread..everything else was free.

We left Mulcy, France Saturday night about midnight to go back to the front. We moved all night and at daylight we stopped at a small town to get a little sleep. After looking the town over and cooking our "C" ration on the little tank stove we got ready to move into our sleeping quarters for the day. We were going to bed when these French people were going to church that Sunday morning. We slept on hay in bunks. It was soft; a lot better than some places we had slept. The only men awake were the guards---two per platoon for an hour at a time. At the end of the hour the guards would wake up the next two men and then they would go back to sleep. Our chow truck had a mess at 4 o'clock. Mess is right---it was stew! That night we moved out again, but not before we had mail call. Quite a few bags of mail had come in, and I had four packages in the lot.

Next morning we were near our objective. Orders were to take Herrlisheim, the town after it, and push our way to the Rhine River---driving the Germans across it. We moved into position on the large field covered with snow and faced our first objective---Herrlisheim. The field was flat, something like the terrain we have around here. With the snow covered trees and bushes the scene was a very pretty one. In among all this beauty, though, we had to fight. We approached the town in the tactical formation---each section moving by leaps and bounds, covering the other as it went. A German command car passed on our left flank, but no one hit it. The Germans then knew we were there. We came to a halt in line formation about 800 yards from the edge of town, and just waited to see what would happen. Nothing did except for a few sniper bullets whizzing around our heads once and awhile. Near 6 o'clock about thirty German soldiers marched out of Herrlisheim to surrender. Their buddies saw they weren't getting shot so they came out one by one too. By night fall we had more than fifty prisoners. One was a woman in uniform! Many of the prisoners had white coats so they could blend in with the snow.

We stayed in that position all night, and pulled guard as we always did---one man in every tank turret. We had infantry with us to outpost the tanks. Nothing happened that night.

Things were quiet the next day too--we would shoot at the enemy as he stood along the tree line 800 yards away. Our shooting and killing some of them did not break their morale. They still continue to watch us.

That afternoon we moved around to the right side of town and faced it from that direction. At dusk we started throwing our 75 and 76 mm ammunition into the town---not particularly firing at known targets because we knew of no enemy gun positions. We just shot at places that might be probable places for enemy guns. We set the town afire with the exploding shells and it burned far into the night.

Late that night we were relieved to go back to Oberhoffen (already in our hands) to get a little rest. "A" company stayed on guard with the infantry. We got billets in Oberhoffen and went to sleep. Course, we did have guards in the tanks. The house I stayed at was the home of a woman, her daughter, and son. One son had been taken into the German army as the Germans retreated. She was not very hospitable due to that fact. She was afraid we might kill her son.

Next morning we went back to the field again. We stayed there all day just shooting at an occasional German who might get too bold and stand along that tree line. Nothing much happened all day so we went back to Oberhoffen and our billets that night. The Alsations asked, "Have you pushed the Germans across the Rhine yet?" All we could answer was, "No, not yet." Every day we moved to the field; every night we went back to Oberhoffen; every night the people asked the same question, and every night we gave them the same answer. This went on for almost a week, then orders came to take Herrlisheim.

Various patrols that had gone out during the days and nights we were in the field brought back information that there were 1200 enemy troops and a few anti-tank guns in the town. That was all the information they had collected. We had sat along enough and gotten nowhere so we had to take Herrlisheim in spite of knowing little about its defences.

The afternoon before the attack we were in the field as usual. About dusk the krauts threw everything they had at us. We shot back, but we couldn't pick up any of their gun positions. They had set their guns before dark, and at the proper time they fired them. It was too dark for us to get the right range to their guns. "B" company, then on our right, decided to move. Instead of going behind us, they moved right between us and the German guns. That was a mistake. Six of "B" company's tanks got knocked out in a row before they could get out of range. By complete darkness the firing had ceased---none of our company's tanks had been hit.

That night we sat in the field to await the time to attack. At 10 o'clock the infantry was withdrawn to get some sleep before they would shove off. We were left to guard the tanks ourselves on that cold and cloudy January night.

The infantry moved in about 3 o'clock in the morning--hours before any tanks went in. They suffered heavy casualties. So heavy that there were only enough men left to stay with the "A" company tanks. They moved in before us. One fourth of the town was then taken: the other three fourths was still in German hands. We moved in column down the street as far as "A" company had gone. We stopped.

Then, over the radio we heard the tanks at the end of our column getting fired at. We had to move farther into town without the infantry's support. It was suicide moving without infantry, tanks buttoned up, (all hatches closed with just the periscopes for us to see through), and Germans in every house on both sides of the street. I was in the SECOND tank from the front. One of our tanks at the end of the column was knocked out so there was no time to argue---suicide or not. We started in. The street was arced in the semi-circular fashion. The distance between tanks was so far that we could see only the end of the tank in front of us. Two panzerfausts (the German bazooka) were fired at us. They both missed. The next one didn't, It hit the .50 Cal. machine gun and started it on fire. Lt. Dulce, the tank commander and the platoon leader in the tank in front of us, called back over the radio for us to bail out that we had been hit. I shouldn't say "called" back at us. I should have said "yelled"! No smoke came in the turret, but we didn't stick around to find out if any would. The gas tanks are back there. Five men broke all records for abandoning a tank.

Among the five of us we had two tommy guns and two steel helmets. I came out with a helmet and a flashlight---no gun! By running and dropping to the ground the five of us got back to a house the engineers were using as a CP (command-post---place where the company commanders give out their orders). We had bullets from enemy rifles and machine guns fired at us all the way back to that house, which was right at the edge of the American held territory. Now I know how a duck in a shooting gallery feels! By that time it was noon. We talked with the engineers and when an artillery barrage sent by the Germans started we went to the basement of the house. The civilians were still there---a mother, father, daughter, and two small grandchildren. Every window in the house had at least one guard. The guard either had a rifle or a machine gun. We decided we were pretty safe in the basement, and there was no need to go farther back behind the lines at that time. When the barrage lifted, Sgt Reed, the tank commander, went out to the nearest tank to have them radio the captain we were OK. He got caught in a barrage of German artillery and had to stay on the ground for about half an hour. When he came back he brought some "C" rations with him. None of us were hungry and we didn't want to eat the stuff cold anyway. The day was crisp even though it was sunny, and frozen meat and vegetable stew isn't even good on a hot day!! Reed and I went upstairs to look around. We were talking to a guard when an artillery shell came through the roof and landed on the floor. It didn't go off. If it had you wouldn't be reading this right now!

During the afternoon a German tried to run off with our tank. It seems the fire didn't get to the gas tanks and the tank hadn't blown up. The soldier probably figured on getting a medal if he could get it to his buddies. He never got to show his prize to the boys though. The tank behind it saw it move away, so it pulled up and sent a big 75 mm shell into the engine and the gas tanks. The German was machine gunned as he ran away before the tank blew up,

Without infantry to protect the tanks they had to withdraw to where they could get protection. That was right back to the house we were in. After they got into their new position the officers had a meeting in a house pretty far from the front to discuss the situation. During the meeting an artillery shell went through the roof of the house and wounded almost every officer there. Our captain and another one laid the plans to leave the town that night. My platoon lieutenant was one of the officers injured. That left the staff-Sgt. in charge of the platoon.

Soon darkness came on, and we went to the basement where a candle was burning. We weren't there very long when the engineer captain called us and told us it would be better if we didn't stay in the cellar. The Germans, all the main houses zeroed in and at night they would set them on fire. When the soldiers ran outside to get out of the fire they would be machine gunned. He didn't want us to get caught in a fire, and figured we could do better upstairs should such a thing happen. When it got real dark everyone was pretty tired. So we, the ones who weren't guarding, found a room with two beds on the main floor. Ten men could only sleep on the two beds. The rest of us slept on the floor. None of us had blankets, so we just about froze. Guards still stayed at every window. When two guys would get out of bed to go on guard, there would be a mad scramble to get the two places. Slutsky and Reed finally got in. When they got up for guard, Wright and I got their places. Ten minutes after I got myself on the feather tick orders came to get ready to move out.----No sleep there.....

