SERVING IN THE ARMORED CAVALRY IN EUROPE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR: 1944-1945

GUS BLASS II

The reminiscences of a lieutenant, who served in the 24th Squadron of the Fourth Cavalry Group, attached to the Third Armored Division in France, Belgium and Germany during the last two years of the Second World War, 1944-1945.

With the Armored Cavalry in Europe, 1944, 1945 and 1946

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To Amanda, Alex, Kristen, Isabel, Jack and Their Children to Come

All to soon, more than 50 years have passed since the Second World War. I believe that it is now the time to record my thoughts on paper, recollections that some day you might want to tell your children. In the enclosed pages, I have recorded the role that I played as a soldier in Europe in this great conflict.

I think the story of my experience is worth writing. I addressed it to you grandchildren with the hope it will afford a picture of a part of grandfather's life, of the experiences that I endured while they are still so foremost in my mind. I hope that in reading these words you will sense the undertones of my patriotism, idealism and love for one's country that I lived by.

May there never be a depreciation of the values of this great heritage that was left to us by our ancestors, a part that in some little way I am passing on to you.

Gus Blass II
Little Rock, Arkansas
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FOREWORD

We are now approaching year 2000 and World War II ended in 1945. I am well aware that the once vast ranks of veterans of that war are rapidly thinning, but I hadn't realized that those hostilities seem ancient history to two subsequent generations of our people. Not long ago, one of my grandchildren idly inquired of me, "grandfather, what is a 'Dear John' letter?" I explained to her that the term began during World War II when wives and sweethearts might find someone else, maybe closer to home, and write their former loved one many miles away in the military the bad news. Service people began calling those missives "Dear John" letters.

It suddenly dawned of me that my grandchildren never knew of such terms as Kilroy was here, snafu, V-mail, USO, victory garden, ration board, the Nuremberg trials, Axis Sally and Tokyo Rose; ones that grew out of the war. In fact, few young people today know little of the conflict and my own grandchildren are only vaguely aware their grandfather was one of those fighting the Germans at places like the Battle of the Bulge, Remagen Bridge, Nordhausen, Cologne and Aachen.

I am not writing this piece to be published, but rather to enlighten my own grandchildren and their coming children that this war had once been very personal to our family. Our history books in school deal more in the overall picture and not the personal events and experiences of the individual soldier.

I don't think any of us in the armed forces in the early and mid 1940s regarded ourselves as heroes, but rather young men who responded when our country was threatened and needed us. Believe me, there were times I was not only frightened, but also scared to death, just as service people in all our wars have been.

I remember the Remagen Bridgehead where we were fighting off repeated German counterattacks, sometimes two a night. I was in the armored cavalry and we were the outposts, well in front of our lines. Our armor in the World War II scheme of things was the first line defense. I recall talking with my commander over the radio during one of these intense combat actions, which I now record as an example of the tense situations that my men and I often participated in:

"Blass, can you hold them?" Captain Norman radioed.

"We're holding, sir. They're not breaking through," I answered on the radio.

"Blass, how close are the Krauts now?" asked the captain a few minutes later.

"Just a minute, sir. I'll hand one my SCR-536's and you can talk to them."

I was cold, dead tired and had diarrhea. Of late, I'd had only a chocolate bar to eat. At times, death seemed inviting. The war had become a very personal thing. We all had several reasons for fighting, patriotism always being one of them. Without acting presumptuous, I am enclosing am excerpt from a letter the captain wrote me after the war. He said for my part in helping hold the bridgehead at Remagen, I should have been awarded the Silver Star medal. However, I never looked at the fight as any more than doing my part. I lived through it and went on to have the wonderful family I have today. That is rewarding enough for me.

There are several people I want to thank for helping me with this project. Certainly, my wife Pat, who has supported me in all of my undertakings. Don Grisham, retired columnist of the *Daily Racing Form*, worked right along with me in writing these memories. Also John McEvoy, former editor of the Chicago edition of *the Daily Racing Form*, who read the original proofs and made valuable suggestions. Finally, Dan Grisham, Don's brother and a former member of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, who helped edit the finally text.

Keeping in mind that 54 years have passed, I want to apologize for perhaps forgetting someone's first name, or maybe omitting a name, or detail, that should have been included.

GI JOE FROM 1941 TO THE END OF WORLD WAR II

It all started so innocently. I was 18 years old and a student at the University of Arkansas in the autumn of 1941. My buddies and I had driven home to Little Rock for the weekend. I tell the story that we came home in a third-hand car since no one in our group could afford a second hand car. This one was a Terraplane, which soon went the way of the Hudson, Hupmobile, DeSoto and Nash.

I had traveled home specifically for my grandmother's birthday party on December 6. She was Mrs. Gus Blass and I always felt I was her favorite grandson because I was named after her husband. Mrs. Gus Blass was a wonderful person, refined, ever smiling, gracious, a good cook who always had special lunches and dinners when someone came home on certain occasions, like a visit from college.

On December 7 we were returning to Fayetteville and stopped at Conway to call home to confirm news that the Japanese had just bombed Pearl Harbor. All of our big battleships had been repeatedly hit. The Arizona, Utah and Oklahoma on battleship row were lost, along with several others. We later learned that the Pennsylvania and West Virginia were sunk, but in shallow water and could likely be salvaged later. The Tennessee and Maryland were damaged. The Nevada was beached, but later salvaged. My father said that an announcement about a declaration of war was imminent.

We students got back in the old car and returned to Fayetteville. We were all in Reserve Officers Training Corp, known as ROTC. Being a land grant college, the University at that time required ROTC of all its young male students. There was a patriotic urge in us to rush right out and enlist in one of the services. But, after discussing it with my family and faculty advisor, I decided to remain at the University, finish the semester and complete the military training that I'd already started.

Suddenly, our nation was at war. I remember men appearing in uniforms, shipping out, draft boards being set up and draft numbers and classifications being assigned. Women went for the men in uniform. A man of military age and not in uniform was looked on as a 4F, or slacker. Those categorized 4F couldn't pass the physical and a slacker was regarded as someone pulling strings to stay out of the service.

The slogan to keep the world safe for democracy quickly caught on and was about all that was needed to arouse patriotism and idealism to the point that all Americans wanted to do something. The old World War I marching song, "Over There", stirred everyone's emotion, as did "God Bless America". No one could sing the latter with as much feeling as could Kate Smith.

Rationing was a big thing. Families got booklets of stamps, some for sugar, others for food, shoes, tires and gasoline. The more important a worker was to the war effort, the more gasoline ration stamps he received.

That spring people began planting victory gardens for additional foodstuffs. In what used to be a flowerbed in the back yard, now vegetables grew. The office of price controls (OPA) was on everyone's lips. Prices were frozen on about everything. Most boards were made up of women and older men. My mother was in charge of the Red Cross here in Little Rock. One group made and rolled bandages, another group knitted socks and scarves.

Everyone was war conscious. I remember the top radio program was *Hit Parade*, sponsored by Lucky Strike cigarettes. It those days the Lucky Strike package was predominately green. The green dye was needed for the war effort, so Luckies changed its package to red and white and used the motto, "Lucky Strike Green has gone to war."

I remember the number one song was "*I'll be home for Christmas*". Of course, I would later spend two Christmases in the army in Europe. For me, home seemed very far away both those yuletides.

Training for War

After semester, we all were shipped to Camp Walters, Texas, about 140 miles from Dallas for 16 weeks of basic training. The barracks, hastily thrown up, were two stories with some 60 men to a floor. We had cots, footlockers and a few hangers each under a shelf. It didn't rain the entire 16 weeks that I was there. I remember we were listed alphabetically in the barracks, and I bunked next to Ed Bauer, who was later killed in the South Pacific. The food wasn't all that good, so we would volunteer for KP (kitchen police), because the mess sergeant fed his help well.

Basic training involved a lot of hard physical work. We drilled every day but Sunday. There were classes, films, guard duty, and the firing range. We marched everywhere we went. Don't let me forget the hikes with full field pack, rifle and equipment. The heat was always present, so we took salt tablets. After drilling or marching, we would be soaked in sweat. Our clothing would be streaked in salt when it dried.

We had to qualify with both rifle and pistol on the firing range. One group would be shooting, while another group marked targets in the pit. If your shot went outside the circle, the scorer would wave a flag, which we all called "Maggie's drawers."

Fall out, fall in, forward, about face, and halt. We marched and marched. Often, we sang out our cadence:

"I got a gal in San Antone,
She doesn't like to be alone.
Hippo, hoppo,
Ring out the moppo.

Left oh right, or left."

We often marched and sang in cadence about Chicago:

I used to work in Chicago
In a department store
I did, but I don't anymore.
A lady came in and asked for a cup
I asked her what kind - at the door
"Mug", she said. And mugger I did.
I don't work there any more.
Sound off!

Woe be to the foul-up. Embarrassment, extra detail, etc. (example):

Platoon halt! Private Jones, front and center!

Following a snappy salute, "Private Jones reporting as ordered sir."

"Take hold of your ears, Private Jones."

(The GI didn't seem to understand)

"You dummy, get a tight hold. Now pull your head out of your rear end!"

No basic training was complete without a 25 miles hike, full packs, a mortar barrel, or part of a machine gun. The hike had to be completed in eight hours. We marched 55 minutes with a five minutes break per hour. "Get it right the first time men, " the sergeant would order. "Else, you will have to do it all over again."

And the pay! We received $21 a month and didn't have any time to spend it. When we did get a couple of hours off, we were too tired to go anywhere. The nearest town was Mineral Wells, but we had no transportation. A run to the Post Exchange (PX) was possible unless we were restricted to the company area. There was a little recreation area where we could get 3.2 (percentage of alcohol) beer. It took a lot of 3.2 to give one a buzz. We were called GI because we were "Government Issue".

Maggie's drawers, GI, PX and KP. The military has its own lingo. A "head", or latrine, was a toilet. When "the eagle flies" meant payday. The "old man" was your commanding officer. He might be no more than 21, but he was still the old man. The "C.O." also meant the commanding officer. The "top kick" was your first sergeant. Your bunk was called the "sack". The OD was the officer of the day. The term "gung-ho" was applied to an overly zealous person or outfit. Rumors, called "scuttlebutt," seemed to abound. From the first day in basic training and thereafter, scuttlebutt had us shipping to this place or that when the 16 weeks of training were over.

The phrase "Kilroy was here" had its birth during the war. Even civilians picked up on Kilroy. Snafu (situation normal- all fouled up) meant a mix-up, and was a much-used phrase. Brass, or wheels, meant officers.

Officer Training

At last, basic training ended. We had earlier thought that, since we'd been in ROTC, we would automatically progress to officer candidates' school, known in military jargon as "OCS". This wasn't the case. We first were selected for OCS. We had to be interviewed by a board of regular officers and there were written tests to be taken and passed. Most of us did pass. I recall that all from Arkansas did.

We were sent to OCS school at Fort Knox, Kentucky near Louisville for a 15 weeks course in armor. Not only were those of us from the University there, but I remember a number from Louisiana State University and Texas A&M.

Much of the course was math related to artillery. We learned to fire 75-millimeter guns, which were then on tanks, and we were taught to fire the 37-millimeter cannon. We learned the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), the M1 rifle, .30 caliber carbine, the rifle grenade launcher, the light and heavy machinegun, the 81 mm mortar and how to operate the SCR 536 radio.

We learned how to take weapons apart and put them together in the dark. This really helped us later on in Europe. Suppose you are crawling in the mud and suddenly have to fire your rifle and it jams. You can't use a light or you could give away your position. So you must clean the weapon and put it back together while lying there in the dark. We also learned map reading, fire direction and plotting coordinates for calling in fire.

I was happy to be near Louisville when the Kentucky Derby was run. Several of us made plans to attend the great race since we were scheduled to be off on Saturday and the Derby was to run the first Saturday in May. Would you believe that someone in our group fouled up and, for discipline, we had to drill that Saturday from about 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at night. None of us got to see the Derby.

We graduated, but there were no commissions in armor, only infantry, cavalry, or field artillery. I was commissioned in the cavalry. At age 20, I felt a number of emotions that day. I felt proud, tough, confident, patriotic, carefree, scared, but glad to get OCS behind me and to pin the gold bar of a second lieutenant on my shoulder.

Stateside Duty as a New 2nd Lieutenant

After graduating from OCS, I was assigned to a cavalry unit at Fort Riley, Kansas. At that time, Fort Riley was America's headquarters for cavalry and was one of the oldest posts in the country. Fort Riley, still active today, dates back to May 17, 1853. It was here that the storied 7th Cavalry was formed in 1867. George A. Custer was second in command of the fort.

Located near Junction City, the main fort is up a hill. We new officers were garrisoned down in a flat region known as Camp Funston. We were required to pay dues to the main officers' club even though we were not permitted to go there except at certain hours or for specific occasions.

We had to look like cavalry officers and were required to buy breeches, boots, hats, spurs and carry riding crops. I remember one night that there was a formal dinner at the main officers' club. That evening my friend Zeke had a date with the general's daughter. While dancing, Zeke caught his spurs in the hem of his date's long dress just as he twirled her. Off came her skirt, right there on the dance floor!

Zeke was a fun guy, tall, angular and witty. We had been at OCS together in Louisville, where a lot of whiskey is made. At that time, the distilleries were working around the clock. One afternoon when we were on leave in town I asked him,

> *"Zeke, are you are trying to drink up all the booze in town."*
>
> *"No chance of that here, Blass," he answered, "because I got them working nights."*

At Fort Riley, I was assigned to the firing line to train young soldiers to use the M1 rifle. One day a colonel drove up in his jeep to do an inspection. As he climbed from the jeep, he caught a spur and fell face first on the ground. I laughed aloud and promptly found myself assigned officer-of-the-day duties for the next three weekends.

I taught men to fire from various positions, such as prone, standing and kneeling. We had several trainees from the Appalachian region of Kentucky and Tennessee. One boy couldn't say fire, but instead pronounced the word "farr", as in "farrwood".

The instructor would say, "Ready on the left! Ready on the right! Ready on the firing line. Targets...Fire! You weren't permitted to shoot, until the command "FIRE" was given. One day this boy fired prematurely after I'd only said, "ready on the left!" I called out, "who fired that shot?" Rather sheepishly, he looked up from his prone position and answered: "I farred it."

Shipping Out to Europe

Not long after that I was assigned overseas, but not until after I had taken a furlough home. After my leave in Little Rock, I reported to Fort Dix, New Jersey, for shots and indoctrination. Then 14,000 of us boarded the *Queen Mary* for Europe. It took 24 hours of constant loading to get us all aboard even though we had six gangplanks in use the entire time.

England and America were allies now and to consolidate the alliance, Winston Churchill offered the *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth* – the greatest liners in the world - as troopships. General George Marshall, our chief of staff, asked Churchill how many men to place on the liners per trip? Churchill replied that each ship had enough lifeboats and accommodations for 8,000, but in an emergency could carry 14,000 troops. From then on each liner was packed to the gunwales with military personnel.

The two Queens made the crossings alone instead of as part of a convoy because both used their speed to outrun enemy submarines. A convoy, say of 50 ships, can move only as fast as the slowest boat in the group. Slower ships in a convoy are much more vulnerable to a torpedo than a fast moving liner like the *Queen Mary*.

Happily, no troop liner on the Atlantic run was ever lost. But, we were constantly vigilant as thousands eyes continuously scanned the ocean around us. All of us worried about German submarines or U-boats as they were called. They were known in the Kraut navy as "unterseebooten," roughly translated to undersea boats, or U-boats. They were given a number when built, starting with U-1. After the war, we learned that 1,162 had been constructed.

The U-boat was a fierce weapon - perhaps Germany's strongest arm. For example, the most successful of the Kraut commanders was Otto Kretschmer, who commanded first the U-23 and then the U-99. Commander Kretschmer sunk 44 ships and 266,629 in total tonnage, yet sat out half of World War II as a prisoner of war in Canada.

