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591 FABN/SVC

MY ADVENTURES IN EUROPE IN WORLD WAR II

This is my story of experiences in the Ardennes Forest in Belgium the Lorient area of Brittany in France, and post war experiences in the occupation army. Like Rip Van Winkle, I returned thirty years later and found a whole new prosperous world.

I was commissioned in 1942 by then Governor John Bricker in a field near the University Hospitals at The Ohio State University, saw service in the United States at Fort Bragg N.C. and The Ohio State University before join the 106th Infantry Division on Tennessee Maneuvers. Included is a letter from 5th Panzer Army Commander in 1970 answering some questions I submitted to him, and a news article on Axis Sally my enemy then my neighbor. Photos and maps are included.

This material is dedicated to my family who stood by me in the dark and exciting days of World War II when I was young. I am now 86' years old and have enjoyed a long and adventurous life.

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A MONTH TO REMEM8ER--DECEMBER 1944

by
Robert C. Ringer
9 May 1985

(The attached map was used for reference in the Presentation.)

I'm writing about firing positions we occupied in the 'Fortified Goose Egg' near St. Vith during the Battle of the Bulge. U. were originally in the vicinity of Heckhalenfeld, Germany, and although three batteries were surrounded, we escaped into this larger encirclement, which we occupied from the night of December 17 until the twenty-third. Our unit was the 591st Field Artillery Battalion, a 105mm howitzer unit organic to the 106th Infantry Division. I was a first lieutenant serving as ammunition officer (sometimes battery commander) with this unit. I thought it might be useful to provide at the outset some background information showing how we got to St. Vith, which was certainly not a direct route, and involved considerable hardship.

Our fate was foretold by the stars, or at the very least by one 'four star,' as early as August of 1944. Four star General Ben Lear came to Camp Atterbury, Indiana and met the assembled 106th Infantry Division in a large grassy field. It was a perfect day, low humidity, large billowy white clouds in the sky and a whole division gathered in a huge semi-circle and seated comfortably on the grass. Lear closed his remarks with the ominous statement, 'It is later than you think' How right he was!

The 591st Field Artillery Battalion furnished direct support to the 424th Infantry Regiment of the 106th Infantry Division. We had twelve, 105mm howitzers and some five hundred men give or take a few. Our code name was Driftwood, and we certainly lived up to our name!

December found us in the relative comfort of the Gloucester Reservoir Camp, Gloucester, England, provided you called straw mattresses and unheated buildings comfortable. December ended with the battery in Eronheid, Belgium, where I lay flat on my back with a raging fever and the flu. Seven blankets could not keep me warm and when the fever returned the sub-zero temperature could not cool me down. At this point, even though I occupied a cot in the local schoolhouse, I scarcely cared whether school kept or not!

Shortly before, on my twenty-eighth birthday, (10 November 1944) elements of the division had sailed out of Boston Harbor in a raging storm. Although the SS Wakefield was an ocean-going liner (formerly the Manhattan), converted to a troopship, it was scarcely a match for the storm. Sailors told me that they had never been in such a storm before on the previous eight trips that the Wakefield had made across the Atlantic Ocean.

I was the Acting Battery Commander of Service Battery of the 591st FA Battalion. Our commander, Captain Martin Dollitsky, had left [Camp Atterbury, Indiana](#) with the advance party for England, expecting to see his battery in thirty days. One delay after another stretched the time into three months. He rejoined us at Gloucester, England.

Service Battery, along with 'C' Company, 81st Engineers had the trash detail on the ship. Captain James Wells was the engineer company commander. We had to collect trash during the day and at night kick it off the fantail of the ship into the sea. For this, my troops were awarded the wind tunnel as a billet instead of having to live in the terrible heat of the lower decks. Despite the cool air, I could scarcely muster ten men to help the first day. The rest were as seasick as those in the heat and stench of the hold of the ship. That night, Capt. Wells and I personally kicked all the boxes of trash off the fantail. Several times we almost went over with the trash.

Five days later on 15 November we landed at Liverpool and the London, Midland and Scottish Railroad transported us to Gloucester. While on board the ship, I was billeted with 23 other officers who were battery commanders, acting battery commanders or key staff officers. The reason for this was the command wanted us together for emergencies and releases of orders. In the close quarters, sleeping twenty-four to a small room, I got well acquainted with most of these fine people. Had I known that only six of us would survive the first few days of combat, I would have looked for a different occupation'

Captain John Pitts, of the 590th FA Bn, who slept above me was killed in his gun position the first day of the Ardennes Battle. His twin sister, who was a Red Cross worker, had visited him in the position only the day before. Years later, Mrs. Fleming, who formerly owned Fleming's Bookstore at Northland Shopping Mall in Columbus, Ohio put me in touch with John's sister. Mrs. Fleming had been a Red Cross worker with Jean Pitts and also served in the Ardennes. Captain Rockwell of the 589th FA Bn, who slept at my feet, was killed, and the man who slept beside me, Lt. Isaac Alexander of the medium battalion (592d) was killed attacking a tank with a bazooka. Next to Lt. Alexander, Captain Edward Chateaufneuf of my battalion and a good poker playing friend of mine, was captured and killed in the Christmas bombing of the Gerolstein Railhead by the Royal Air Force. So it went throughout the room, nearly everyone killed, wounded or captured.