The engineer captain said we could walk out with his men if we wanted to. We didn't want to walk---a tank seemed safer to us---no artillery can hit you in there. Reed went out again to the tanks to get us places to ride out of town. Lt Dulce's tank (the first tank) had been used to evacuate the wounded officers. So there were only three of the five tanks left. Each tank commander consented to take an extra man. That still left two of us to find other tanks. Reed, Wright, and I headed out for the third platoon to get two more spots. We found the third platoon, but the Lt. DeFrance didn't want to put us inside his tanks. He had 76 mm tanks, and with an extra man on the floor the tanks couldn't be fired very easily. Off we went to find the second platoon--they had 75 mm tanks. We went down the side street to where they were supposed to be. We couldn't find them. We walked back to our platoon, and the S/Sgt said we had been on the right road. We started to walk down the road again. We didn't get far though, because our artillery had set that part of town on fire. That part of town we had walked through almost out of town was still German. We had walked through the street once and hadn't been shot at nor captured.....Lucky huh??

We went back to our own platoon. The time was drawing close when we should leave town. We left Herrlisheim with seven men in two tanks and six in the other. We were crowded! By midnight all of the

Americans had gone except a few engineers who were left behind to go with us and blow up the only two bridges...after we crossed them. The sun had softened up the ground and had also melted the nearby creek. A few of our tanks got stuck, and others had to pull them out. This all took more time. We just got out of Herrlisheim in time. Behind us we heard German Tiger tanks coming on their way to attack us and that part of town. As it was we left the captain's tank turned over in the creek. The engineers blew the bridges after we passed. We moved to the other side of Oberhoffen to spend what was left of the night. Those who were tired slept - I did.

The next day we moved back into Oberhoffen. The people were surprised to see us. They thought we had gone for good. I know they knew what had happened the day before. The rest of the crew and I had to go back to ordnance to draw another tank. The rest of the company moved out to that field in the day time and came back to Oberhoffen at night. After watching the town the same as we had before time came for us to move back further. That was about nine days after our entering Herrlisheim. The Battle of the Bulge had started in the north. Troops in the units in the south had to go north to beat it back. That left us without enough men to hold all the territory in American hands. The Germans began to enlarge their bulge in our area; and due to lack of men we were forced to withdraw across the bridge between Oberhoffen and Bischweiler. We blew the bridge behind us. One day at Bischweiler and we were relieved by an infantry division. We went to Eckwersheim for a rest.

When we were last in reserve and not fighting the war we received mail and Christmas packages. Among mine was a jar of green olives my sister had sent., along with cookies, etc. We were saving all the Christmas goodies for a party when next in reserve. With our knocked out tank we lost all we had except what we had on our backs - no party later.

On the way to Eckwershiem we stopped off at Brumath. We pulled into that town after midnight. Orders said we'd stay there for the rest of the night. Off we went to wake up people and get a place to sleep in their houses. Everyone found a place, and by next afternoon we were all awake and ready to go back farther for a real rest. We stayed there, however, because it appeared we might be needed at the front again.

During our stay there quite a lot of snow had fallen. We painted the tanks white so they would blend in with the snow. A dark green tank really shows up against a white snowy background. The tanks were painted in streaks rather than all over. From a distance the streaks confuse the enemy as to what the object is.

After a few days we headed for Eckwershiem, because we wouldn't be needed at the front. Eckwershiem is a quaint French town with houses like the children's story books illustrate---each one painted pink, blue, or some other bright color; big wooden beams and posts run in all directions on the exterior of the houses. We strung our lights from the tank to the house we were living in. Another crew lived with us---that made ten men for one bed. We cut cards every night to see who'd get it. I was never lucky! Every hour we'd dash out to the tank and turn on the radio to get the news from the BBC in London. After that we could hear American jazz being broadcasted from that station.

Every rest period must be broken up by something. The big boys weren't happy unless we were busy. Outposts started this time. A tank went to the end of each road at the edge of town. It had to guard against German patrols that might try to come through. Two men from each tank had to be on guard at a time. With five men in a tank and two of them on guard all the time guard came around pretty fast---we guarded two hours and had three off. Our outpost wasn't so bad because we stayed in a house when we weren't supposed to be on guard. However, the weather was extremely cold and in two hours we almost froze to death in spite of our warm clothing and a heavy wool blanket wrapped around us.

In that particular house where we slept the three hours we had off there lived a little French girl about seven years old. I had gotten a can of pop corn that had not been popped. We decided then was the time to pop it. I got a skillet, threw a little of the corn into it, and put it on the stove to pop. I didn't put a cover on the skillet. Sure enough---pop corn popped all over the room. Finally enough had popped and I held the skillet out to the little girl to take some. She got her hand on a few kernels when some that hadn't popped---popped. She jumped and after that was afraid of the stuff. She had never seen popcorn before, and after I convinced her that it was safe, she enjoyed it. It was quite a treat for her.

That Sunday we had a church service in Eckwerdhiem's only protestant church. When we were on the front lines it was impossible to have any services. It was the first time Americans had ever entered their church. Because we were still close to the front lines we had to take out tommy guns along. It turned out to be a communion service that was well attended. Picture soldier's going to a communion service with tommy guns strung across their shoulders!

Soon replacements started coming in for the infantry--we had to train them. Every day we had a "problem"; we'd capture some nearby town that had all ready been taken by us. We wouldn't fire any ammunition, but the tactical formations, etc., that the new men would learn helped them greatly after they once got up to the front in real combat. It taught them teamwork. Deer interfered with our problems once and awhile. We would have liked to use a little ammunition on them. The deer meat would have tasted a lot better than the goat meat our cooks were feeding us.

Soon that rest ended and off we went to the front once more.

We left Eckwershiem far behind on that cold and sunny Saturday afternoon as we headed for Colmar to help the French 1st army. Eckwershiem still had plenty of snow on the ground. When we got close to Colmar we could see that there had been plenty of fighting there already - the woods were filled with fox-holes. On Sunday morning as we passed our last woods we turned right and faced the city more than a mile away. We had taken the north half of the city so we moved swiftly through to the other side. People were all dressed up and were going to church for the first time in months...or maybe years. They watched the tanks pass them to fight the war and destroy, while they went on their way to church to hear of peaceful things.

We shot our way through the southern part of Colmar, and stopped in line formation behind a railroad track elevated a few yards higher than the level ground. The Germans had retreated into the woods...and there were woods all over now. Driving the enemy out of them was a job for the infantry. Artillery and mortar shells fell all around us. We weren't in a position to see the enemy guns or locate them. Our platoon was picked to move down the road to see what we could see. I was in the number four tank this time. While we were getting set to move a French armored car with a 37mm gun on it would come out from behind a house onto the road, shoot a few shells straight down the road at the Germans, and then back up behind the house again before the enemy could shoot back. The French army was relieved from the sector not long after we got there.

Our tanks moved down the road across the bridge. WE had no infantry with us to protect us from the German panzerfausts. Orders came for us to come back on this side of the bridge until we could get infantry. If the Germans blew up the bridge while we were on the other side no one could help us.

Three tanks went back on to the railroad track, and left our tank and S/Sgt Lindquist's tank on the safer side of the bridge. We had the first position now..in the ditch off to the left of the road right on this side of the bidge. It was not a good position with no infantry support. Lindquist was about 40 yards behind us. They tried to cross the bridge to go through the woods when they got infantry support. The Germans had the bridge zerod in and every time a soldier tried to cross the bridge to go through the woods the Germans fired a mortar shell and it would land on it. That would wound the soldier. Under our tank was the medic aid station. Some of our boys succeeded in crossing but many were killed or wounded in trying. Ambulance after ambulance came up to our tank to take the wounded away. We called for the ambulance over our tank radio. Our men who lined up along the railroad track wondered what was going on. The infantry captain and artillery forward observer used our tank also as a CP,.