The IXB class submarine was the most widely used type of German submarines during the time I was on the *Queen Mary* bound for Europe. It carried a crew of 48, which included four officers, three warrant officers, 14 petty officers and 27 seamen. It displaced 770 tons, was 75 meters in length and 6 meters across at the beam. It carried a maximum of 14 torpedoes. On deck, it had one 8.8-centimeter cannon and two anti-aircraft guns.

But cramped quarters and seasickness on the Queen Mary were by themselves sufficient to make the six days crossing the most wretched of some men's whole service career. The constant changes of course at full speed (28.5 knots) which the largest liners made as they zigzagged their ways across the Atlantic unescorted added to their passengers discomfort. I remember there were eight of us in our 10x12-foot cabin. Down

below, men were stacked in hammocks eight high. The portholes were blacked out and the seas very rough. There was a lot of seasickness and no one was sicker than I.

If you ever were nauseous for a few hours, imagine being that way for six days and nights. Remember that we didn't have Dramamine back then. I recall being sick in my bunk feeling like I was about to die when an officer came an announced that I had duty to perform on B-Deck.

"I'm sick, real sick. I can't go," I replied.

"You go, or you will be court martialed," he warned.

"I'm so sick, tell the colonel he'll have to bring the court martial to me," I countered.

I didn't hear any more about the incident. We arrived in England on the sixth day. After disembarking, we boarded a train and traveled all night to Southampton. We then took a boat the next night and landed in LeHavre, France, located on the English Channel at the mouth of the Seine River, some 110 miles northwest of Paris. During World War I, the Americans and British had used LeHavre as a disembarkation and supply port.

The Germans had occupied LeHavre, which was badly damaged when I got there. After we chased them out, the port was used by the Allies to unload troops and supplies. We climbed a steep hill loaded down with equipment and full duffel bags. Getting up that hill was one of the most physically demanding things I have ever endured.

When we finally got there and assembled, we were assigned to a "repo depo," short for replacement depot. From there, we were loaded into boxcars, which were called "forty and eight" in those days. This meant that the carrying capacity was intended to be 40 men or eight horses. It took us a day and two nights to get to where we were going. We had neither food nor toilet facilities during the entire trip.

My Unit: 24th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Group

Arriving, I was assigned to the 24th Squadron of the Fourth Cavalry Group. The Fourth Cavalry was in the First Army and attached to the Third Armored Division. The name cavalry remained, but by now the army had mechanized. Armor had replaced horses. I became a 2nd lieutenant platoon leader in Company A. My platoon (three platoons to a company) was comprised of three armored cars and seven armored jeeps. Each armored car had a driver, radio operator, gunner and commander. This was when at full strength. When less than full strength, the vehicle commander doubled as gunner and the driver as radio operator.

The company consisted of three platoons of armored cars, one platoon of light tanks and one platoon of supplies, which included field kitchen, clothing, medical supplies,

etc. The supply platoon also transported shells, ammo, etc. Luckily, when I arrived some enterprising people had welded steel shields on the front of the jeeps for protection.

Anytime any outfits of the First Army were to jump off and be a part of major action, it seemed the Third Armored and a couple of infantry divisions were the ones chosen as "point." I thought they should take turns and divide up the danger as to which outfit was to lead off, but it seemed our people were inevitably selected. Maybe it was the same philosophy when a basketball game was on the line, you wanted your best man drawing the fouls and shooting free throws. Surely, I thought, a couple of the other groups could take a turn being first to start.

I had taken two years of French in high school and another two years of it in college. Going over, I thought this would be very valuable to me in Europe, where French is a common language. When I got to France and later Belgium, then Switzerland, I discovered that the average citizen in those countries spoke better English than I spoke French.

I was quite scared when joining the outfit. But, luckily I had two seasoned sergeants in Sgt. Miller and Sgt. Cauriveaux. Both had been with the Fourth Cavalry almost the entire time. The Fourth Cavalry was a member of the Fifth Corps of the First Army and was attached to the Third Armored Division. Fourth Cavalry always ran point for Third Armored. This was the case until we got shot up and had to call the Third Armored for help (on the point) in providing heavy fire.

General Patton came out of the war a national hero, but he wasn't all that popular with our guys. Patton was known as "Blood and Guts," but our soldiers were quick to say: "some one else's blood and some one else's guts!"

I did not have time to tarry because we were going into hard action. The Germans had come out of the Ardennes and the Battle of the Bulge was underway. What a baptism of fire I received!

The Battle of the Bulge

I doubt the Battle of the Bulge could take a back seat in the military career of any soldier. Being a part of this battle was the most memorable event of my military career. It came at Christmas time in 1944 and was Hitler's final offensive of the war. After it, the Germans were on defense, fighting and withdrawing deeper into their homeland.

Hitler's plan was to come out of the Ardennes in a swift move, break through the Allies line, turn north and capture Antwerp. This would cut off the English Army from that of the American one. The Ardennes is an area where Germany and Belgium join along the Our River. Luxembourg and Belgium are to the south, and Aachen, Germany is to the north.

Somehow, Hitler thought he might take Antwerp and negotiate some kind of peace. We had our gasoline stored at Liege, one of the German's main objectives. Hitler thought that by making such a wedge in our lines he could create another Dunkirk.

The battle started on December 16. I remember most the cold and snow. The temperature was about 10 degrees above zero. We did not have air support for several days because our air force was "souped in" over in England. General Eisenhower had not expected a German offensive in this area, so many of the units there were unseasoned. One needs to understand the terrain of this area to properly imagine the battlefield. The terrain consists of forested hills, steep twisting valleys, rushing streams, and tiny quaint villages. There are few good or straight roads.

During the Battle of the Bulge, we were rushed to defend St. Vith, Belgium. I have always thought St. Vith was the most important town, even more so than Bastogne. In stopping the Germans at St Vith, we had denied them an important objective. If the Germans had a chance of success, it had to come in a lightning thrust. There was no room in their game plan for delay, and yet we stalled them.

Harrison Salisbury, writing in *History of World War II*, noted: "All but cut off, the Americans failed to yield St. Vith on the right shoulder of the German breakthrough. The Germans drastically needed to overrun St Vith because it guarded the Allies' oil and gasoline supplies. In their quick strike the Nazis couldn't carry enough fuel on their own to fight a long battle. Unable to take St Vith, the Germans finally split their force and went around, which brought them to the crossroads town of Bastogne."

Bastogne was due west of us. The Germans encircled Bastogne and had it besieged when Patton and his Third Army arrived from the South on a dead run. But oddly it was the 101st Airborne Division, fighting a ground war, arrived first by an hour or so and beat the large German panzer force of General Heinrich Von Luttwitz. Patton's forces came right behind them.

Later, Von Luttwitz wrote, *"I still don't understand how General Patton and the airborne leaders moved so many men and so much equipment as far as they did in no more time than they had."*

Eisenhower was quick to realize that this was a major German offensive. "Tell George to send two divisions (of his 3rd Army)," Eisenhower told Omar Bradley. At that moment, Patton was poised to strike into Germany's coal bin, the Saar. Patton's Army was intact, not having been shot up like the First Army, whose infantry, armor and artillery had really been hit hard. Discounting Patton, the only reserves that Ike had other than troops in England, which were too far away to be a factor, were the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions that were recovering from earlier fighting in camps located around Rheims. Both airborne divisions were told to move out and fight as foot soldiers.

Meeting with Patton, Bradley and Jacob Devers, Eisenhower asked how soon

Patton could wheel his army 90 degrees and strike north into the southern flank of the Bulge?

"Two days," Patton answered.

"Sure, you don't need three?" asked Ike.

"Not my style," said Patton. *"Me and my men can do anything, even change direction. But, getting on with it is what we do best."* With a salute, he was gone.

There are many things I recall about the Battle of the Bulge. One thing was that our Christmas presents were either lost or confiscated by the Germans. Another thing I remember is the severe cold that never rose above 10 degrees. We had fur-lined combat boots, which made your feet sweat. Often the perspiration froze and caused trench foot disease. Because my group was equipped with armored vehicles, we could remove our damp socks and dry them on warm equipment. The infantry outside did not have this luxury. Instead, they would sometimes take off their wet socks and wrap them around their waists or shoulders, hoping to get them dry. We had many cases where the nails would turn blue and then the feet white as trench foot set in. A number of men lost their toes, feet up to the ankles as a result.

Not only were we fighting seasoned German troops, but adverse weather. In hot weather, at least you usually got cool nights. But in ten-degree day temperature, the nights are even colder. The ground was frozen, so you can imagine how tough it was to dig foxholes for protection. Luckily, we had armored cars, so during the Battle of the Bulge, I recall we slept under our vehicles. But we just couldn't get warm. And the snow! One could have made a small fortune selling sunglasses because the glare on the endless snow was unbelievable.

I really didn't realize we had a segregated army until I got in combat. The blacks in our area were mostly in the transportation corps. This was what we called *the Red Ball Express*, which hauled endless loads of ammo, food, supplies, etc. Why the name? The maps were poor and printed in the metric system. So we devised a system of painting red dots on poles, trees and landmarks for them to follow. That is how the name *Red Ball Express* came about. There were many heroes among those black fellows driving, hauling and fighting. At St. Vith, they got out of their trucks and fought side-by-side with us.

At the Bulge we also had to worry about English-speaking German troops who dressed in captured American uniforms. They infiltrated our lines, cut phone lines, turned road signs the wrong way, directed American columns down the wrong road, and used other ruses to disrupt us. These counterfeit troops were the idea of SS Colonel Otto Skorzeny and the undertaking was designated *Operation Grief.* At the time, the Allies called Skorzeny "the most dangerous man in Europe". Their activities got so bad that MPs' were stopping everyone and asking them questions that they believed only real Americans would know. Two of the questions were: "How many home runs did Babe

Ruth hit?" and "What's the capital of Maryland?" A correspondent said "Baltimore" and was waved on before he could correct himself. However, MPs' locked up Brigadier Bruce Clark, of the 7th Armored briefly because he kept insisting the Chicago Cubs were in the American League. The German infiltrators dressed in American uniforms were eventually all captured and shot. Wearing an enemy uniform is considered spying and totally against the rules of war. Once a soldier takes off his uniform to avoid discovery, he loses his rights as a prisoner of war under the Rules of the Geneva Convention.

One tragedy of this battle was the massacre of 140 Americans at Malmedy, just up the road from St Vith. The men, all of Battery B, 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion, ran into a tank column commanded by SS Colonel Joachim Peiper. Not equipped to fight, the spotters surrendered. Suddenly, several German machineguns opened up, massacring the men standing there with their hands in the air. Some of the Americans survived by feigning death.

Both Peiper and Skorzeny survived the war. Peiper was convicted of war crimes and sentenced to death, but the conviction was later commuted to life in prison. He was eventually released. Skorzeny was tried by a military court and acquitted.

The massacre at Malmedy had a sobering effect on the American troops. Until that time, none of us were particularly mad at the Germans. They were doing their jobs and we were doing ours. But after Malmedy, there was a change in the attitude and behavior of our soldiers. It was hard to hold back some of our guys when they encountered prisoners.

When the Germans went on the surprise offensive even airborne troops were rushed into the breech. Private First Class Kurt Gabel of the 17th Airborne was fighting near the village of Houffalize when he saw two medics shot as they crawled forward in the snow to try and drag a wounded American to safety. Gabel, born in Germany but raised in California, was guarding a half dozen German POWs nearby when he witnessed the shooting. He promptly herded his German prisoners ahead of him at gunpoint to use as a shield while he rescued the three fallen Americans.

"That's not in the Geneva Convention Rules," yelled his lieutenant from behind a fallen tree.

"Neither is shooting medics," retorted PFC Gabel.

There was no further firing as Gabel proceeded forward. Speaking in German and holding his rifle steady, Gabel had his POWs carry the two medics and one fallen infantryman to safety.

One of my good friends was Captain Barrett Dillow, who commanded Company "C" of the 24th. He was one of the best, most fearless men I met during my time in the

service. Wounded three times, he was awarded two Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars and a Distinguished Service Cross.

As we were leaving the Ardennes Forest, Barrett was shot through the stomach. He sent for me and I arrived to see him bandaged from his hips to his armpits.

"You are lucky, Barrett, because they will send you stateside to recover. By time you're well, the war will be over," I told him.

He gave me a wan smile, saying, *"maybe, Gus, maybe."* A day or so later, I looked up from my armored car and there stood Dillow. He had gone AWOL (Absence without Leave) from the hospital and rejoined us.

"Barrett, what are you doing here? You had a ticket home," I said in astonishment. Dillow answered, *"Gus, I had to come look after you. Those fellows on the other side are tough soldiers and mean! You are still green."*

Combat Observations, Memories and Comparisons

Our equipment wasn't as good as what the Germans had. The Germans had 88s millimeter guns on their Tiger tanks while we had less powerful 75s on our Sherman tanks. Often you would see our shells just bounce off the 70-ton Tigers, which also had a lot more armor than our tanks.

The Tiger was a formidable weapon. It was designed by the Porsche Company, which today makes the fast and expensive automobiles. The Tiger had a flash suppressor. When they fired at night we couldn't see the flash from their guns, so it was even more difficult to locate the tank. We couldn't hide our flashes, so the Germans could readily locate the Shermans. The best way to knock out a Tiger was for an infantryman to crawl within a short distance and fire a bazooka (rocket launcher) at a track. You stopped a Tiger by blowing off one of its tracks. American armor defeated German armor by exchanging three Shermans for a Tiger in a battle of attrition. Back home, our manufacturing plants weren't being bombed day and night but our air force was bombing the German plants making the Tigers. So we had a lot more equipment available than the Germans.

The enemy also had rockets, something we called them "screaming minnies." I know that in the Ardennes they would fire those rockets through the trees over us and spray shrapnel everywhere.

The Germans also had what we called the "Bouncing Betsy" landmine. Troops crossing a field would trip a wire and the Betsy wound spring into the air about three feet high and explode.

Our outfit had a lot more firepower than called for the in the technical manual. We had earlier cannibalized a P-47 American fighter plane that had been shot down. We took the .50 caliber machineguns from the fighter and welded them to our armored car and jeeps. Ordinarily, we would only have .30 caliber weapons. People would sure scatter when we opened up with the .50s. Every tenth round was a tracer because 50-cal. ammo came with tracers since it was made for use in aircraft. With tracers, pilots could see the effect of their shooting, which helped them "walk" it right into the cockpit, plane engine or other target.

A tough part of combat was the anxiety of not knowing just when the next shot would be fired or where the next German sniper might be hiding. Fear of the unknown is always unnerving.

The Germans were very experienced. I remember that they would intersect, or "crossfire," their machineguns instead of shooting at a particular enemy. When advancing soldiers would attack, no one in the area could escape being hit.

We in armored cars and light tanks learned the hard way about advancing in vehicles. The roads were narrow, so the Germans would hide and let columns pass. Then they would open up from the rear, knock out the trailers, and then take their time on dealing with the leaders, who had to slow, turn and return to fight off the attackers.

Casualties are demoralizing and tough to take psychologically. The number of casualties in my unit was very high. The turnover in our outfit caused by the loss of those killed or wounded was astronomical. We experienced 175 percent turnover after I joined the 24th Squadron.

We had twins in our outfit. For some reason in WW II, they were not separated. They stayed together and fought together. One day, one of the twins was killed. The surviving one "totally lost it". He went off his rocker and we had to send him to the rear. It was hard for all of us left behind to cope.

We had troops get "shell-shocked" from constant shelling. At that time, we had no counselors. Today, one bad incident will bring about a team of counselors. But, all this came after my combat days.

One thing we really needed was a barber. We finally came up with a Latino soldier named Salcedo, who we turned into a barber. It took him a while, but he finally got to where he could give a decent haircut. I wrote mother about this and she sent us a pair of barber scissors.

Instead of United States currency, we were paid in scrip, which could be used for money. When I got leave passes, one each to Paris and Switzerland, the scrip was accepted in both locations. Scrip was used mostly for crap and poker games however.