The forward observer would get out of our tank, stand in the road and look for targets. He saw a column of German soldiers coming toward us to attack. He ran back to our tank, called his artillery, and told them to fire on that target. The artillery said they couldn't do it, that the outfit on our right had priority on the guns. He explained the whole situation and had a hard time convincing them it was an emergency. They finally fired and stopped the attack---priority even on the front lines....

The infantry captain called the colonel and told him the situation. The colonel told him to keep going in spite of the heavy losses. He had to go on. To draw the enemy's attention one soldier borrowed one of our machine guns and stood on the bridge firing it from the hip into the woods so his buddies could get a start. A mortar shell landed on the bridge and wounded him in the leg. He still kept on firing. The next shell that landed put shrapnel in his arm. The medics had to force him to come back under our tank for first aid. He was sent to the hospital. He had given his buddies a good start into the woods before he had to quit. That soldier was a Lieutenant when the war ended.

By dusk the woods wasn't taken and there were only 70 men left in that infantry company that originally had 250. Two of our tanks came up, crossed the bridge and moved into the woods to help. The trees were too thick for the tanks to maneuver. They had to get out. The infantry captain ordered his men to withdraw along the road and dig in. Mortars and artillery continued to hit the bridge, and would just miss us. We were so close to it that smoke from the exploding shells would seep into the tank from outside. A miss on the bridge and a hit on the tank would have killed us. However, no hit on our tank!

All night we called for ambulances to carry out the wounded. Our radio receiver went dead; we could only transmit. Lindquist's tank could only receive---his transmitter was dead. Every time we sent for an ambulance we had to run back to the other tank to see if our message got through.

About midnight a fresh infantry company was brought up to relieve what was left of the other one. We were also withdrawn. However, not for a rest!

With little sleep we moved back into Colmar, got lined up, and moved out the other side at daylight. That day started the drive south to connect up with the French army coming up from Mulhouse. We traveled down the highway about 15 miles per hour. This time combat command "A" led---we, in "CC B" just went along for the ride. The highway had plenty of knocked out vehicles---both ours and the enemy's. Plenty of prisoners passed us on their way back to a PW cage. This was the first time our armored division had been used as an armored division should be used. Infantry cleared the towns as we went along.

When we met the French we had cut the German pocket in half. The enemy was in the mountains on our right, and on our left in the town and fields all the way to the Rhine River. I never saw so many American soldiers in one place so fast after that highway had been taken. Some outfits stayed along the road to capture all the Germans who would come out of the mountains. The rest of us in the other outfits turned left---each tank company taking a different road and some infantry and headed for the Rhine River---our next objective. The Germans retreated as fast as they could. For many it was not fast enough. Dead horses were lying along the road. Already civilians had cut off the best parts of them for food.

We came to a town and got in position to take it. We found out it was already in American hands. In fact, there were so many troops in that section that three outfits had moved up to take that town before we got there. There was no more room for men to sleep in town, so we stayed outside in our tanks. During the night two other outfits tried to take the town. A few of those soldiers were killed before other American outfits in town recognized them as Americans.

Next morning we moved out again. Hundreds of prisoners had been captured during the night and were behind fences. Rubber rafts on trucks lined the road. They were to be used in the event the Rhine River bridge was blown. On we moved. We were stopped in the town along the Ill River. That river is only a couple miles this side of the Rhine. The Germans had blown the bridge there after they had crossed it. Our engineers came up and built a bridge across in less than eight hours. Infantry used the rubber rafts to cross and keep the Germans on the run. We were relieved before the bridge was finished. We moved back to Herlishiem---but this was a second Herlishiem--one that had already been taken and was near Colmar....

We parked tank behind tank on one of the narrowest streets in the town, strung our lights from the tanks into the rooms of the houses we were going to occupy, and got all set for the night or nights we would spend there. We never did know how many days we would have to rest. The room our tank crew was in was very small. But we all got into it and the five of us could sleep lying down with a few square inches to spare. We were waited on hand and foot. The man of the house started the fireplace after his son brought in the wood. The little daughter brought in the paper to start the fire. We spent the days trying to wash off the white paint that we had put on at Brumath. That paint did not want to come off. The weather was warm. WE didn't need jackets. There was no use for the white paint anymore since we didn't have to blend in with the snow. The nights we had guard duty and also wrote letters. The house we lived in seemed to be the gathering place of our platoon. You might call it the USO for our platoon. We had another crew living in another room, and the other three crews just spent their time with us. The man of the house had quite a few bottles that had not been opened. Whether that had anything to do with our house being the gathering place I don't know. By the time we were ready to leave there weren't many bottles left unopened. He would open one right after another when one was emptied. The lady of the house saw I wasn't drinking so she took me by the hand and led me to the kitchen, warmed some milk, and that is what I had to drink. I had plenty of milk. We left that town a few days later and moved to a new place about 100 miles north.

This new place was Falkenburg. It was a very modern town. The German people moved into it after it had been built especially for them by the German government. The German Government had built many such towns throughout France to encourage their people to settle in them. Their purpose was also to Nazify the French people. The Germans had left by the time we got there. After stringing our lights and sweeping out the houses we were ready to rest once more. This rest didn't last long either. After cleaning tanks for a few days we had to move on and fight a war again. This time Strasbourg was the objective. We wound up NOT taking the place.

Strasbourg sat across a valley from where we were moving to take it. The hill we were on would have to be crossed, and we'd have to move through the valley and up the enemy hill. All this time they would have a perfect view of what we were doing and could set up their defense accordingly. We came over the top of our evergreen covered hill without being seen. But the minute we'd try to move out across an open space between the trees we'd catch enemy fire and whatever else they had to fire on us. After a lot of dodging in and out of behind trees we

had crossed the top of our hill and were moving down the other side. We didn't get to far though. All along the side of that hill moving into the valley we bumped into obstacles that would have to be knocked over by engineers. We bumped into dragons teeth, ditches too wide for tanks to cross, and other things that would prevent our getting across that valley. Back we went up the hill to the top, This time we didn't dodge in and out of trees but sat right on the top like a bunch of ducks sitting on a pond. We had the infantry (70th Infantry Division) with us but as we'd move a little closer to the top of the hill, getting more in the sight of the Germans every time, the enemy's artillery would open up and finally it got so bad that the infantry had to withdraw. Of course we couldn't sit there either. Before we backed off, though, we had done quite a bit of damage. We wrecked some German guns as well as some of their soldiers. The town was later taken by American troops who came in from the side instead of the front like we tried to. We moved back and took position on the other side of a big tank trap. It must have been built ~~by the Russians~~ about 20 yards wide and 15 feet deep. That trap had been built by Russian slave labor long before we got there. Many had been killed because they worked too slow to suit the German guards, and many starved to death while working. We got orders to move back to Falkenburg and that is where we went---but not until we had picked up a few automobiles from that sector.

We moved back to Falkenburg and parked the tanks in a woods across the street from our houses. That was to prevent the enemy planes from seeing them. Our days were spent having classes and cleaning the tanks. Every day it rained and the water in the streets looked like brown paint. After a few days the woods ~~was~~ were too muddy to walk in so we spent little time working on them. When that happened we became housewives and worked most of the time keeping our houses clean and fixing up anything that might need fixing. The weather was warm, but not warm enough to go without a fire in the furnace. But our furnace wouldn't do much good until we got a pipe for it. Seems the Germans sabotaged our heating system before they left. That was soon remedied by one of the boys who took a pipe out of another house. For almost three weeks we lived a domestic life. We ate stew from our mess hall a couple times a day; what was left over was quickly picked up by the civilian population. The grownups would send their children to get the food because they figured the kids would have a better chance of getting it than they. We went to the show almost every night. In an old Russian prison one of our companies showed movies. They weren't the newest ones, but still we hadn't seen them.

We all knew the army so our life of leisure would have to end. It did when we moved out of the town to train an infantry division that had just come across and didn't know what the score was. Our job was to teach them how to work with tanks. We thought surely that we'd have to go into action with them when the time came to crack that part of the Siegfried line. That we didn't want at all. These troops

just wouldn't learn what to do. They didn't want to learn. Guess they thought it all was just a game. They did learn---the hard way; in combat! We weren't with them. After our training, or trying to train them, we went back to Falkenburg to have another vacation for a few days. That vacation was short. By this time the sun had evaporated enough of that water for the whole lot of our armies to start the drive toward Berlin. After the usual cleaning of tanks we headed up to the front lines to join Patton's 3rd Army and start fighting a war once more. However, this war was a different kind of war for us.

The start with Patton's 3rd Army was something altogether new. That was the start of the big and final drive to end the war. Our first main objective was Speyer, a German city on the Rhine River. From the time we left our previous rest area until we came to that city we were on the move day and night. We moved down those roads about fifteen miles an hour all day long. When it got dark around 8 o'clock we still didn't stop to sleep. We gassed up whenever we needed the gas. The trucks pulled up alongside the tanks and gave us the amount of gas we wanted in five gallon cans. Then they picked up the emptied gas cans and went back to the end of the column again. We were in task force formation. A tank company led the force with one platoon of infantry and one platoon of tanks in the lead. Behind the tank company came the rest of the infantry company. Then followed the other tank company, the field artillery, ambulances, and other vehicles including the anti-aircraft. The start of the column had two tanks, then two half-tracks, then three more tanks, and three more half-tracks. Then came the rest of that tank company and the rest of the task force. When going got tough, the infantry in front got out ~~out~~ of their tracks and walked next to the tanks to cover them and protect them from any German bazooka fire that might start. When things got dull again they went back to their tracks and we were on our way once more. If things got to serious the whole tank company and infantry company came up to fight it out. We didn't have much trouble getting to Speyer though.

When we came up to the town we had our two tank companies in a line formation with the infantry ready to cross the last open field to take the town. The Germans were in foxholes in that field so there was more opposition than we expected. In the town the enemy had 88's and anti-tank guns. They used them too! Plenty of tanks had close shaves but non got hit. One half-track got knocked out. After things had softened up a bit the infantry started moving into town. "A" company tanks went with them to cover them as they went. Two tanks got knocked out on the way. Our company was to take the road and come into the town on the right side. We started out. Our company lost no tanks, but the forward observer for the field artillery was knocked out. We were without field artillery for awhile; until they could get another observer up to us. We moved into town---with me in the second tank again. We shot at different things, but we had no real fight. We got into town before "A" company's tanks did. Then the trouble started. All at once the Germans started a counter attack. The third platoon tanks went down a road to meet them. Two tanks were knocked out in that fight. Our platoon was left on a different street to hold what we had already captured. We didn't know what would happen next. All night we sat in those

positions. The Germans still had control of their bridge on the Rhine River and we expected them to bring across a lot of stuff to take care of us in short order. And we expected everything to happen during the night. Instead, all the Germans left town that night and blew up the bridge behind them. Next morning we just moved through town and shot or captured snipers. We moved into a German tank training camp that afternoon to stay for awhile and get a little rest period. We stayed there about three days, cleaning the tanks and taking it easy as best we could. After a day the military government had come up and were searching suspects of the German citizens. The people were pretty frightened and there wasn't a lot of trouble. After the rest we were on our way toward the center of Germany again. The weather was warm by now and the leaves were pretty well full grown.

Our night fighting stopped not many nights after we left Speyer. The Germans caught on to our system and would let some of the task force pass before they started anything. Then when they did start fighting they would split up our force. One night "A" company was in the lead and suddenly two bazookas were shot at two of the tanks. It was dark and the enemy couldn't be picked out. The infantry was sent out to try to round them up. They moved into line formation and began crossing the large field. When they got a few yards from the not then known German line a hay stack was set on fire by a German bullet. This lit up the whole field and with the Germans sitting in deep foxholes they could shoot at our men without having to worry about getting shot themselves. The infantry company suffered terrible losses, because there was nothing for them to hide behind for protection. From then on there was no more night traveling. We then moved from dawn to dusk..

After we left Speyer we were on the run once more. We went so fast, in fact, that once a vehicle lost its company it wouldn't catch up for a few days. I know! We tore down those roads with little opposition. It seems the Germans all knew what was happening, because they withdrew across the Rhine River all along the front. We did not cross at Speyer, but went north and crossed at Worms. Before we got there though our tank broke down and we had to let the rest of the task force go on without us. We stayed parked along the road till our maintenance crews came along to help us out. By the time we were all fixed up it was reported our company at the lead of the task force was about 30 miles ahead of us. That was all territory covered in a half a day. With all these other vehicles between us and them there wasn't much chance that we could catch up. We fell in the column going past. Imagine vehicles lined up for 30 miles and still we weren't at the end of the column!

We crossed the Rhine River on a pontoon bridge constructed by our engineers. Next to it about 400 yards away was what remained of the regular bridge. It was quite a bridge in its time. It was rather large with a tall tower in both sides of the river bank. Only the middle of the bridge was blown away. The towers were still standing. On the other side of the river instead of a usual town was all parkway instead. Beautiful trees and plenty of green grass covered the area for miles. The column was moving toward Mannheim, about 20 kilometers on that side of the river. Once across the river we were again in General Patch's 7th Army.

We got to Mannheim and decided to try and get the right road to join our outfit. By that time there were so many signs at the center of town with the directions of which way different units went that it was almost impossible to find the sign we were looking for. In fact, we couldn't find ours. We rode through that town a couple times without finding a sign we wanted. We asked the MP's and they didn't know a thing. It seems our outfit was the first one through and everyone in the town came after it. Thus they didn't know a thing. We spent the whole afternoon looking and watching for a 12th armored vehicle to roll past. Finally we eyed a jeep that had our own battalion's service company insignia on it. A few towns down with our division's medical battalion was part of the company. They were preparing to move back to the front. The task force had moved so fast that already the hospital was where those medics were. It was behind the lines far enough. That night we hooked in with service company and moved toward our head of the column. And then we we didn't catch up to our company until the next afternoon. We caught up only because they had

stopped for a few hours during the night to refuel and give the men a little rest. We got there just when they were preparing to move out again. We got in our right place in the column and started with them once more.

During the ride we had catching up to the company I saw the prettiest scenery in Germany. For miles there were green grass and weeping willow trees as well as other greens. The hills were rolling hills. The day was a rather dreary one and the colors contrasted more than usual.

From there on in between towns the drive was the same. Any opposition would quickly be brushed aside and the task force would go on. It stayed that way till the end of the war. So from now on I'll dwell only on the major battles.

Main River

March 31st to April 2nd

We moved into line formation on the high plateau above the town on the Main River. Off in the distance we thought we saw two Tiger tanks, and to this day we aren't sure if that is what we saw. They made no move to fire at us, tht they did move away from their position. Whe we got tot the edge of the plateau whee we see into the town from above, we saw the rereating Germans hurriedly crossing the bridge. They knew we were coming. We shot at them, as well as those still remaining in the town. "A" company tanks had the orders to move into the town first. With our company still staying on top to cover them, they moved in with the infantry. There was little opposition because the enemy was in too much of a hurry to cross the bridge. We followed right behind the lead company of tanks. The main thing was to get to that bridge before it was blown up. We couldn't get there fast enough. With a big explosion and a cloud of smoke large than the spout Old Faithful shoots at Yellowstone National Park the twon bridge blew into bits and flew in the air. We did have the town captured as well as the remaining Germans who weren's lucky enough to cross the bridge before their buddies blew it up. Every tank had its section to guard to prevent any Germans fro recrossing the rivery by swimming to give us any trouble. Some tanks went back to the plateau to guard against anything that might still be uthere that hadn't been able to cross. Others surrounded the town on the outside. Still others wereput in different spots throughout the town to prevent any sabotage that might start. Another tank with ours was to move up the river bank to guard against anything that might cross the river.