We officers received liquor rations of scotch and bourbon. We also received cigarettes. I didn't smoke so I divided mine with my men. I did have cigars, which I carried and chewed as a cover, perhaps so that these men wouldn't see my fright. I believe that anyone who says they never got scared is being a little careless with the truth. A popular comment among my men, and a lot of young men who were there, was:

"We're not old enough to vote, but we are old enough to die."

The army newspaper was then, as is today, known as the *Stars and Stripes*. It was a daily that carried news from home as well as overseas. One of the items it printed was that Al Jolson had been in Hot Springs, Arkansas, doing a USO show when he met Earle Galbraith. At that time, Earle was engaged to my good friend Frank Elliott, then overseas with the 16th Armored Division. It wound up that Jolson married Earle, who moved to California with the entertainer. A few days after reading about the wedding in *the Stars and Stripes*, Frank Elliott received a "Dear John" letter from Earle.

A "Dear John" is a letter that servicemen receive when a wife or girl friend back home writes that they have found someone else. Galbraith was one of four trips to the altar for Jolson. The latter had made history in 1927 when his movie *"The Jazz Singer"* was the screen's first talkie.

Mail call is usually the highlight of a serviceman's day. I remember that we would wait days for a letter, even though mail often brought sadness. While overseas, I regularly wrote eight friends in the service. Late in the war, four letters were returned to me as "unable to deliver". Ed Bauer was killed in the Pacific. Captain Raymond Sallee died in Germany, and Bill Demerit, a member of the tank corps, was lost in the final days of hostilities. My thoughts turn to Ed Bauer. We had been at the University together. Ed was from Gillett and as good a softball pitcher as one could find. I don't recall Ed ever giving up more than two runs in any one game.

Charlie Vestal, a good friend, was reported missing in action. Charlie's MIA (Missing in Action) status was so stressful to his family that his mom refused to accept the fact her son was dead. She kept saying he would come back after the war and that they would find him alive somewhere on an isolated island. For years, Mrs. Vestal kept a light on her son's picture.

In 1968, the pieces of a World War II plane were found where years earlier it had hit a mountaintop in a remote, inaccessible part of a South Pacific island. The skeleton within the wreckage was the remains of Vestal. Charlie's dog tags were still around his neck.

Thinking about Charlie, I remember an incident that happened to us during the war. Charlie had been a good chum when we were growing up in Little Rock and had joined the old army air corps. We happened to be home on leave at the same time and decided to go out. Wearing our uniforms, we drove over to the Belvedere Club, located

just outside Hot Springs. In those days, the Belvedere had gambling. Between us, Charlie and I had $17, which we soon lost. As we were leaving, one of the Belvedere officials, I think it was a pit boss, asked how we had done at the table.

"We busted out, lost our whole $17," said Charlie.

The man handed us $17, saying, "here is your money back, but I want you to promise me, you will not return while wearing your uniforms. We don't want people seeing us taking our service boys' money."

The Union General Sherman in the Civil War was right when he said, *"war is hell!"* After the Battle of the Bulge, we went north through the Hurtgen Forest, a heavily wooded area southeast of Aachen. This forest was known as the Argonne in World War II because it was the site of one of the bloodiest and costliest battles of the war. It was attacked, fought, and captured by the 9th and 28th Infantry Divisions, among others, comprised of 120,000 troops. The costly battle resulted in 30,000 casualties.

The Battle for Aachen

We continued on and captured, perhaps I should say recaptured, Aachen. This was the first town captured in Germany. In Aachen, I took my first bath in a long time. They had told us not to change our long-handle underwear because the oil in our skin would permeate into our underwear and give us warmth. We also shaved for the first time in quite awhile. We all had beards by then because it had been so cold. The beards protected our faces.

For food we had packaged combat rations, both C-Rations and K-Rations. We seldom received hot food. Even today, I still can't eat marmalade, Spam, or chipped beef on toast because I ate so much of it the service. We troops called chipped beef on toast, "shit on a shingle". During the Battle of the Bulge, our cooks and mess help had taken rifles and fought along side us in the lines.

As we moved into Germany we'd take a town and stop for a while. I always picked a house with a basement and a strong roof. We slept in the basement because enemy artillery shells frequently came in and the basement afforded us the most protection. If a basement was not available, I'd try to sleep under a heavy table. We could also get a light into our place unless we were real close to the Germans. We'd leave our engines on and run a light into the house, taking it right off our headlights.

My Most Harrowing Combat Experience

Leaving Aachen, our mission was to capture Cologne, which meant crossing the Roer River. Cologne is some 45 miles northeast of Aachen. There is a little town about three miles from where we crossed the Roar. I remember that the land was flat as flat as

the back of my hand. This was the type of land on which the dreaded Tiger tank loved to engage.

"Tank country," I mused to myself as we moved along the Germany countryside. It wasn't long until I saw tank track marks. I halted my vehicles and studied the tracks, which seemed a million miles wide. The Tiger tracks were much wider than those of our Shermans. I touched the tracks and found that the mud was still wet. There was a Tiger up ahead almost certainly in that little town, probably half-hidden and waiting to ambush us. My stomach did flip-flops!

I called my superior officer, Captain Norman, and asked him for some firepower to soften up things before we moved in. Sometimes, you could bring heavy artillery in on a German tank and it would return fire, thus giving away its location.

"Blass, time is of the essence. Go ahead and take the town," said Norman.

I told Sgt. Cauriveaux to lead the charge and I'd be in the third vehicle. The third vehicle gives the one in charge the best vantage from which to command the entire column. One can see everything and issue orders accordingly.

Cauriveaux, a veteran of some of our hardest fighting, just shook his head. He had made the D-Day landing at Normandy, but wanted no part of going after a Tiger tank in a jeep. I told Corporal Fortner to get in the lead vehicle. He refused to budge. I called Captain Norman and again requested heavy fire, needing it before anyone would take the lead vehicle into town.

"Speed gets 'em. After them, Blass," Norman commanded.

So I mixed a shot of grain alcohol and grapefruit juice, downed it, then had another. I eased into the head of the column and we started down the road. I could just imagine that Tiger lining us up in his sights.

Memories swirled in my mind. My thoughts were of mother. I wanted to see her again. I remembered the times that I had caused her problems and pain. I wanted to tell her that I had been wrong. I wished that I could tell mother that I loved her and appreciated all that she had done for me. And there was the thought that I might never see her again.

I thought of dad and wished I could thank him for putting me through school. I thought of the Razorbacks and how nice it would be see another football game. I knew the odds were better than even money that I'd be killed or wounded. To be killed now at age 21 was not an inviting thought.

I told the crews of the two jeeps and two other armored cars to follow me and we'd go in as fast as we could. If we were going to be a target, at least we would be a fast

one. Off we went, revved up to as fast as we could go. Miraculously, no enemy shells came as we roared into town. The awesome looking Tiger sat in the town center unmanned. We captured the tank, but the crew wasn't in sight. We soon found them inside a nearby building eating lunch. When we captured them, they had the most sheepish looks on their faces.

Looking back, that was my luckiest day of the war. I thanked God like I had never had before. Certainly, his hand had been on my shoulder.

Cologne

We went on to Cologne over fairly flat ground the whole trip. We were the point for the Third Armored Division. The 24th Squadron of the 4th Calvary Group was among the first into Cologne.

The Rhine River runs through Cologne. The landmark of the town is the ancient Cologne Cathedral. The city had been heavily bombed during the war but the cathedral was only slightly damaged and the only big building still standing. This surprised me because it was located next to a railway station that had been virtually obliterated by allied bombers.

There were a lot of snipers firing from the heights and ruins that we had to clean out. The main body of German soldiers had withdrawn and left the snipers as a rear guard. I remember there were Germans in the steeple of the cathedral and that it was my unit's job to climb the winding stairwell, fire and toss grenades in every little room as we advanced. We managed to clean out the steeple, but I lost one man killed and had two wounded in the action.

The Battle for Remagen

The battles to take Aachen and Cologne were costly. The 24th lost about 30 percent of its total strength. After taking Cologne we were told we could take a break and that maybe the war was over for us. But we had hardly got to sleep when we were awakened and informed that the Seventh Armored had surprisingly captured the bridge at Remagen. The town of Remagen is on the Rhine River about midway between Cologne and Koblenz. These events was a real windfall since the Germans had destroyed several bridges earlier rather than permit them to fall into our hands.

The bridge itself was actually named the Ludendorff, but mistakenly called the Remagen Bridge. It was the first bridge taken intact that led right into Germany. The Germans had failed to blow it up and were now trying desperately to do so. They continued bombing this bridge and also were tried to float explosives down the Rhine in hopes of blowing up the bridge supports.

The Allies desperately wanted to get some firepower across and into Germany, but feared that the weight of heavy tanks might collapse the damaged bridge. Because my outfit had armored cars and light tanks, we were sent across first to see if the bridge would support our weight. We quickly formed up at Cologne with approximately 100 armored vehicles, including light tanks, armored cars, armored jeeps and others, then headed south to Remagen, 60 miles away. It took us quite awhile to go that distance.

Our engineers put up a smoke screen well around the bridge. With so much smoke, German planes had trouble locating the bridge from the air. The travel was difficult and all the while we could hear bombing. But mostly, I remember all that smoke getting thicker as we neared Remagen. We finally got out of our armored cars and guided the vehicle behind us. You just couldn't see in all that smoke!

Why had the Germans failed to destroy the bridge when they had a chance before the Seventh Armored arrived on the scene? Later, we learned the Krauts' had mishandled the explosives, compounded by a snafu in the chain of commands. As a result, a company of the Seventh Armored had gotten across, killing or capturing the bridge defenders. The Germans had delayed too long.

As the Germans desperately pulled levers and pressed switches on that March 7, 1945 day, Able Company, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion of the Seventh Armored Division attacked across the bridge. Lt. Karl Timmermann of West Point, Nebraska led the charge. While Able Company fought its way across, members of the 9th Armored Engineer Combat Battalion under the leadership of Lt. Hugh Mott cut lead wires and defused breakers beneath them on the bridge's beams, catwalks and various other bridge supports. Although the Americans expected the bridge to blow up any second, they determinedly worked and fought on in anyway.

Firing from his hip, Lt. Timmermann halted briefly to shoot a German soldier firing at them from one of the towers. A few yards in front of Timmermann, his platoon sergeant, Joseph DeLesio and a squad leader, Sgt. Alex Drabik, were running forward and firing. Miraculously, none of the three were hit. Their bravery inspired the rest of their company to follow right behind them. Sgt. Drabik was the first American to reach the German side.

Years later, from his Toledo, Ohio home, Drabik would recall that unforgettable March day.

> *"Looking back at that run across the bridge.... I remember it just like a scene from a John Wayne movie,"* Drabik said. *"The Germans tried furiously to explode the demolition charges, but it was too late. Too many wires had been cut and too many fuse boxes and charges had been tossed into the swirling Rhine below."*

Suddenly, Timmermann's group was across and the fighting slowed, then halted. Captured defenders were soon herded into a tunnel on the German side. Quickly, the engineers began putting up smoke. By late afternoon, the Germans were trying to destroy the bridge through bombing.

Our (the Blass) group reached Remagen from Cologne on schedule and proceeded across the Rhine River. We held our respective breaths as we drove up onto the bridge and then crossed over through the dense smoke covering our move. Units that crossed with us were the 52nd Armored Infantry Regiment, 14th Tank Battalion, 47th Inf. Regiment, and the 1st Battalion of the 60th Infantry Regiment, all of 9th Armored Division. Others included the 311th Infantry. Regiment of the 78th Infantry Division and Company C of the 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion. As we crossed we could tell that the structure was obviously weakened.

Neither the Americans nor Germans had dreamed that a bridge would be taken intact at Remagen. As a result, there was neither an American plan to exploit the sudden success nor a German plan to rush reinforcement to plug the hole. Despite the absence of a plan, more than 25,000 Americans and countless tons of equipment quickly crossed. Ten days later, the Germans finally succeeded in destroying the bridge and I experienced a lonesome feeling as I watched the bridge finally collapse. I believe capturing the bridge and getting so many troops and equipment across quickly shortened the war by at least 60 days.

Hitler was so furious that the Americans had captured the bridge that he convened a court-martial. As a result, five German officers were ordered shot for "dereliction of duty" by failing to destroy the bridge and allowing it to fall into Allied hands. Only four German officers were actually shot, because the German bridge commander, Colonel Willi Bratge, had been captured during the battle. After the war, Bratge claimed to "have been a most fortunate POW."

Captain Karl Friesenhahn, the German engineering officer in charge of the demolition, returned to Remagen with his wife after the war and happened across Coy Clark, a visiting American. Clark had been one of Mott's engineers on the bridge on March 7, 1945. Friesenhahn asked Clark what recognition the American Army had given Timmermann, Drabik, DeLisio and Mott.

> The former member of Company B, 9th Armored Engineer Battalion, answered, *"they all got the Distinguished Service Cross."*
>
> *"They deserved them and then some,"* said Friesenhahn. *"They saw us trying to blow the bridge, and by all odds it should have blown up while they were on it. In my mind, they and several others with them were the greatest heroes in the whole war!"*

Frau Friesenhahn asked the whereabouts of the four. Clark reported, *"Timmermann is dead. After the war, he took his discharge and returned to Nebraska, where Remagen had made little news. In 1948, he returned to the army. He fought in Korea, made the landing at Inchon, and died of cancer in an army hospital in 1952. Drabik is working as a meat cutter in Toledo. DeLisio is regular army. Like Timmerman, he fought in Korea. Lt. Mott returned home to Nashville, Tennessee, after the war and earned a degree from Vanderbilt, in engineering, of all things."*

Clark asked how Friesenhahn had escaped Hitler's wrath since he was the demolition officer? Friesenhahn explained,

"The trial was held at Rimbach, down the Rhine from Remagen. "I had been taken prisoner in the tunnel, but I was tried and acquitted 'in absentia.' General Huebner was there at the trial, as was Field Marshal Model. The trial was a dumb headed thing since none of the three people in charge had any legal experience. I had always respected Model, but that changed after the trial, or special court, as they called it. My assistant, August Kraft, ran away while we were surrendering in the tunnel. Somehow he escaped. But as one who had overseen placing the demolition, he was charged for high treason because there was no explosion. After they led him into a room following a short hearing, he was told by Model, "not to worry, things would be okay." An hour later, Kraft was taken into some nearby woods and shot. As I said, I have no respect for Model, despite his many military honors and decorations. Kraft would have been so much better off had he permitted himself to be taken prisoner," concluded Freisenhahn.

Hitler was so irate that the Americans had crossed the Remagen Bridge onto German soil that the counterattacks were furious. The Germans tried to take back the bridgehead and we were determined to hang on and not give an inch. We prevailed.

I remember the K-rations, the arrival of new people, and the fury of the counterattacks. The Americans were so anxious to get troops and firepower across the bridge before it collapsed, that no attempt was made to get the kitchens or a lot of heavy equipment over. Because the bridge wouldn't support the weight of heavy loads, we had to fight with the lighter stuff. We had been eating K-rations and chocolates since the battles for Cologne and Remagen.

We held off the Germans with the help of a lot of green troops. We had suffered so many casualties at the Bulge, Aachen and Cologne that replacements came to us in big numbers. Most of them were my age or younger and very green. Few of them knew how to fight, deploy, or were knowledgeable of German fighting techniques. Many couldn't use the 37 millimeters or operate the radio. At that time, we were only holding ground and there was no room to back up. Some of the veterans were saying that it was better to fight 30 percent short of troops than have to train the new kids. I agreed, even though at

this stage I was looked on as only a semi-veteran. At the bridgehead, it was difficult to fight off counterattacks and train new people to fight at the same time. It is very difficult to protect yourself and train inexperienced troops at the same time. Combat experience is a good teacher in warfare. If you live long enough to get it, you greatly increase your odds of survival.