That spot we had was right in the yard of a German prison camp that was holding Belgians. They had been there four years. Not only were there men in the 30's and 40's, but also young boys about 14 or 15 years old. They had been taken from their homes before they were ten years old and brought here to work as slave labore. You can't imagine how happy those men were to see us. They couldn't do enough for us it seemed. Our tank crew was the only tank near them so the figured we had a lot to do with their regaining their freedom. They heated water so we could wash and shave. They wanted to fix us something to eat. O course we didn't accept them, because they hardly had enough for themselves. The town was taken in the morning and that gave the Belgians plenty of time for the rest of the day to "loot" the town. The German SS troops had used it for a storage place. There wee cases of cherries, chocolate bars, and other so called luxuries, as well as cases of boxes of German cigars. There was also German clothing that the civilian population wanted to get their hands on. As is the American policy, though, a group of infantry men were put there to guard the stuff and prevent its being taken. By the time the day was over we had two cases of cherries, and two cases of chocolate bars on our tank to take

with us, as well as the things we had gotten to make the Belgians' lives a little more happier. They had found a wine store and had plenty of that so they could really have a celebration that night. Early in the afternoon one of the Belgians walked up to our tank and wanted one of us to go with him to get a case of soda water. Our driver was able to talk German so he went with the Belgian. They walked into the store and the Belgian politely and the store keeper if he could have a case of soda water. When the fellow saw the American soldier he was more than happy to give one away. The Belgian only wanted the American to scare the store keeper into giving him a case, It worked.

That night we stayed inside their house till it got dark; that is all but the man who was on guard. When it got dark we all went back to the tank to get set for the night. We had picked up two radios but had never had electricity to try them out. Here there was electricity. We had sneaked up on the town to fast for the power lines to be destroyed. We plugged in both radios but neither one worked. Too bad! They did have a victrola and plenty of records that the American Red Cross had sent them. They played records all evening and we drank coffee—our coffee!

Across the river where the Germans had fled was another town. It is right on the bank of the opposite side of the river. As it got dark we'd see lights flash on and off now and then. We had a good time shooting captured rifles at the flashes. Those lights would really go out in a hurry. There was no trouble all night.

Next day was Easter Sunday. We were awakened by the assistant gunner who was on guard about six in the morning. Across the river and traveling down the road slowly as a German truck with two trailers fastened on behind. Apparently the driver didn't even know the other side of the river was inhabited by us. Our tank and one on top of the were the only ones that were able to fire on it. We had a good time shooting. By the time we saw the truck and trailers they were almost to the spot where the bridge connected with the road. We shot but didn't get a direct hit. We did stop the vehicle though. On one trailer was a flak gun with ammunition and on the other was a load of "screaming meemies" ---they are German ammunition that sound like a woman screaming when they explode. The truck was filled with ammunition too. We finally got the right range and just shot a .30 calibre machine gun bullet into the trailer with the screaming meemies in it. You should have heard the noise! As one was set off another would be started, until the whole truck and both trailers were blown to bits.

That was all the excitement there was for a while, and seeing our kitchen wasn't going to give us an Easter dinner a goose happened to get in the way of one of our rifle bullets while we were practicing! The Belgian cook fixed us a goose for dinner along with French fried potatoes. We had coffee to

Drink and our canned cherries for dessert. For entertainment while we ate they brought out their victrola and played some of our world swing records. These records were really OLD. Their favorite was that "On land, on the sea, and in the air" record. They all knew the words by heart because they had played so so often. None of them knew what they were singing though. They had the most fun when they got to that "Buuuuup, buuuuuup, buuuuuup," part. They'd sing that and laugh as hard as they could. We just spent the whole day playing records and shooting our rifles at targets on the other side of the river. Guess that was the happiest Easter they had had in years. It made us feel pretty good too to see them so happy. The Belgian Red Cross, British Red Cross, and our Red Cross had sent them a package every month, but the Germans had taken out all the good things and given them what they didn't want. In a few days our military government would come and make arrangements to send them back home. Yes, they were really happy!

As all good things come to an end the time came for us to move across the river. Easter night the engineers had built a bridge across it and next morning we were ready to cross it ourselves. However, crossing went a little slowly and it was afternoon till we got across. Then we just moved up and down that road we had shot the truck on till dark. There was no opposition. When night came we parked with our guns facing uphill toward the enemy. That side of the river also had a plateau. We heard German tanks moving through the night but we couldn't find them. It is a good thing because night tank warfare is no good! When morning came our tank was the first to climb the hill and get to the plateau. Once up there we were to turn left and face a woods that still contained Germans. Off we went with the rest of the company behind us. All eighteen of our tanks got into the same formation---all facing the woods spaced 30 yards apart. I was looking through my sights, and as I saw a German Tiger tank about 200 yards directly in front of me the gunner of that tank saw us. Our tank gun was pointing right at the tank so we had little trouble getting on the target. Their gun had been facing the river so they had to turn their turret. Lucky for us that we had less moving to do to get on the target than they had to get on us. We were able to get off the first shot. Sparks flew and there was so much smoke we couldn't see their tank. There was no use waiting to see if we had done a lot of damage or not so we shot four more shells into the target. When the smoke cleared away the tank was not there. Evidently our opponent was so large our ammunition didn't knock it out. Later, it was found abandoned in the woods. Our tank would have been a thing of the past had they shot at us first, because it takes a poor gunner to miss at a range of 200 yards. Their guard must have been asleep because eighteen tanks make a lot of noise when they come up a hill one by one. Seeing our tank was the first one, they had plenty of time to shoot us before we saw them. It's a good thing that tank was asleep!

The rest of the morning we just shot at German infantrymen as they came to the edge of the woods to look us over. We'd

knock some of them off with .30 calibre machine gun bullets and wait for more to come. It was just like shooting ducks. The afternoon brought orders to move to the other side of the woods and take up positions. There the soldiers were in foxholes and we'd just look through the sights and wait for a head to move, then "bang", we'd shoot our machine guns again and knock them off. More of the "shooting ducks". One place seemed to be a little stubborn though. My tank commander was looking for more heads to move through his binoculars and every now and then someone would shoot at him. He'd hear the bullets whiz past him, but non hit him. We looked for the guy we thought would be shooting at him. We located the spot. We shot the machine guns and it seemed like we got the guy. We stayed on that target and another head moved. We shot again and it looked like a hit. This went on about four times and still there was a head moving. We decided to shoot the big gun at the foxhole. We did, and lucky for us---at the time we got ready to shoot a German with a bazooka aimed it at us and our round of ammunition hit him just in time. That was our second close call for that day and the day wasn't over yet!

After staying there till about 4 o'clock in the afternoon we got orders to capture a town not far off. We started on our way. Before we left the woods, though, our infantry had gone through and killed, wounded, or captured all the Germans it had in it. We moved down the road one tank behind the other, shooting at fleeing Germans as we moved. We didn't have time to stop and shoot so we just shot what we could as we moved along the road. We got to the outside of the town and there was a little hill between us and it. As a tank tried to look over the top of the hill it would get shot at by the German 88's and anti-tank guns. In fact, one tank moved up to the top of the hill and stopped. As it stopped a projectile went right through its gun tube. If the tank had kept moving the shell would have gone through the turret and killed the crew. That day was a lucky one for that crew too! The infantry then got orders to locate the guns holding us back and destroying them. While they were doing that we were to move around to the otherside of the town and come in there. We moved out by platoons, and then by sections. The two tanks in our section, ours and another one, moved into a clump of trees till we got further orders. Just as we moved in a shell passed parallel to the front of our tank about five yards from it. We could see the flash as it went past. Our tank commander was cool about the whole thing and kept his head. He looked through his binoculars and I looked through my sights to try and locate the enemy gun. Three shots had gone past in exactly the same place before we located the gun. They were shooting at the other tank, not us. We moved and faced the enemy, and at a range of 600 yards we located the 88 and fired at it. The first shot fell short of the target, but it did kill some of the men and sent the rest of them on the run. We were interested in knocking out the gun so we let the other tanks take care of the men who were running away. By the time we finished shooting the 88 was pretty well banged up and could never be used again. So that was our third close call for that day. The infantry had cleared the town by that time and the rest of our tanks had moved in. Some of the Germans the infantry had captured could not have been more than 12 years of age. Others

must have been 70 years old. It was the bottom of the pot that the Germans were scraping now. It was not dark yet so orders came to move out and capture another named town. We got started and the orders were changed so we moved back to the place we had just captured to get set for the night. The tank commander and I walked over to the gun we had knocked out just to see what damage we had done to it. It was pretty well split up, and there was still a shell unexploded in the chamber---they were ready to shoot shell number four our way, but we got ours to them first. Among the dead men lying there among the ruins was one undamaged from the waist up. From the waist down we couldn't find a thing!

The rest of that morning and part of the afternoon the first tank and our tank shot at the fleeing Germans who left town before we got there. The forward observer for the field artillery had his 20 power telescope on the cement bridge rail and ~~was~~ picked out targets for us to fire at. When the range got to great he called his field artillery and they fired at the targets. So for some time we just watched to see what they could do.

The bridge just had a few craters that had to be filled and that was done in a pretty short time. Before we could start an infantry division passed us up and walked across the bridge to continue the fight. We received orders to take another town a few miles away. Off we went on our new mission. We got there too late and it was already taken. We moved back to Kitzingen to sleep for one night. The next morning we were on our way once more.

Kitzingen

April 5th

Staying on the roads weaving in and out of hills we tore toward Kitzingen, our next main objective. The Germans didn't attempt to stop us till we got right on the road only a few yards from town. A few German fighter planes strafed our column with their machine guns but there were few casualties. At the edge of town the enemy had constructed a road block consisting of logs that was meant to stop us for awhile. It did! Our infantry went up to see that it wasn't being protected by the enemy. Seeing there was no resistance our engineers were called up to remove the road block. My souvenir pistol came from the burgermeister (mayor) of that town while we were waiting for the engineers to clear the road.

Once cleared we were on our way with me in tank number "two" again. We went through town cautiously and there wasn't the least sign of a German. We got almost to the bridge when things started to happen. (It seems all the towns had a bridge) For two blocks before we got to the bridge on the left side of the road was a park. The park was only about a half a block wide. When the first tank got up to the last crossroad some German burp-gun next opened up on it. That started the thing off. The infantry got out of their half-tracks and twelve of them went with the first tank and the other twelve came with us. Six men got on each side of each tank. That park was filled with Germans. They had been sitting in deep foxholes just waiting for the signal to start the fireworks. When they got it, one bazooka missed the first tank and two missed us. By that time we were firing on the right side of the road with tank number one firing on the left side. It didn't take long till we had things under control. There was so much action around there in a few minutes that windows in houses almost 100 yards away from a tank were blown out by the concussion. Before things quieted down a machine gun opened up on the infantry guarding our tank. It came from the right side down that last crossroad. With a 200 yard range we shot a 76 mm shell and blew everything there sky high.

We had no casualties but the enemy had plenty. What wasn't killed was captured, and many of them were wounded. The bridge was blown up as they always were so we had to sit on this side of the river till the engineers could build another one. The tank commander and I went back to that side street to see what damage we had done. Two of the three men were killed. The doctor and our captain were just taking the third man away. The doc told us the shell should have landed about six inches farther. Then the third man would have been killed and put out of his misery. He was in terrible shape, and it would have been better had he been killed.



Yours Truly after having been on the
move for almost two weeks
straight. During the big
drives through Germany.
April 10, 1945

Ansbach

April 18th

Ansbach was the next main objective after Kitzingen. It was a town in a valley. Of course, it had a river too! We shot up any opposition that got in our way. Sometimes it held us up and other times it didn't. When we were held up and only the tanks in front were fighting, the ones farther back would search through the rubble lying on the side of the road. Many times pistols and other souvenirs were found. As the fight in front wore on the prisoners were told to walk toward the rear of our column. Somewhere down the line they would get picked up by trucks and taken to a PW cage in the rear. Naturally they were searched as they moved down the column. It's a cinch they didn't have anything valuable on them by the time they got ten tanks back! That is the way most pistols were gotten.

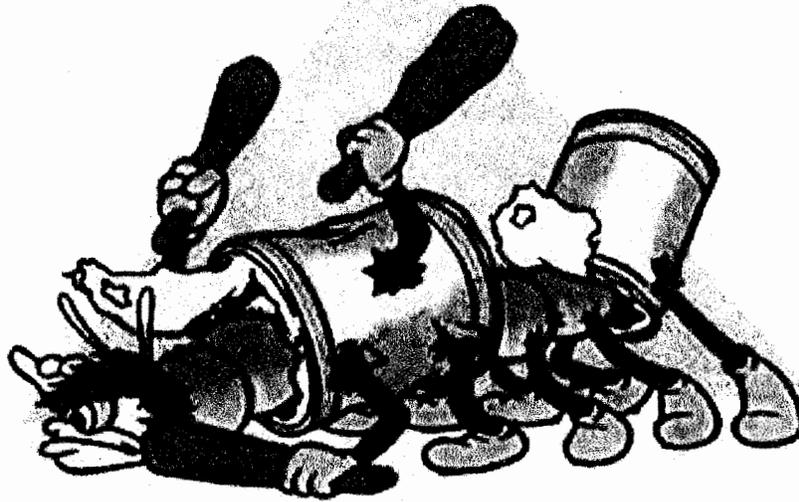
Sometimes the air corps would lead the way. The fighters would see the German columns retreating and the planes would dive bomb and machine gun them. The Germans had few motor vehicles. The majority of equipment was pulled by horses. The planes killed many of them, and really tore an enemy column apart. As we came up to it then, our medics would take care of the wounded soldiers. If we stopped because a few of them wanted to fight and hold us up the GI's farther back would look for souvenirs in the ~~bl~~ blown up wagons and along the roads. The whole drive from the end of our February rest period till the end of the war was the same--no matter what part of Germany we were in.

We finally came up on the high plateau above Ansbach. There too was a beautiful spot. There were little clumps of bushes all over the green grassy fields. Again the area looked like a park. The land wasn't cultivated, but was just good green grass. Here and there would be a small patch of woods. Every clump of bushes might hold a German 88 so we had to be very careful. We moved slowly and cautiously mile after mile. No one shot at us. We'd see the 88's but they were never manned--that's goodness! The ammunition was still sitting in the woods that would be nearby. We would blow it up by snooting a few machine gun bullets into it. We did that for miles till we got to the edge of the plateau overlooking the town. It was near 5 O'clock then and that was as far as our company had to go. "A" company tanks were to enter the town and take it. While we waited for them to finish their mission we just sat up on top and watched what was going on. Across the valley on the other side of the town we could see the Germans running. There again were "ducks to shoot at". The captain tried out some of his new gunners on them. He'd let one tank fire at a time to give the new men practice.