The 106th and 99th Divisions held the bridgehead with us. Some of those guys had not fired a shot in anger until the Battle of the Bulge, but they had since learned their lessons well. They could really fight. But like all of us, they had a lot of new replacements.

The German soldier was very methodical. When he could, he loved to place his machineguns in a certain piece of terrain such as a knoll under a tree to hinder a mortar round coming in. He also preferred foliage for front cover. He often employed two machineguns. Frequently, after firing one, he'd hold the second for surprise. When you tried to flank the machinegun you knew about, you often walked right into the hidden one. The Germans might also fire three machineguns, all in crossfire, and still hide one. If you advanced even close to the brunt of that crossfire, you got cut in two.

Of course, the weather remained cold and wet. We were hardly ever dry or clean. Dirt was everywhere. I remember it being in my hair and foxholes. However, we had to always keep our guns oiled and clean.

We often slept under our vehicles and in the mud. And there was the smoke. Our engineers were still laying it down to obscure the bridge from the German air force.

After the Remagen Bridge had fallen, our engineers built several pontoon bridges to bring across heavy stuff, especially artillery and big tanks. In the meanwhile, we had to hold on. In other words, we were expendable! The fight was for time to get the big stuff and more troops across the Rhine. Help was on the way to handle the attacks.

Our outfits formed a semi-circle around the bridgehead. Once we got outposts established, we knew we could hold on. There was no route of escape available. We later learned from prisoners that the German High Command had ordered that all Americans around the bridgehead and those coming from it be wiped out. Our men stood guard six hours on and two off around the clock, but everyone fought when the attacks came. We were cold, tired, hungry, and in many cases, disillusioned.

At times it was kind of eerie, because the Germans made their counterattacks at night and early morning, rarely later in the day. The Krauts knew the terrain, every hill, knoll and stream. By comparison, we were strangers to the land. They might attack twice at night or once at night and once early, then not again until darkness. We armor units were the outposts. It was scary out there at night at the OPs (outposts). There would be strange sounds and you knew one of the noises could be start of another attack. When I

slept, I had a .45 pistol at my hand, an M1 on one side of me and a BAR on the other. All were fully loaded with additional ammo close by. And I said prayers.

The Beginning of the End

After we finally got the Remagen bridgehead secured, we were ordered to continue running point for the Third Armored. It was right after this that we lost General Maurice Rose, commander of the Third Armored. I thought General Rose was the most outstanding general that I ever met. He was tough, but a good man. He drove his men, but not excessively. And he would never ask anyone to do something he wouldn't do himself.

Being up front with his men cost Rose his life. After crossing at the Remagen Bridge in Germany, his group ran into a superior German force that overran Rose's headquarters, almost wiping it out. Rose was in the act of surrendering the few men he had left when a young German soldier cut loose on him with a machinegun at point blank range. His lose was a real tragedy because he was the most terrific general I had any dealings with during the war. In my opinion, General Rose was braver and a better solder than Generals Patton, Bradley, Hodges or Collins.

When the Germans suddenly started falling back we became the pursuers. The British crossed to the north and we angled north toward Kassel. The 106th and 99th were still with us and the plan was to form a giant pincer movement and trap a hundred thousands Germans in the pocket. We were fortunate that Germany had good highways-autobahns they were called, which allowed us to make good time. When we came upon an intersection, we left a detachment for roadblocks to try to prevent the Germans from escaping.

Our major problem was that we had outrun our supplies of food, fuel, ammo, etc. But we took Kassel and pushed on. No rest for the weary. But now we were inspired, gung-ho you might put it, because we had that feeling the war was about over. We were thinking that if we could just survive three more months we would make it home. We were told to take Leipzig, but to get to Leipzig we had to go into the Harz Mountains where a lot of Germans were hiding.

The Germans also sensed that the war about ending. More of them now were young kids and older men. The German term for them was *volksturm*, or "people's guard." The German home guard consisted of civilians organized for last-ditch fighting in the final weeks of the war. All able-bodied males from 15 to 60 were conscripted. We were capturing groups of them; some using wooden bullets instead of steel, lead or copper.

In the Harz Mountains we captured a small town. That night we rigged up a couple of bright lights and went into a dense area of underbrush where we killed two big deer. Fresh meat after all those K-rations! We couldn't believe our good fortune. All the

men in our group would share the food. We took the deer to our field kitchen and the mess sergeant promised to have the big feed of deer steaks the next night.

The word got around in hurry and that evening we showed up hungry. The menu turned out to be creamed beef on toast, the same old SOS instead of the feast we'd expected. We learned that some brass, a colonel, a pair of majors and several captains had taken our deer.

We sped on. In one small town, a group of Germans opened up on us. We returned fire, killing a number of them. We lost several men as well. Only then did we learn that the offending Germans were 13 and 14-year-old kids. None of the officers wore any insignias on their uniforms. Insignias were inviting targets for snipers. It seems the seasoned German troops had withdrawn, been eliminated or captured, leaving the kids as a rear guard element.

Nordhausen

I was wounded as we neared Nordhausen. I was standing up in my armored car firing a machinegun when it happened. We don't know what kind of shell hit us, but it contained a lot of shrapnel. The round came in from the passenger's side, killed my radio operator, and hit me in the mid-right leg. They removed the steel pieces, gave me a penicillin shot, put in some stitches, bandaged the leg, and then sent me back to my unit. When I arrived, the car had been cleaned up and we continued the push forward.

Approaching Nordhausen, we smelled a stench that was almost unbearable. Entering the town, we found there had been a lot of slave labor there: Poles, Czechs, French and Jews. They were stacked in piles, many dead and still others more dead than alive. Those still living were barely hanging on.

It is unimaginable how terribly the Germans had treated those slave laborers. We learned there had been many more atrocities at Nordhausen as well. We made the town people come out and bury the dead. A good number of our high ranking army officers, including Eisenhower and members of the press corps, viewed the scene. It was awful. The local people blamed the SS troops and the Gestapo. These groups were Hitler's private elite army, made up of those who could prove their Aryan blood all the way back to 1750 AD. Hitler had promised them that they would be the aristocracy of Nazi Germany after the war.

The End of the War

We were moving now and fortunate that we controlled the air. Our army didn't have equipment nearly as good as the Germans. Our tanks couldn't match up against the Tiger, which had better armor and flash suppressors. The Germans also had rockets. Their helmet offered more protection than ours did. We lacked the cold weather foot protection they enjoyed. The Germans had sunglasses for the snow, which we didn't have.

I said right there that I hoped that no son, grandson, son-in-law, or nephew of mine ever had to go to war and not have equipment at least equal to that of his enemy.

We got to Leipzig ahead of time and knew the war was almost over. The Germans knew it as well and were surrendering to us in droves. Once, more than 100 of them surrendered to just two troopers in a jeep. The Germans wanted to give themselves up to the Americans rather than Russians. They knew that their own troops had committed atrocities in Russia and feared that Ivan was bent on revenge.

We could have been in Berlin in no time, but instead we were halted at Leipzig. The Russians, who had linked up with American troops down the road at the Elbe River, were eager to take Berlin. They remembered Stalingrad and other Russian cities and were anxious to take revenge on the German capital. So Ike told the Reds to go ahead and ordered us to stop. The Russians took Berlin and Hitler committed suicide on April 30, 1945. The war in Europe officially ended on May 8, 1945.

With the war officially over anyone who had any kind of liquor, even our grain alcohol-grapefruit concoction, went about tying one on. Our outfit explored the possibilities of liberating a cask of German cognac, but nothing was uncovered.

The wet blanket to the festive occasion was thrown by our own *Stars and Stripes* newspaper, which warned us not to celebrate, too much so soon. The paper warned that many of us might be transferred to the Pacific to prepare for the invasion of Japan. This was very disheartening news and all of us began wishing for a quick finish to the Pacific fighting before any of us could be sent to the Far East.

Occupation Duty in Germany

I served my occupation duty in Bad Mergentheim, Germany near Buchen, which was in East Germany until the nation was reunited. During my time there, I remember we had a ring of black marketers who were somehow selling stolen army supplies to German citizens and American occupation troops. It started with stolen liquor and cigarettes and grew to vehicles, tires, gasoline, etc. The black marketing group numbered around 20. When we cracked the case and nailed the leader, she turned out to be a German woman known as *Buchen Bessie*. I really got involved in this case because here were military people who had risked their lives for freedom that were being taken advantage of for profit. Two commendations grew out of solving this case. One was awarded to 1st Lt. Gus Blass, the other to F/Sgt. Jack W, Brumfield, both of Troop D.

During my occupation duty, I took a three-day pass to Switzerland and was amazed to observe how well the trains ran. Of course Switzerland had been neutral in the war, so there was no damage to the cities. I stayed at the Hotel Richemond in Geneva.

While in Lucerne, I was able to call home. It was necessary to make an appointment for the call and then stand in line several hours. The time difference, I

believe, was seven hours. The calls were set up by the USO, which entertained our forces during the war. The time limit of the calls was only three minutes, but at least I got to talk to both my mother and dad. Those three minutes sure went by in a hurry!

For a long time, my mother had wanted a special large tablecloth at least 108 inches long so that the entire family could eat together at the same table. Tablecloths of this length were not available in Little Rock. I had some money with me from my monthly military pay as well as winnings from cribbage and crap games to make the purchase. At a specialty shop in Geneva, I found and bought just the tablecloth mother had always described. She had given me so much over the years that I was pleased to be able to mail it to her.

I had always been very much concerned that we had a segregated army. The white Americans had their divisions, battalions, etc. The black Americans had theirs. We were all Americans and we had the same goals and reasons for fighting. But we were required to do it separately in WW II.

One day, while on occupation duty and at the Fourth Cavalry headquarters, the adjutant handed me the personnel records of my group and asked me to review and update them. While reviewing the records, I discovered that during hostilities I had been recommended for a battlefield promotion. I also learned that when the recommendation reached S-1 (the personnel staff division), it had been torn up by a certain officer. This was really upsetting to me, so I asked a friend at headquarters to find out why. After checking around, he learned that the reason was that I was Jewish. The offending officer had openly commented as much.

This was very wrong! I realized then that discrimination in our army was really more than I had first thought and that it went beyond color lines. Even though I was soon promoted, I am still very saddened and hurt about the destroyed recommendation. Today, there is no longer a segregated army, which is much better for everyone.

The method used to assign priority for servicemen to return home was based on a "points" system. If you were married, you got 12 points. Additional points were given for other factors such as the number of children, your age, length of time in the service, time overseas, combat service, and decorations. Since I wasn't married and didn't have any children, I was well down the priority list for rotation. I wound up spending a full year after the war ended serving occupation duty in Germany.

My good friend Barrett Dillow was still with me, having recovered from the wounds he received in the Ardennes Forest. Late in the fighting, we had captured some Krauts with a female German Shepherd. Barrett "liberated" the dog and announced he was going to train her.

The dog, named Ilsa, was mean and not happy about leaving her master. I told Barrett there was no way he could win her over. I warned that she'd probably kill

someone and that the dog would never become "totally Dillow". But in time, Dillow did win over Ilsa and she became a one-man dog. She would even fetch his slippers. She was a top guard dog, and no one bothered our equipment, clothing, or anything else as long as Ilsa was around.

One weekend, we went to Antwerp in a jeep with Ilsa riding in the back. We found a place that sold beer, but it was in a no parking zone and there were several military police (MPs) nearby. Barrett wheeled right into the no parking area anyway.

"Barrett, the MPs' will confiscate our jeep and we are going to catch holy heck back at headquarters," I warned.

"Not with Ilsa guarding it," he laughed.

An hour or so later, we returned to find that no one had bothered the jeep. Ilsa was sitting up, watching every one who dared come close. A show of her teeth made anyone walking near the jeep change course.

Now that we had time for picture taking, a camera was considered a valuable item. Of course the Leica camera is a German product and the company had never shut down during the war. At that time, the Leica was considered the finest camera made. The military was acquiring some of the Leicas and sending them down to the outfits; a few each month intended for some of the most deserving men. I was placed in charge of camera disbursement. Whenever I got a camera, I sent it to the next unit on our list. It continued like this until each outfit had received a camera. I always sent the Leicas to the unit commander with the idea that he would make an award of them, such as the unit's soldier of the month. I never kept one for myself.

One day I found out that Frank Delmonica, who had played football for the Razorbacks before the war, was stationed about 20 miles from me. We made contact and he invited me over for lunch where he was quartered in a lovely little house. After lunch, while he was showing me the place, I saw 10 or 12 Leica cameras over the fireplace. When I asked Frank how he got so many of them, he answered,

"We get four or five every month send down from group and it is my job to distribute them. I always conduct a drawing to select the lucky men."

I then asked him how he had personally wound up with 10 or 12.

"You can't believe how lucky I've been," he grinned. *"Every drawing we've held, my name has come out of the hat."*

Coming Home

I spent Christmas of 1945 on occupation duty. Then in July of 1946, I received a port call for the states. A port call, which in those days came by teletype, was an order to pack and report to a certain port for shipment home. My ship sailed from LeHavre. We could tell by the number of points we had accumulated just about when we'd go home. I had been in Europe 19 months at the time I received by orders to return home.

Whereas I had come to Europe on the *Queen Mary*, I went home on a fruit freighter. The first was a six-day trip; the return journey took 14 days. I was smarter on the return trip and claimed a top bunk - the fourth up. This was because when you suddenly got sea sick, the one in the bottom bunk suffered most. It really wasn't a bunk, but rather a hammock. I recall that there was a pipe wrapped in asbestos about four inches from my nose. In those days, there was no fear of asbestos. Luckily, I have suffered no ill effects.

I remember three of us who had come over together happened to be on the same freighter going home. One day, we sat on the deck discussing combat situations that we had been in where we knew we just couldn't lose the fight. We had held firm when the Germans were in a fury to break through us. Somehow, we held and finally we could sense that each succeeding Kraut charge was a little less fierce than its predecessor had been. Finally, the thrust went out of their attacks and they withdrew.

"Where did the we get the adrenaline, the intestinal fortitude to stand and repel?" I asked. It is a question each man must answer for himself.

"I know that my country needed me," said the taller of the two. *"Outside that, I don't know, unless it was because I thought I was expected to hold on, or else I would betray the trust of those men fighting along side me. There was some feeling inside me that I had to succeed, or lose respect of those around me."*

When the two looked at me, I said, *"I think the Battle of the Bulge was the American soldier's proudest moment. Before that, I had nothing personal against the Krauts. But after I helped recover those bodies at Malmedy, guys frozen stiff with their hands still in the air, then I hated all Krauts. And later, I saw all those slave laborers - Poles, Czechs and Jewish folks - piled high at Nordhausen. I wanted to kill every Kraut I could line up in my sights. I felt I must, just to save my own ass."*

After we arrived in New York we were transported in trucks to Fort Dix, New Jersey. One of the first things we all did was get haircuts. I recall that we thought the price of $2 was simply outlandish. When I was discharged at Fort Dix my separation certificate was dated 24 September 1946. I had earned ribbons for five campaigns. One of my decorations was the Purple Heart for wounds received in action.

I had mustering out pay and unused leave coming. Plus I had the money that I had sent home each month, that my mother had put in a saving's account. When I arrived in Little Rock to resume civilian life, I had some $4,200 - a goodly sum in 1946.

I still had one more year remaining at the University and fully expected to complete my degree. I had always been a good student and I wanted to go back and graduate "Beta Gamma Sigma." At that time, Beta Gamma Sigma Fraternity in the School of Business was the equivalent to Phi Beta Kappa.

But things didn't turn out like I had planned. As you know, my family owned Gus Blass & Company, which at that time was the largest department store in Arkansas. My father sorely needed me in the store, so I went to work there instead of returning to school. But the Beta Gamma Sigmas made a very unusual exception for me and about 40 others nationwide. Since my academic career had been interrupted when I had been called to help defend my country as a junior, I was awarded the Beta Gamma Sigma. I am one of the few people to ever receive it without having graduated from a university, or an accredited college.

EPILOGUE

Looking back today, more than a half century after the end of the Second World War, I appreciate having had the opportunity to serve my country when it desperately needed me. It was the greatest experience of my life. Since then, over the years at various functions when we stood for the national anthem or "God Bless America," no one among those present sang with more feeling than I did.



Gus Blass II in World War II. The youngest platoon leader in his battalion.



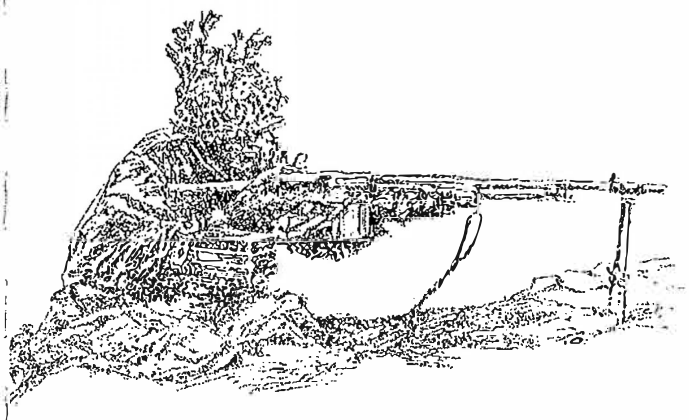
Sgt. J.C. Cauriveaux - Our platoon sergeant. This is point jeep. Note armor plates on it, radio antenna and bed roll.



German 20 mm gun. It gave us fits.

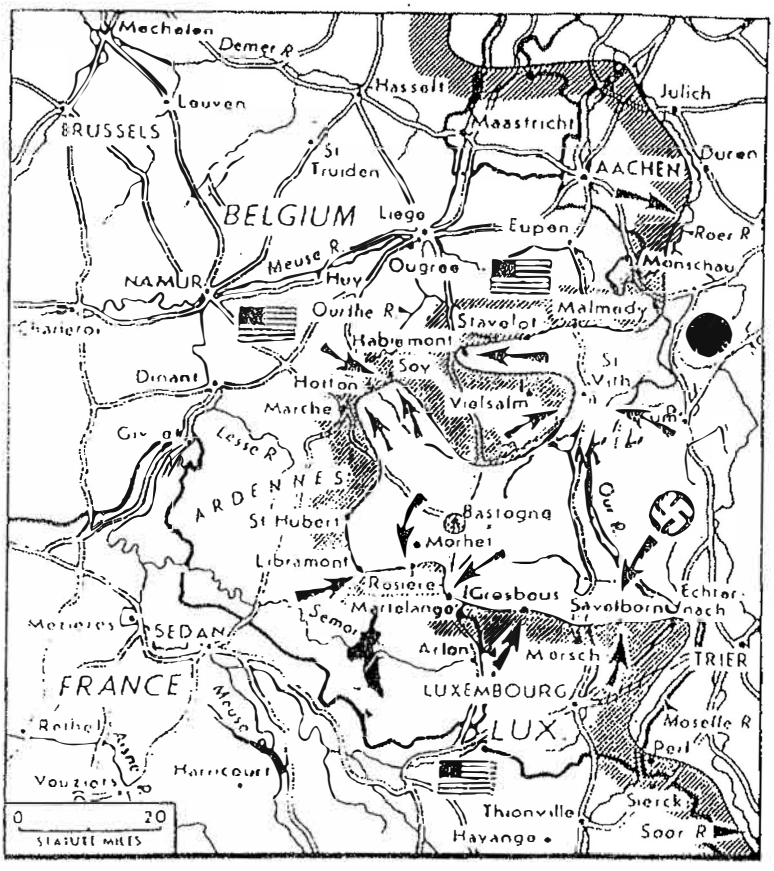


Gus Blass II in World War II. The youngest platoon leader in his outfit never smoked, but chewed cigars in 1944-45. "Chewing the cigar helped appease my fright," he recalls today.



BAR

Much used rifle in American wars for more than a century. BAR is short for Browning Automatic Rifle with extra clips of ammo at the shooter's hands.



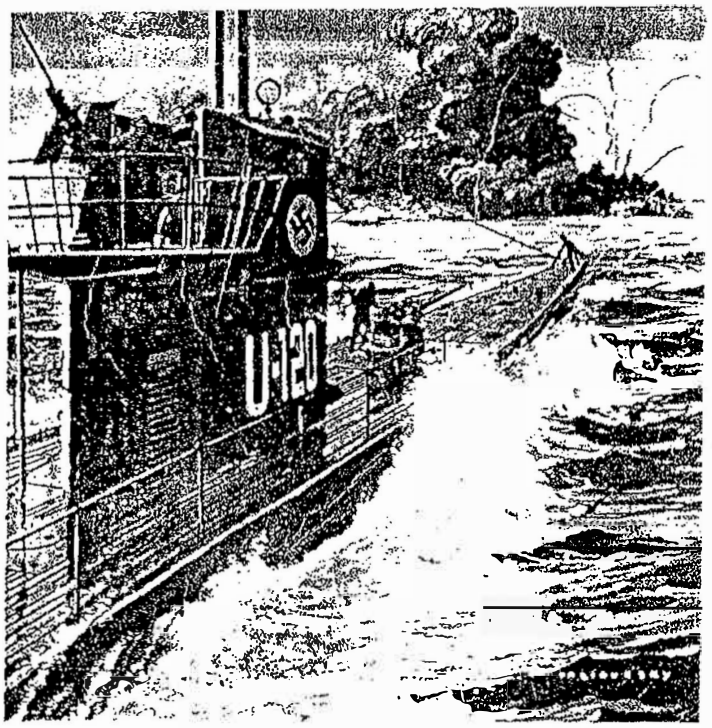
At the Bulge and in Bastogne, GIs fought their finest hour.



Some Kraut had just surrendered his column to us. Note this German vehicle, something like a combination half track and motorcycle.



SCR-536



German U-Boat, the U-120

Of the IXB class the U-120 was the most widely used of these German submarines during the time Gus Blass was on the Queen Mary bound for Europe. The U-120 carried a crew of 48, which included four officers, three warrant officers, 14 petty officers and 27 seamen.

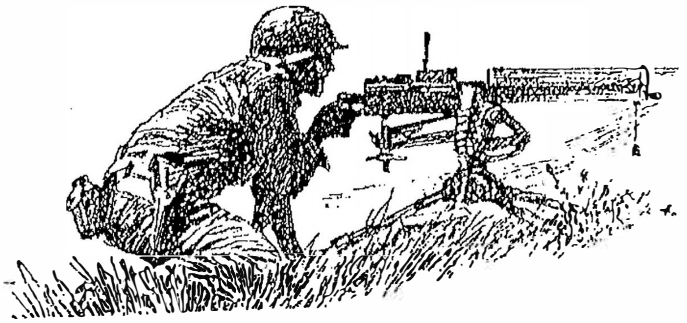
It displaced 770 tons, was 75 meters in length and 6 meters across at the beam. This one carried a maximum 14 torpedos. On deck, it had one 8.8 cen. cannon and two cen. anti-air craft guns.



This is one of my armored vehicles. Standing are Sgt. Fornier (left) and Cpl. Parish



Bazooka
This was the best weapon we had against tanks. Only thing, you had to get close before firing.



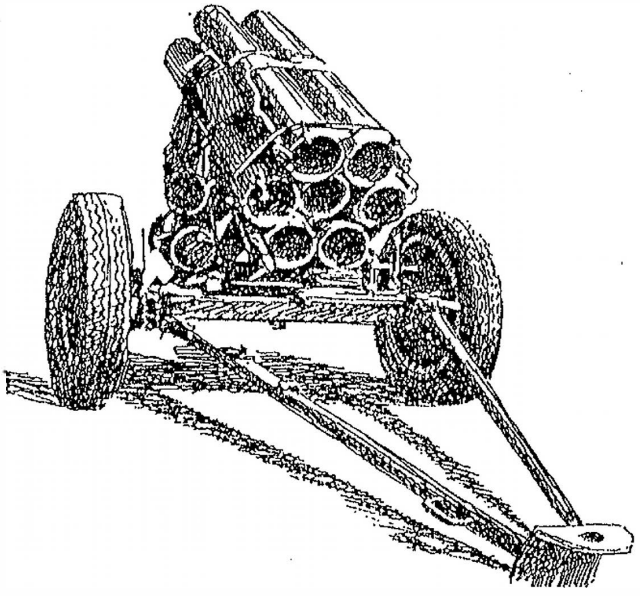
Browning Heavy Machine Gun



Racketen Panzerbuchse 43



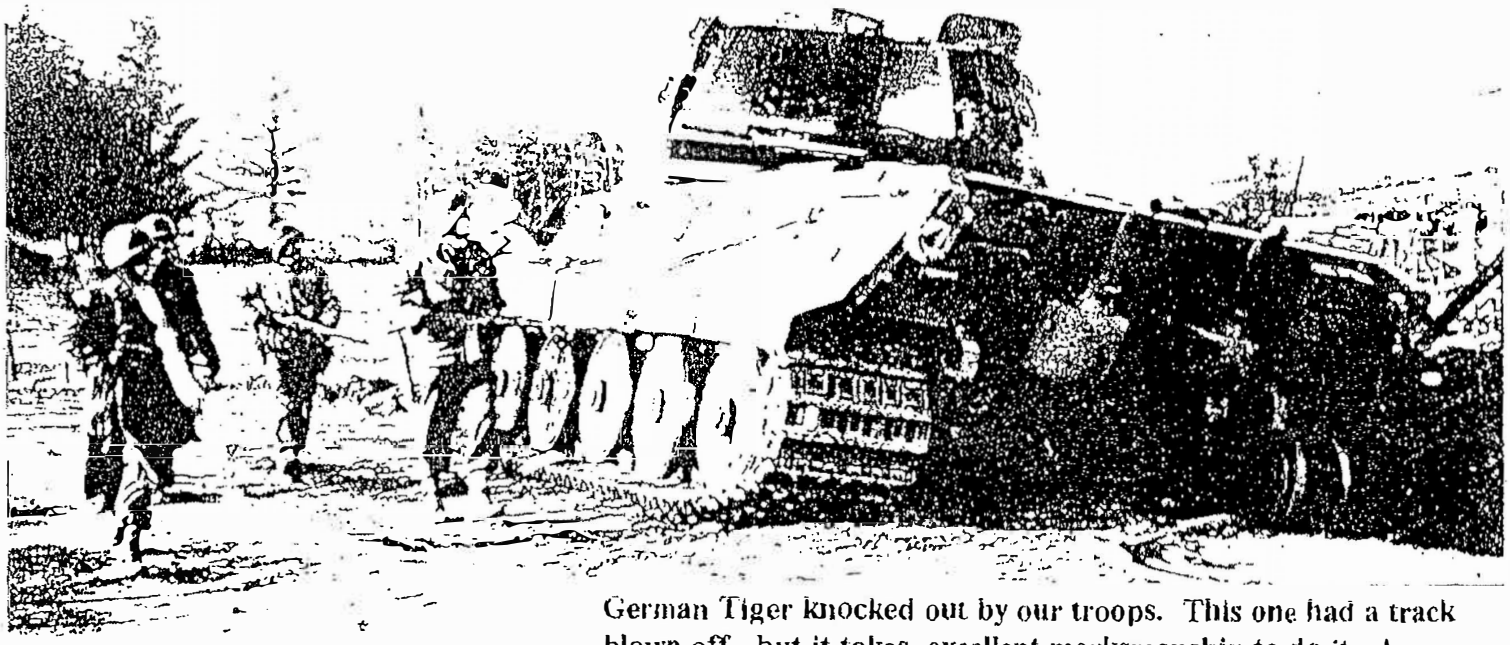
81 mm Mortar



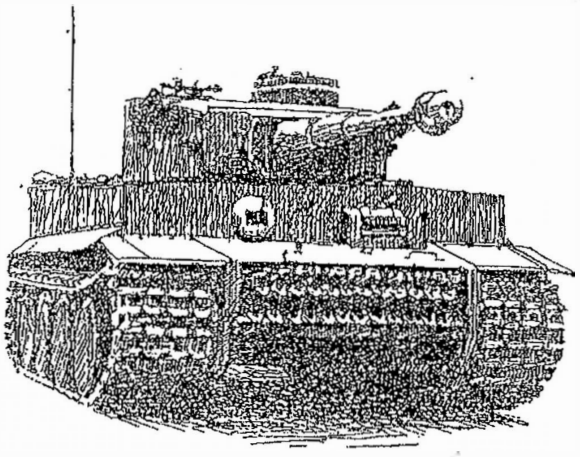


M1 Rifle with grenade launcher

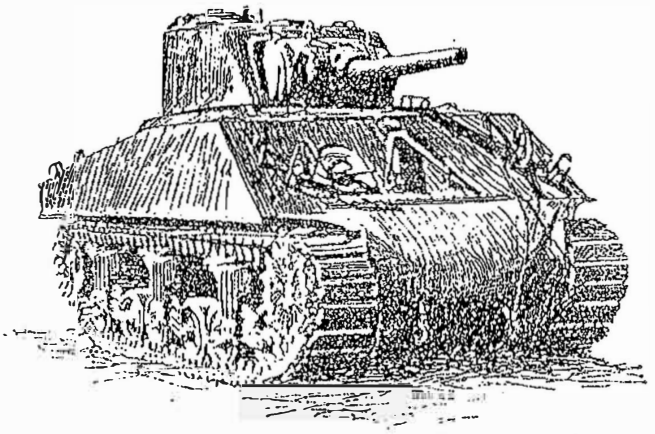
The German Tiger Tanks carried only five days of fuel for the Battle of the Bulge. It wasn't enough. The Germans had to move fast and get through us at St Vith, where we guarded the Allies fuel supplies. Had the Krauts got through us, they could have confiscated our own gas and oil and used it. They never made it. Desperate for time, they finally split their force and went around us, winding up at a town called Bastogne.



German Tiger knocked out by our troops. This one had a track blown off, but it takes excellent marksmanship to do it. A second possibility is the gas tank located in the rear, but you need an armor piercing shot, a lot of luck and someone brave enough to get in real close to attempt the shot.