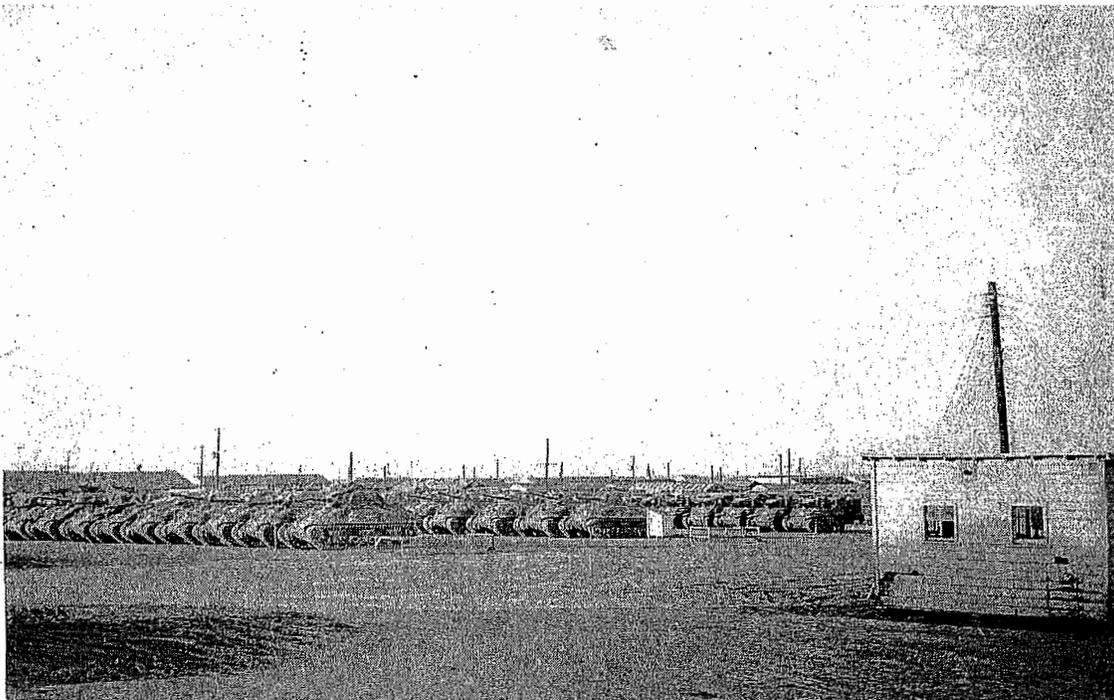
By nightfall the town was captured and we all moved in to sleep in houses for a change. We never got a full night's sleep though, because guards always had to be pulled. Nevertheless, we could sleep lying down even if it was on a hard floor---it was better than sleeping sitting up in the gunner's seat!

From Ansbach on there was little opposition. The crossing of the Danube River was done by a different task force and we just followed. We crossed at Dillingen. The task force had a little trouble capturing it. There, too, a bridge was blown up and the engineers had to rebuild it. In a short time we were able to cross. Once across the first task force dug fox holes and had orders to stay there. Our task force had orders to move farther into enemy territory. Off we went. That order was changed in a little while---after we had taken another town and had stopped. Our captain wasn't one to sit around all day and do nothing. He asked for permission to take the company on a little patrol. He got it! As we got farther into enemy territory he'd drop off a platoon to watch what we had taken. We got to the one platoon that was left----ours! We shot up a gang of German soldiers who thought we were going to capture their town. They fled out the other side and up a hill. We didn't move into the town because we didn't have enough power. Instead, we just sat where we were and shot at the Germans----again, like ducks---as they ran up the hill. As night began to come on we went back to the Danube River and picked up the other two platoons as we went back. That night we sat there and pulled guard as usual. The next day the other task force had orders to take the land we had been over the day before. They stated out and they were stopped for three days at the town we could have taken the day before. During the night the Germans had come back and brought plenty of equipment with them.

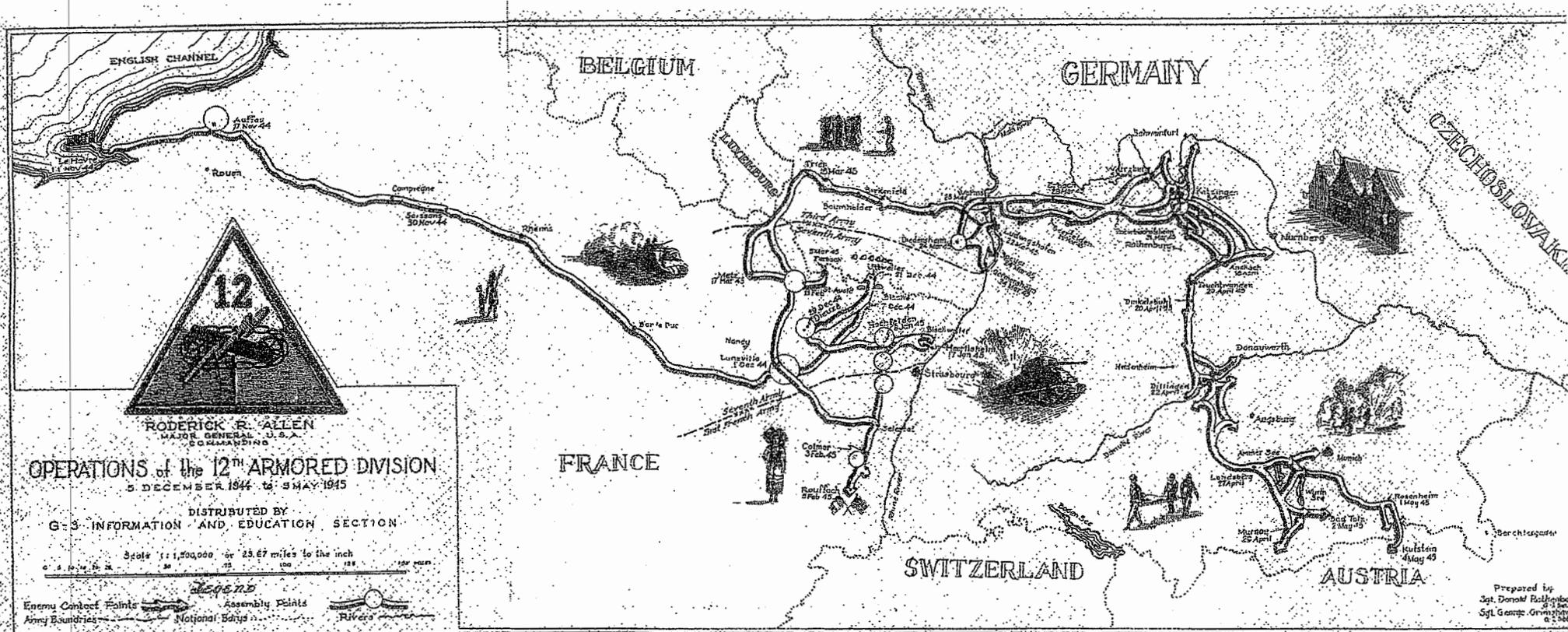
We headed south toward Bavaria. The Brenner Pass in Italy was the next big thing. The closer we got to the mountains the prettier they became. The Alps look like our Rocky Mountains. The month being May had everything on the ground green, but every mountain top was white with snow. When we got to a town about 20 kilometers from Munich our orders were changed. The generals figured it would be suicide for tanks to go into those mountains. Naturally, we thought so too! There is no telling how many tanks could get through if any. The object was to connect up with our 6th Army coming up from Italy. The generals then changed the order to send us on to take Munich. After we started the orders were changed to go back to town and out the other side for the Brenner Pass. Once on the other side the orders were changed again, and we were sent back to town. For three days the generals tried to make up their minds what we should do. Within that time Munich had been taken, and the generals decided to take all the armor off of the front lines. With the Alps to our rear we headed north to a town that had been in American hands for many days. We were to have a rest before moving into another sector. That town we were on our way to was Laupheim. We had no idea we had seen our last battle as we moved farther away from those mountains. But on May 8th when we were cleaning our tanks for the next operation peace was declared. We didn't celebrate that day---we had orders to go right on cleaning the tanks. We did!