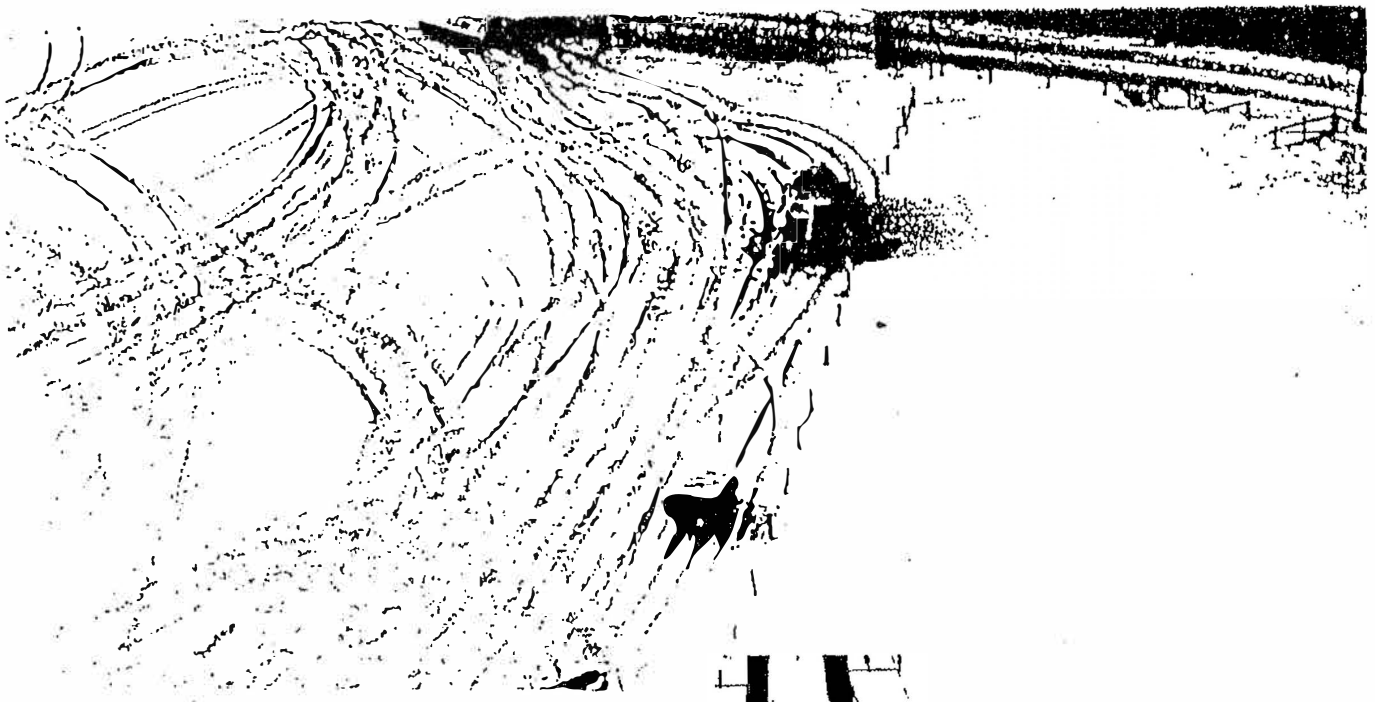


Tiger Tank



Sherman Medium Tank

The big 88 mm gun on the Tiger overshadows the 75 on our Sherman. See the flash hider on the end of the German 88 tank gun. It hides the gun flashes at night. There are no hiders on the Sherman. At night, the Tiger could fire at us and not give away his position. Our Sherman gave away position when it fired. The wider tracks made it easier for the Tiger to cross open,



Tanks leave snow-covered tracks in the Malmedy area

(Right) These are Patton's troops. Patton wheeled his Army 90 degrees in only two days to attack the neck of the Bulge.

The snow was blinding to us. We didn't have sun glasses. The German did. Below you see troops of the 7th Armored Division wearing white camouflage suits, hug the snow covered woods to St. Vith. My outfit didn't have the suits. Instead, we took bed sheets and cut eye-holes in them, so as to be all white in the snow.





All but cut off, Americans refused to yield St. Vith on the right shoulder of the German breakthrough. The Germans had to divide around it like a tide around an islet. But in two days their columns penetrated up to thirty miles. Increasingly the crossroads market town of Bastogne became an obvious necessity for both armies. The 101st, the Screaming Eagles, were ordered to rush there as quickly as possible. The first paratroopers got there at dusk on December 18, just beating out the panzers of General Heinrich von Luttwitz. . . .

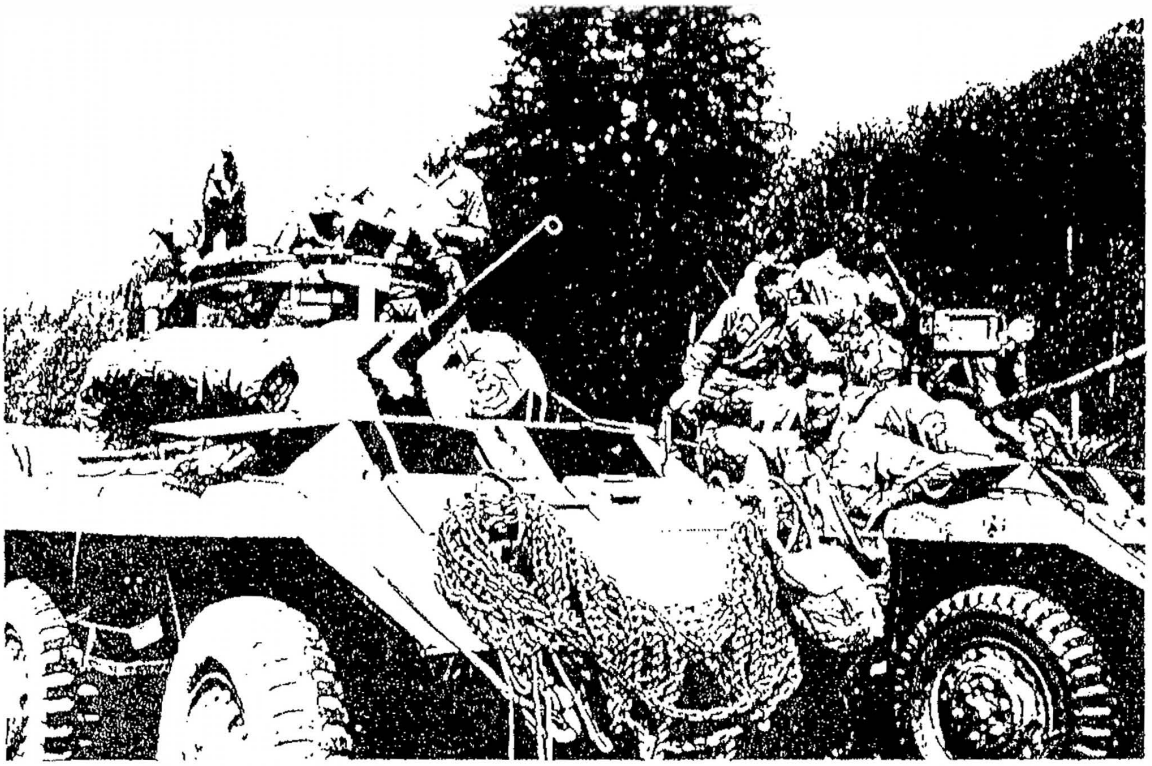


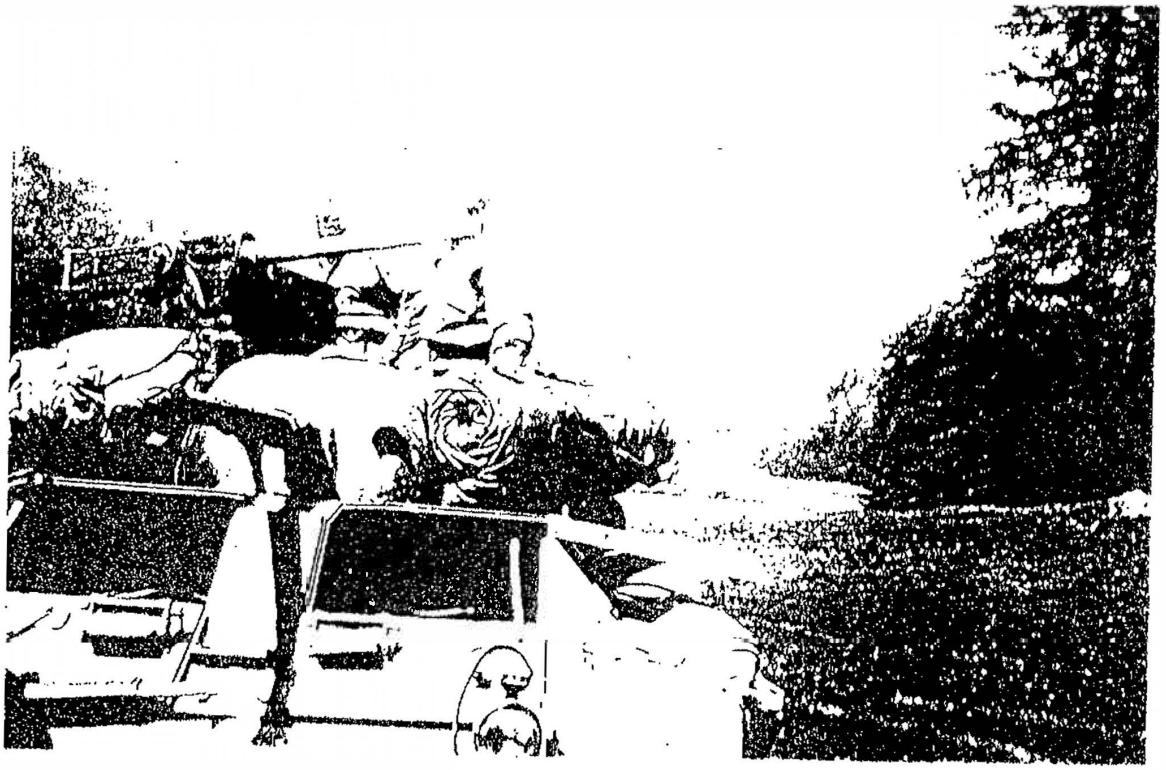
Our soldiers uncover grim evidence of massacre of American POWs at Malmedy

Malmedy was just up the road from St Vith. After the Battle of the Bulge, dozens of Americans, who had been trying to surrender, were found beneath the snow. They were frozen solid, many with their hands still in the air.

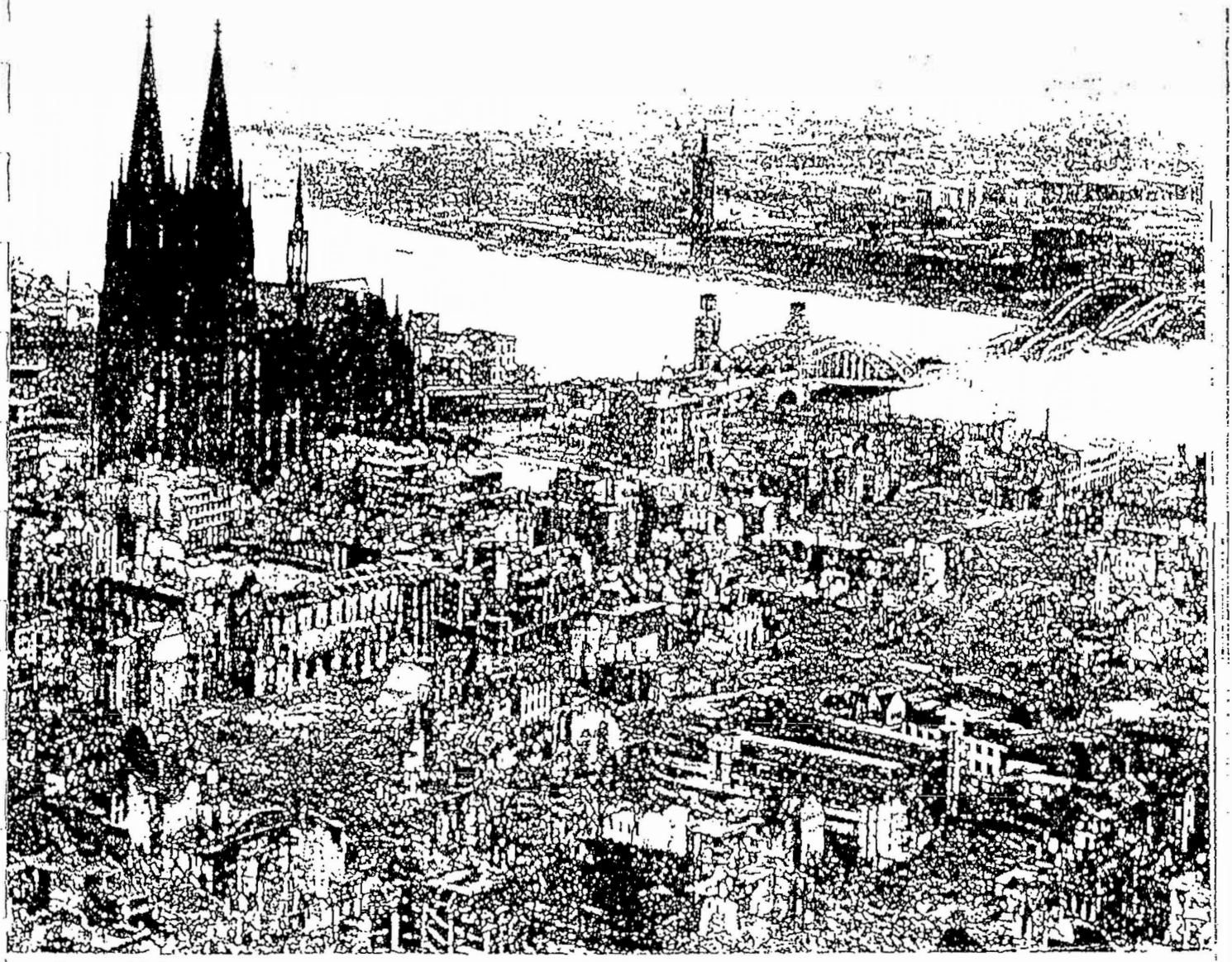
Malmedy completely changed the feelings of our troops to personal from impersonal. After viewing the results of the brutal massacre at Malmedy, some of our soldiers didn't want to take German prisoners. It was difficult for officers to kept their men in line when the enemy wanted to surrender.

My armored car. Note the chains for mud. That is our bed rolls on top. We came well armed. We have a 30 caliber, a 50 caliber and a 37 mm.





Note the 50 caliber welded on our A/C. It was taken from an American plane that had been shot down.



Germany, 1945

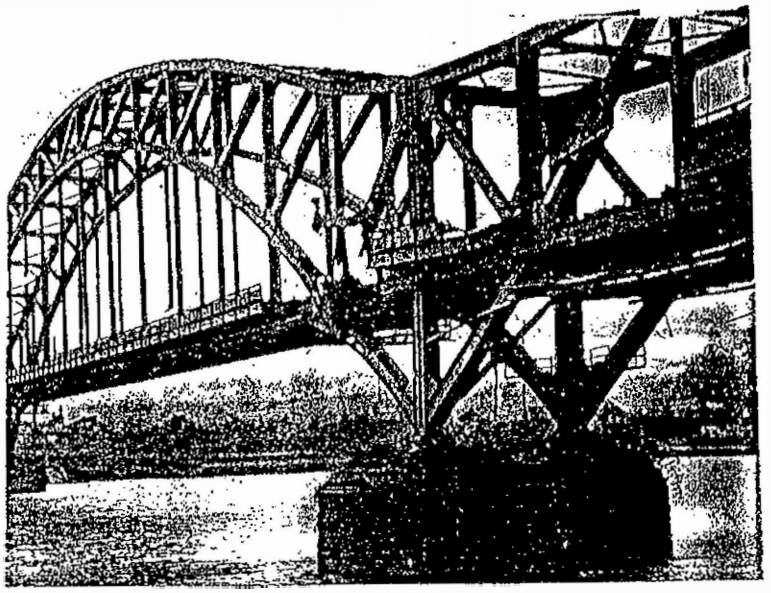
COLOGNE, divided by by the Rhine River. This shot was taken about the time we were there. The ancient Cologne Cathedral was the only tall building not seriously damaged, even though it adjoined the main railway station which had been virtually obliterated by allied bombing. The last of the German snipers held out in the very tops of the twin towers of the Cathedral and refused to surrender.





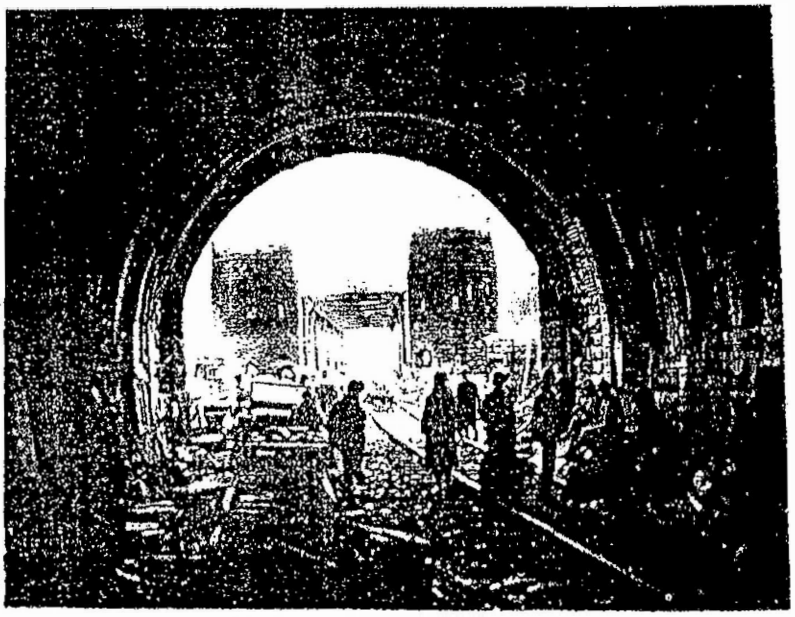


2nd Lt. Karl H. Timmermann led the attack across the bridge (*top left*). Sgt. Alex Drabik, the first man across the Rhine (*top right*). Sgt. 1st Class Joseph A. DeLisio, leader of the point platoon (*center*.