"C" company 714th Tank Battalion's Insignia
Approved by Walt Disney.



Some of the tanks in the 714th tank battalion.



LAUPHEIM, Germany to Milwaukee, Wisconsin May 9th - August 22nd

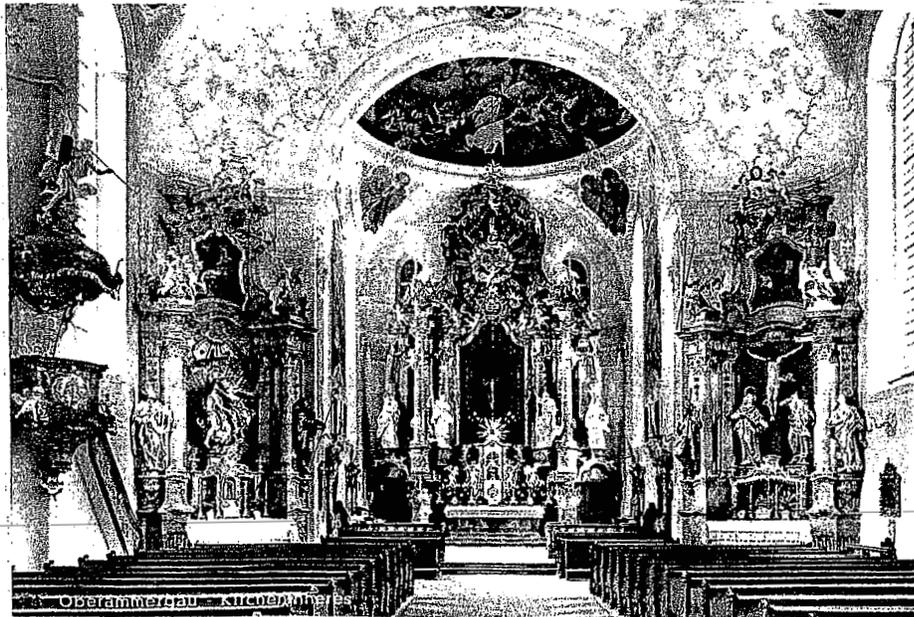
From the end of the war until time for us to come back to the United States we moved from town to town guarding people and captured equipment. From Laupheim we moved to Augsburg; from there our crew went to Markt, and then to Wertingen.

While at Wertingen half the company set out in trucks one day to see the Brenner Pass in Italy. We stopped in Oberammergau to see the stage where the Passion Play is held once each ten year period. The town is famous for its wood carvings. Also in that town was the prettiest church I had ever seen. Up to that time I had seen the world's largest in New York City, the one at Winchester, England; the one at Bath, England; the main ones in London, and in Salisbury, England; but none could compare to the church in this little town. We left it behind as we traveled to Partenkirchen. The Olympics were held there in 1936 and 1938. Our captain heard about a train trip to Germany's highest mountain leaving from this town. We decided to go there instead of Brenner Pass. It took a few hours on the train for it to climb the mountains to get near the top. Mt Jugspitz was the destination. The train left us out at the resort. In peacetime all the wealthy Germans would go there for their vacations. It was strictly American now. Skiing was the major sport. The day was warm up there because the sun was bright...even getting rather sticky for skiing. It was June. A cable car took us across the caverns to the near top of that high mountain. From there we walked to the top on which there was a ten foot large bronze cross. We could see into Austria, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. The cable car brought us back to the resort, and the train brought us back to Partenkirchen. The trucks took us back to Wertingen.

We then moved into an underground factory. Our bombers had flown over it many times but it had never been seen. There was a lot of machinery in those hills and no one would think it was a factory at all. Slave Russian and French labor made shell casings there during the war. Soon the military government ran out of space to put German prisoners while they were waiting to get discharged by our government; so we had to move to give them our factory. We went to Ebnat.

At Ebnat we just guarded our own tanks. The order came for half of our company to go to Japan to fight the war there. That half left the tanks behind and went to Augsburg. We got a train there and rode in box cars all the way west through Germany and France to St Valory and Camp Lucky Strike on the coast.





We lived in tents there for twenty-nine days waiting for a ship to come back to the States. Then after a short furlough we were to go out San Francisco to the Pacific theatre. While at Camp Lucky Strike we slept till breakfast time, ate breakfast, went back to bed, ate dinner, went to the Red Cross for donuts and coffee, then a shower, supper, a movie at one of the ~~three~~ theatres, to bed to talk till about 2 AM, and then to sleep. For that whole month we did just that day after day.

When the day came to leave the camp, we piled in trucks and went to LaHavre to get our ship. LaHavre was really ruined during the war. The invasion had made it one of the main bombing targets. German prisoners were piling bricks into piles--different colors in different piles. Certain sections were bombed to the ground. After the usual Red Cross donuts and coffee we got on to our new ship--the Marine Devil---a sister to the one we came over on. We were out to sea the next day.

Our group coming to Camp McCoy had KP all the way across the ocean. We had plenty to eat you can be sure. Although, this time the mess hall was rather empty on the third and fourth day of the voyage. The water was calm those first few days, but when we really got out into the ocean we hit a storm. The ship just rolled, rolled, and rolled some more. We couldn't stop it! Then was the time I got sea sick. There is no feeling as miserable! After two days the boys were all on their feet again and we were enjoying the sunshine once more while crossing the Atlantic Ocean toward home.

After ten days we got close to the good old American shores. We saw whales spouting water and a lot of birds flying around. We pulled into Boston's harbor and sat there over night to await time to debark the next day. After Milk and donuts from the Red Cross we loaded into American trains and went to Camp Miles Standish near Boston. As we tore through the railroad yards every railroad engine blew its whistle. Boston was welcoming us back home. That was really a reception you can imagine, because there were plenty of engines there. All through town people waved to us welcoming us back.

At Camp Miles Standish we were told we'd be out of there and headed for home within 36 hours. It was true. Two days from there and I was up at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. That afternoon we were turned loose with money in our pockets and our railroad tickets home. Thirty days is what they gave us----at home. The war had ended while we were in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean so we didn't figure we would leave the country again. All of us came home in the best of spirits.

Home to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin and OUT Aug 22nd to January 1st

Upon the completion of my 30 days at home I was prepared to go back to the army. However, the night of my last day brought me a 15 day extension. Guess Uncle Sam has so many boys coming back he didn't have anywhere to put them. At the end of the extra 15 days I didn't get another telegram so back to Camp McCoy I went.

A number of us with high points were informed we would be stationed there until we got discharged. That was nice to hear. I was assigned to one of the companies up there, and my job was type out the reenlistment forms and interviewing the men that wanted to reenlist. That was some job for me---talk guys into reenlisting when I had no idea of doing it myself. We had plenty of men reenlist. The office was never dull. There were only four of us GI's working there with two married girls, two single girls, and a cute WAC. Two of us fellows used to have supper quite often at one of the married gal's homes----incidentally, their husbands and us were friends there in camp. They worked in a different office.

After being there a month the officer in charge wrote a letter recommending a promotion to sergeant. It went thru and Cpl Myers became Sgt. Myers. However, because I was a high pointer and nearing my departing time from the army, the following day the order was rescinded and Sgt Myers again became Cpl Myers. Had they never checked on the number of points I had it wouldn't have been known that I was nearing my discharge----I would have then been discharged with a higher rank.

I got home every week end, which made it nice. Home for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Then the 30th of December I moved over to get discharged myself. In those couple months I worked in the office it seemed like I was working away from home and coming home weekends. After spending New Years Eve in camp the afternoon of January 1st, 1946 had me on a train with that white piece of paper in my hand and the army as a thing of the past. It was a grand and glorious feeling!