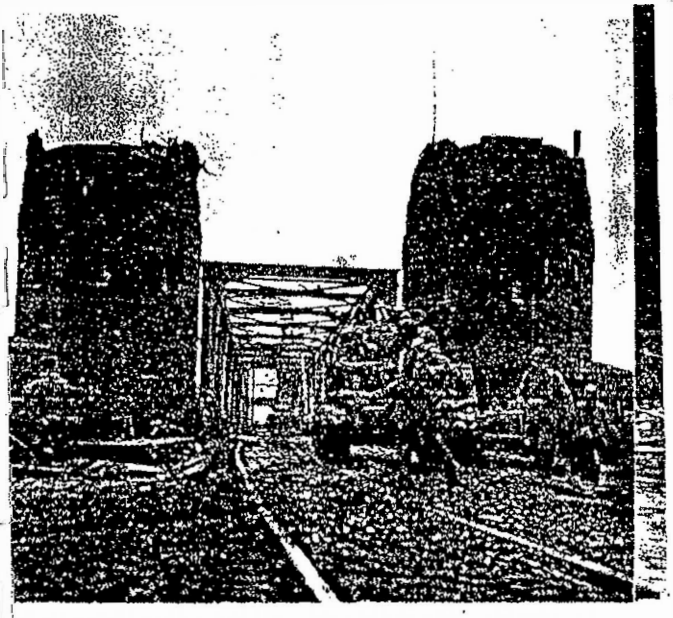


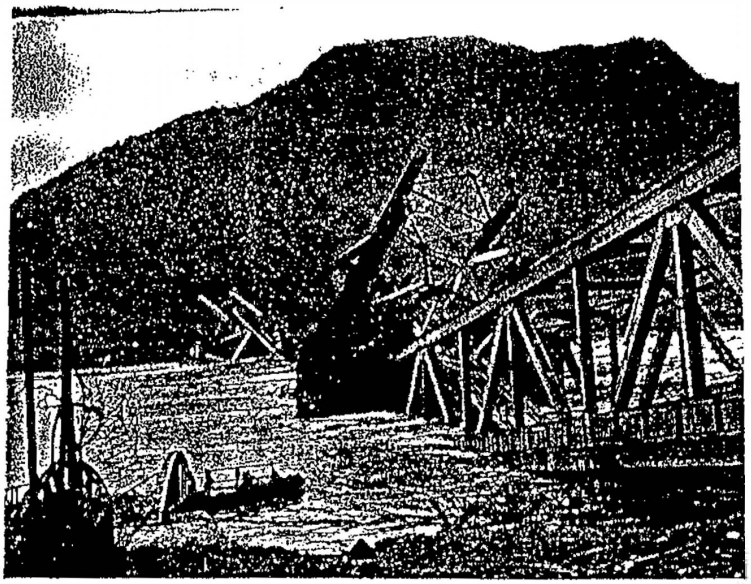
Remagen Bridge as seen from German side, showing damage to main truss. (*U.S. Army photo*)

From this railroad tunnel on the east bank, German soldiers fired on troops attacking across the bridge. (*U.S. Army photo*)



an tanks and infantrymen crossing Remagen Bridge to the east bank. (*U.S. Army photo*)





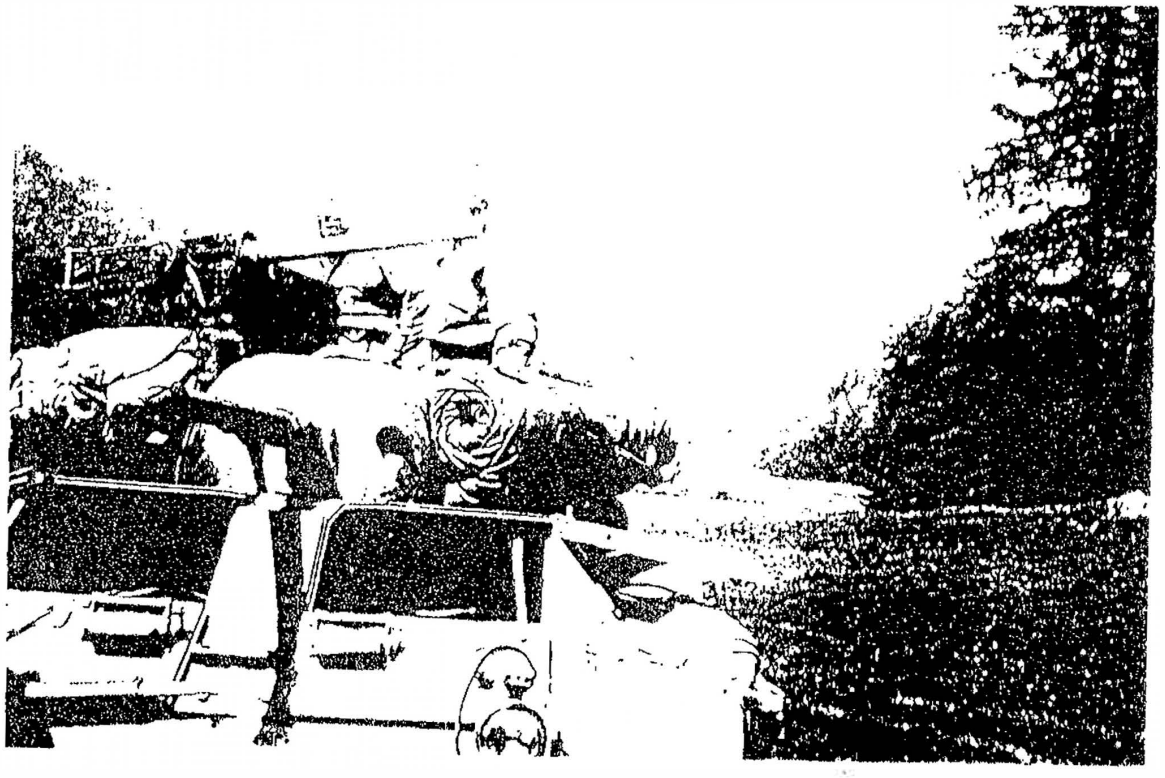
Ten days after its capture, the bridge collapsed. There was no warning. (*U.S. Army photo*)

Medical corpsmen work to rescue engineers injured in collapse of bridge. (*U.S. Army photo*)



My armored car. Note the chains for mud. That is our bed rolls on top. We came well armed. We have a 30 caliber, a 50 caliber and a 37 mm.

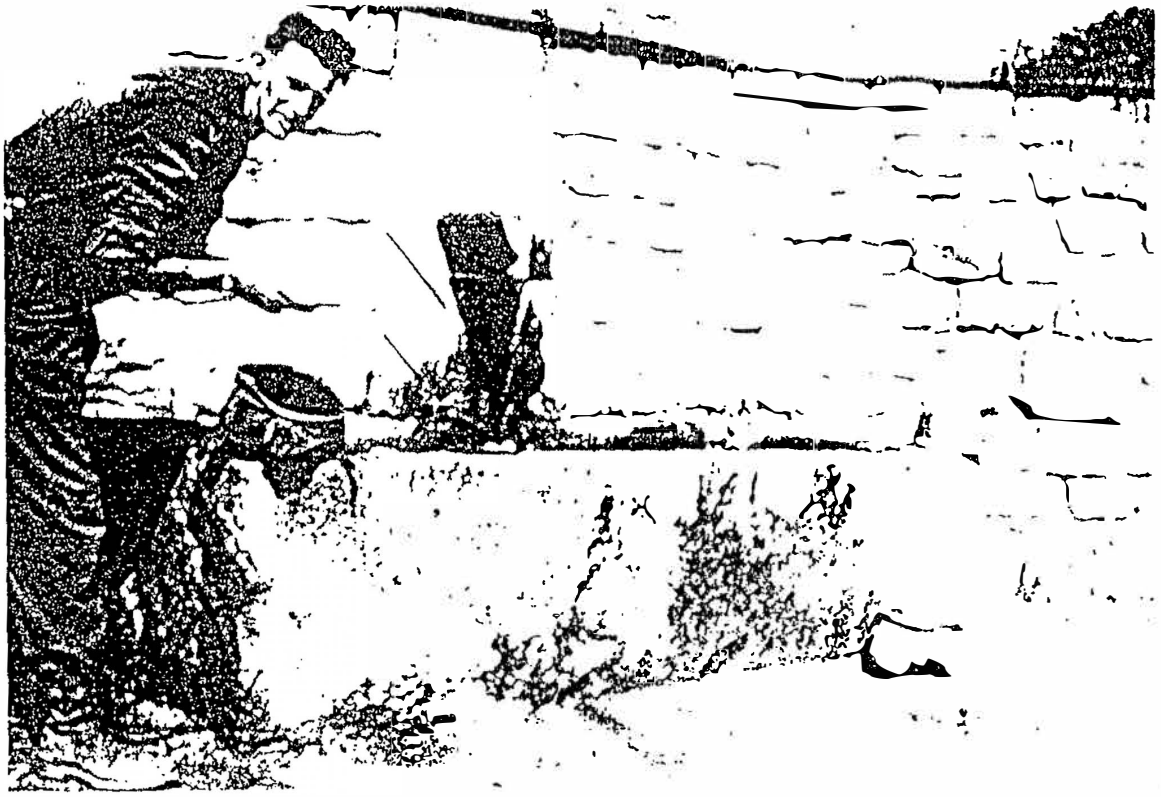




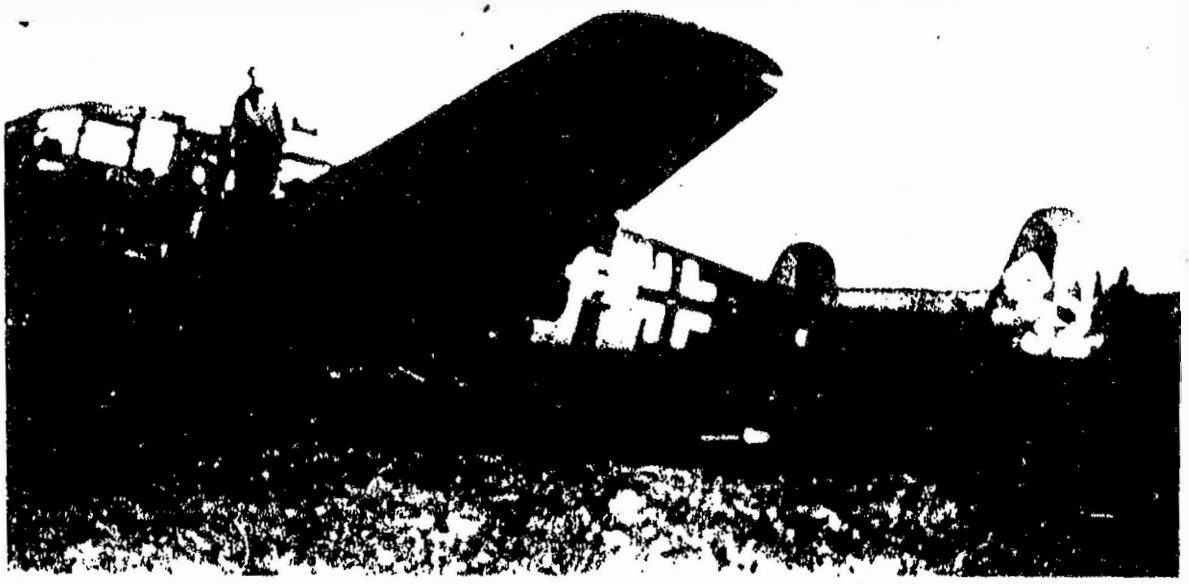
Note the 50 caliber welded on our A/C. It was taken from an American plane that had been shot down.

A shot-up German fighter that was lucky to get home





T/5 Cornelison, who had just finished shaving. Interestingly, that is a camouflage net on his helmet.

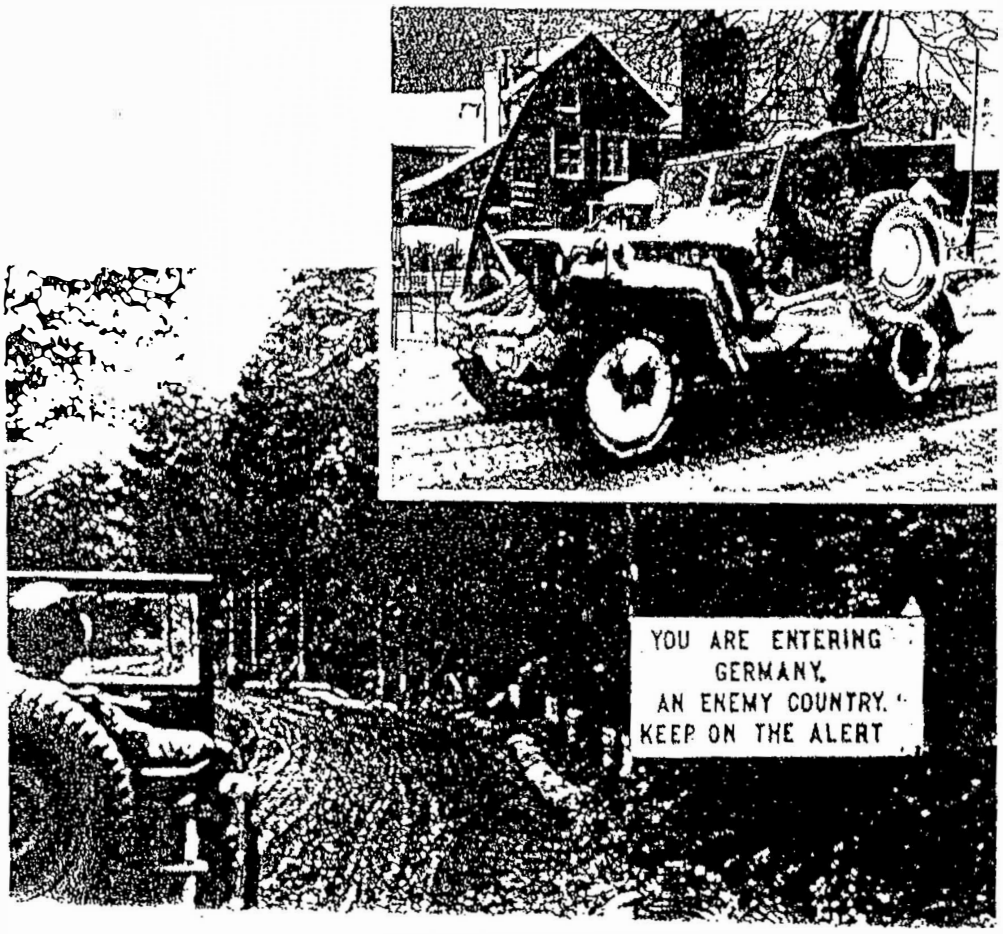


A German fighter-bomber at an air field we overrun



That's me with the binoculars. Taking a break up front is my driver, T/5 Cornealson.

An American jeep. Notice the vertical bar welded to the front bumper. It is to cut wire. The Germans had strung-wire neck high throughout the area.



ON THE GERMAN BELGIUM BORDER: We didn't need this sign to tell us to be vigilant



ON LEAVE IN SWITZERLAND - After the war I managed three days passes to Switzerland and Paris. In Geneva, I stayed at the Hotel Richemond.

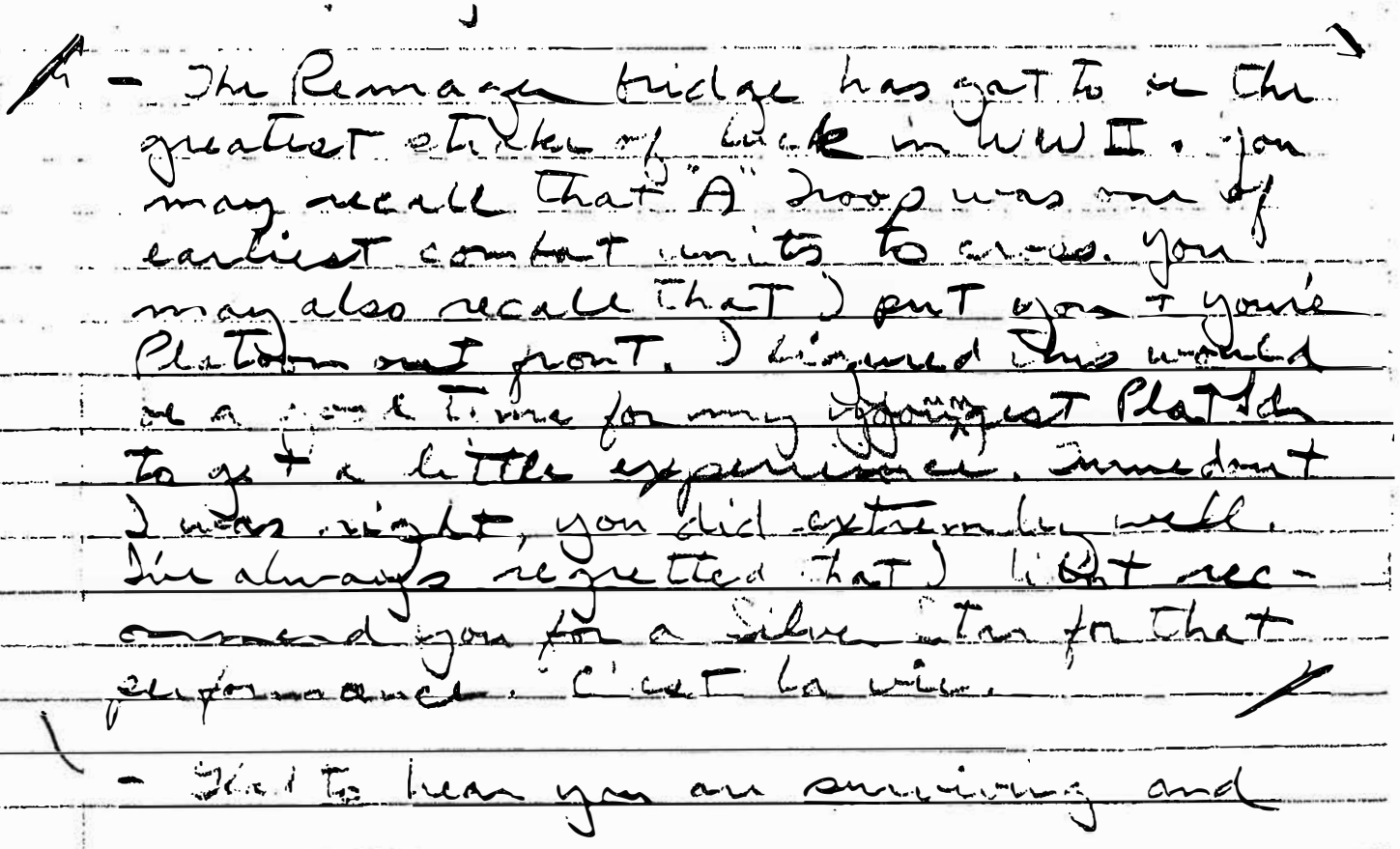


The war has ended and we are parading at Bad Morgentheim. This is my platoon and I'm to the far right. Left to right are T/5 Daugherty, S/Sgt Miller, T/4 Darrisil, Pfc Orono, Pfc Smith, Pfc Lom, T/5 Ammons, T/5 Johnson, Pfc Fedo, T/5 Cornelinson, T/5 Salcido, Pfc Murphy, Sgt. Wright, Sgt Fornier, Lt Blass II. Notice how everyone is in step.

Paragraph in a letter from Capt. Norman, my commander of 'A' Troop. I received it after the war.

I am enclosing it in the captain's handwriting, but will also type the quote.

"The Ramagen bridge has got to be the greatest stroke of luck in WW II. You may recall that 'A' Troop was one of the earliest combat units to cross. You may also recall that I put you and your platoon out front. I figured this would be a good time for my youngest plat. ldr. to get a little experience. Turned out, I was right, you did extremely well. I've always regretted that I didn't recommend you for a Silver Star for that performance. C'est la vie."


- The Remagen bridge has got to be the greatest stroke of luck in WW II. You may recall that "A" Troop was one of earliest combat units to cross. You may also recall that I put you + your Platoon out front. I figured this would be a good Time for my youngest Platoon to get a little experience. Turned out I was right, you did extremely well. I've always regretted that I didn't recommend you for a Silver Star for that performance. C'est la vie.

- Glad to hear you are surviving and

"Orders" for our outfit to be indoctrinated before returning home, as seen by our unit's newspaper, Hardly Able, at Ballenstedt, Germany.

HARDLY ABLE

SUPPLEMENTAL EDITION

15 May 1945

AG 4'10 99(DEBCS)

SUBJECT: Indroctination for return to U.S.

TO: All members , A Troop 24th Cav.Ron Sqdn.(Mecz)

1. IN compliance with current policies for discharge of "A" Troopers with 85 points or over,it is directed that in order to maintain the high standard of character of the American Cavalryman and to prevent any dishonor to reflect on the Troop, all individuals eligible for return to the U.S. under current directives will undergo an indoctrination course of demilitarization prior to approval of application for discharge.

2. The following points will be emphasized on the subject indoctrination:

a. In America there are a remarkable number of beautiful girls. These young ladies have not been liberated and many are gainfully employed as stenographers,sales girls and beauty operators or welders. A proper greeting is"Isn't it a lovely day?" or "Have you ever been in Detroit?" Don't Say, "How much?"

b. A guest in a private home is usually awakened in the morning by a light tapping on his door and an invitation to join his host at breakfast. It is proper to say,"I'll be there shortly!" Do not say "Blow it out your---------- ."

c. A typical American breakfast consists of such strange foods as cantaloupe,fresh eggs,milk,hametc. These are highly palatable and though strange in appeareno e ,are extermely tasty. Butter made from cream is often served. If you wish some butter,you turn to the nearest person and say quietly, "Please pass the butter." You do not say"Throw me the goddam grease."

d. Very natural urges are apt to occur when in a crowd. If it is found necessary to defecate, one does not grab a shovel in one hand paper in the other and run for the garden. At least 90% of American Homes have one room called the "Bathroom", i.e, a room that,in most cases,contains a bathtub,wash basin,medicine chest and a toilet, it is the latter that you will use in this case. Instructors should make sure that all personal understand the operation of a toilet, particularly the lever or button arrangement that serves to prepare the device fpr reuse.

e. In the event the helmet is retained by the individual, he will refrain from using it as a chair,wash bowl,foot bath or bothtub. All these devices are furnished in the average american home. It is not considered good practice to squat Indian fashion in a corner in the event all chairs are occupied. The host will udually provide suitable chairs.

f. Belching or passing wind in company is strictly frowned upon. If you should forget about it, however, and belch in the presence of others a proper remark is "Excuse me." Do not say, "It must be the lousy chow we've been eating".

g. American dinners, in most cases, consist of several items eachserved in a separate dish. The common practice of mixing various items such as corn beef and pudding, or lima beans and peaches to make it morepalatable, will be refrained from. In time the separate dish system will become enjoyable.

h. Americans have a strange taste for stimulants. The drinks in common usage on the continent, such as under-ripe wine, alcohol and grape-fruit juice or gasolene bitters and water (commonly known by the French term "cognac") are not ordinarily acceptable in the civilian circles. These drinks should be served only to those who are definitely not within the inner circle of friends. A suitable use for such drinks is for serving to one's landlord in order to break an undesirable lease.

i. The returning soldier is apt too often to find his opinions differ from those of his civilian associates. One should call upon his reserve of etiquette and correct his acquaintance with such remarks as "I believe you have made a mistake," or "I'm afraid you are in error on that." Do not say, "Brother you're really ------ up." This is considered impolite.

j. In travelling in the U.S., particularly in a strange city, it is often necessary to spend the night. Hotels are provided for this purpose and almost anyone can give directions to the nearest hotel. Here, for a small sum, one can register and be shown to a room where he can sleep for the night. The present practice of entering the nearest house throwing the occupants in the yard and taking over the premises will

k. Whiskey, a common American drink, may be offered to the soldier on social occasions. It is considerd a reflection on "A" Troop to snatch the bottle from the hostess and drain the bottle, cork and all. All individuals are cautioned to exercise the extreme of control in these circumstances.

l. In motion picture theatres, seats are provided. Helmets are not required. It is not considered good form to whistle every time a female over 8 or under 80 comes across the screen. If vision is impaired by the person in the seat in front, there are plenty of other seats which can be occupied. Do not hit him across the back of the head and say "Move your head, jerk, I can't see a damn thing."

m. It is not proper to go around hitting everyone of draft age in civilian clothes. He might have been released from the service for medical reasons. Ask for his credentials, and if he can't show any, then go ahead and slug him.

o. Upon retiring, one will often find a pair of pajamas laid out on the bed. (Pajamas, it should be explained, are two piece garments which are donned after all other clothing has been removed.) The soldier, confronted by these garments, should assume an air of familiarity and act as though he were used to them. A casual remark such as "My what a delicate shade of blue," will usually suffice. Under no circumstances say, "How in the hell do you expect me to sleep inin a get-up like that?"

p. Natural functions will continue. It may be necessary to urinate frequently. Do not walk behind the nearest tree or automobile that you find to accomplish this. Toilets are provided in all public buildings for this purpose.

q. Beer is sometimes served in bottles. A cap remover is usually available and it is not good form to open this bottle with the use of one's teeth.

r. Always tip your hat before striking a lady.

s. Air raids and enemy patrols are not encountered in America. ~~Therefore, it is not~~ necessary to wear the helmet in church or at social affairs or to hold the weapon at the ready, loaded and cocked, when talking to civilians in the streer.

t. Every American home and all hotels are equipped with bathing facilities. When it is desired to take a bath, it is not considered goodform to find the nearest pool or stream, strip down and indulge in a bath. This particularly is true in heavily populated areas.

u. With regard to currency the returning soldiers must bear in mind that in most localities of the U.S. the coin of the realm, i.e. dollars and cents, is the established means of commercial trade. Baits of soap, cigarettes, candy and K rations will not be honored. To offer a young lady a bar of soap(especially Lifebuoy) would in all probability put one at the head of her so-called "Brown list" instead of producing the desired result.

v. All individuals returning to the U.S. will make every effort to conform to the costoms and habits of the regions visited and to make themselves as inconspicuous as possible. Any actions which reflect upon the honor of "A"Troop will be promptly and severely dealt with.

So watch Your Step! !

THE ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART

The Order of the Purple Heart is the oldest American military decoration for war time bravery. It is awarded to members of the armed forces of the United States, who have been killed or wounded in action again an enemy.

Attached to the piece of dark blue cloth is a purple heart of silk, bound with braid and edged with lace. The cloth is believed to be part of the uniform tunic worn by a solder in the Continental Army.

George Washington designed and created the decoration. A general and hero of the Revolutionary War, and later first president of the Unites States, he officially signed the medal into being in 1782.

On August 7, 1782 at his headquarters, General Washington designed two medals of distinction. One was named the Badge of Military Merit. A very difficult honor to win, there would be only three recipients of it during the Revolutionary War.

No more Americans received the Badge of Military Merit for more than century. It was not until October 10, 1927 that Army Chief of Staff, General Charles P. Summerall, directed the drafting of a bill be sent to congress, "to revive the Badge of Military Merit."

Such action moves slow in the military. The Army withdrew the bill on January 3, 1928, but with a notation to the office of the adjutant general to "maintain dialogue for possible future acceptance."

In 1931 General Douglas MacArthur, who had succeeded Summerall, reopened the issue. MacArthur wanted a medal issued on the bicenntential of George Washington's birth.

The only change was that a sprig appeared near the profile of Washington on what is now the Purple Heart. A plaster model was made by the Philadelphia Mint in May of 1931.

The War Department announced the new medal on February 22, 1932. After the award became official, recipients of the Meritorious Service Citation Certificate issued during World War I, along with other eligible army people, could exchange their awards for the new Purple Heart.

(More)

At the same time, revisions in army regulations defined the conditions of the award as: "a wound which necessitates treatment by a medical officer and which is received in action against an enemy. It will, in the judgment of the commander authorized to make the award, be construed as resulting from a singularly meritorious act of standard service."

At that time, the Navy Department did not authorize the issue of the Purple Heart to its people, but Franklin D. Roosevelt amended that by an executrive order dated December 3, 1942. As a result of FDR's decree, the Purple Heart went to all branches of the military, those wounded beginning December 6, 1941.

President Harry Truman later retroactively extended eligibility back to April 5, 1917, so as World War I veterans of all branches would be covered.

What General George Washington wrote in his orderly book on August 7, 1782 still stands today: "the road to glory is a patriot army and a free country."

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1st Ind. TOR/ha

Hq., 81ST CAV RCN SQ (MECZ), APO 251, N.Y.N.Y., 15 March 1946.

TO: 1st Lt Gus Blass, and 1st Sgt Jack W. Brumfield, Troop "D".

1. This Squadron wishes to add its appreciation and commendation to that of the Military Government at Buchen.

2. Such effort, intelligence and attention to duty not only bring credit to you personally but adds greatly to the prestige of your Squadron.

THOMAS C. RICKEY
Lt Colonel, Cav
Commanding

MILITARY RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL	2. ARMY SERIAL NUMBER	3. GRADE	4. ARM OR SERVICE	5. COMPONENT
BLASS GUS	O 551 550	1 LT	CAV	ORC

6. ORGANIZATION	7. DATE OF RELIEF FROM ACTIVE DUTY	8. PLACE OF SEPARATION
81ST CONSTABULARY SQDN	24 SEP 46	SEP CEN FT BRAGG NC

9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES	10. DATE OF BIRTH	11. PLACE OF BIRTH
1900 SUMMIT AVE LITTLE ROCK ARKANSAS	31 MAY 23	LITTLE ROCK ARK

12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT	13. COLOR EYES	14. COLOR HAIR	15. HEIGHT	16. WEIGHT	17. NO. OF DEPENDENTS
SEE 9	HAZEL	BLOND	5-11	180 LBS.	0

18. RACE			19. MARITAL STATUS			20. U.S. CITIZEN		21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO.
WHITE	NEGRO	OTHER (specify)	SINGLE	MARRIED	OTHER (specify)	YES	NO	
X			X			X		STUDENT COLLEGE X-02

MILITARY HISTORY

SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA	22. REGISTERED YES	22. REGISTERED NO	23. LOCAL B. B. BOARD NUMBER	24. COUNTY AND STATE	25. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY ON ACTIVE DUTY
	X		B	PULASKI ARK	SEE 9

26. DATE OF ENTRY ON ACTIVE DUTY	27. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO.
22 JUL 44	ARMORED RECONNAISSANCE UNIT COMMANDER 1204

28. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS

EUROPEAN AFRICAN MIDDLE EAST RIBBON RHINELAND ARDENNES CENTRAL EUROPE

29. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS

PURPLE HEART GO 15 HQ 24 COV REC REC SQDN 19 JUN 45

30. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION

NORDHAUSEN GERMANY 1ST APR 45

31. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED

32. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U. S. AND RETURN

DATE OF DEPARTURE | DESTINATION | DATE OF [illegible]