Supply problems haunted us at Gloucester, England. When we suddenly received orders for the Continent, we did not have our trucks. On the night before departure, drivers went to Liverpool and picked up trucks, barely getting back in time for us to move. As it was, some supplies and equipment were left behind. Inasmuch as the trucks were taken mostly from other units, we had every worn out truck in the United Kingdom!

First we were told we were going to U.S. Seventh Army and the Vosges Mountains. Later that was changed to U.S. First Army and St. Vith, a town most of us had never heard of.

As November ended, we were racing for Weymouth where the battalion loaded on LSTs (Landing Ship Tanks) on December 1 and sailed late in the afternoon for Le Havre. Our LST was number 317. It accommodated three trucks abreast in the hold with seven trucks and guns or trailers in each row in the hold. The main deck held thirty-nine smaller vehicles. Survival time if hit below the water line was estimated to be five minutes for the ship!

For all hands the ship seemed like heaven. Comfortable bunks, coffee on call, card games aplenty, and since only part of 'B' Battery, plus 'C' and Service Batteries could get on one ship, we were free from headquarters. For five days we could do as we pleased. Never again would this happen!

Five days might seem like a long time, but actually only nine hours was involved in crossing the channel, and the remainder of the time was consumed dragging our anchor about the harbor at Le Havre because the sea was too rough to reach the floating dock. One LST picked up a huge mine as its anchor scraped along the channel floor. This ship had to return to Weymouth for another anchor, thus half of one battalion of artillery was delayed in reaching the Ardennes.

As the hours of darkness approached on December 1, we passed the Isle of Wight in the English Channel. It was on this very island that all of my Swiss and South German ancestors during the years 1727 to 1770 stopped for provisions enroute to Philadelphia and the land promised by William Penn. It took them three months, if lucky, to cross the ocean. It took me five days. Somehow I had very mixed emotions about going to fight the Germans. If one

was to look at our battalion roster filled with names such as Wohlfeil, Seehausen, Rosenthal, Weinkauff, Schiesser and Ringer, one might think It was a German unit. By this time, German units had so many eastern Europeans in them that their rosters might have been filled with less German names than ours!

One interesting fact was that our Staff Sergeant John P. Schlessler captured a man by the name of John P. Schlessler. This man was from the same village that our John's grandfather had ventured from to go to Chicago, Illinois in the early 1900s.

Our problem at Le Havre was solved by taking aboard a pilot and going up the Seine River to Rouen, France. Rouen was big, dirty, and in the rain It and its inhabitants seemed most foreboding and not at all a good omen for the future. How we hated to leave the LST, but how fortunate we were. It was only weeks later that troops of the 66th Infantry Division went down to their death in the Channel when good old 317 was torpedoed!

Rain was a daily occurrence as we pulled out on the roads east of Rouen and tried to mount our machine gun mounts on the trucks and repack our gear, which had been so hurriedly thrown on the trucks. We were located near a town named Pissy and we thought the name appropriate for the entire venture.

Finally we headed eastward. Rain changed to snow. Infantry in flat bed trucks, artillery with tops of their vehicles down and likewise freezing. For thirty-eight hours we rolled, stopping only to gas trucks and eat a bite. We passed through Amiens, Baupaume, and Valenciennes of World War 1 days, and then Namur and La Roche in Belgium, coming to rest in a woods south of St. Vith. Even though there was a light covering of snow on the ground, getting out of the wind on the trucks made it seem so warm that I threw my bedroll on the snow and fell on it without bothering to open it. I slept so well that I awoke with a light coating of snow over me and I had not even noticed it as it fell.

On the trip from France, Warrant Officer Collins, the supply technician of the 590th Field Artillery was killed just east of La Roche when the truck on which he was riding jackknifed and appeared about to plunge off the mountain. He attempted to Jump and the trailer pinned him against the truck and crushed him. He was the first division casualty but not the last. He was never replaced and when I assumed command of that battery later, I had two Jobs to perform in much the same manner as I had while Captain Dolitsky was away on the advance party. Ironically, I would take one battery overseas as its acting battery commander and bring another back as battery commander and still never be promoted to captain!

On Sunday, December 10, we relieved the 37th Field Artillery Battalion (2d Infantry Division) man for man and gun for gun, per VIII Corps orders. Lt. Col Earl Hurt, CO of the 37th Joined us and briefed us on what to expect. He and his men did a fine job of helping us, but we had to give them our new guns and take those in the gun positions per corps orders. Used trucks, used guns, rationed ammunition, no overshoes and many shortages made us seem to be the poor relations of the ETO!

Lt. Col. Hurt, of Greeley, Colorado, did his best for us. Years later on a reunion trip to St. Vith, he and I met in the Pipp Margraff Hotel in St. Vith and I reminded him of his words that this was a quiet sector and we should enjoy it. We both laughed the laugh of survivors! Incidentally, the owner of the hotel had been an officer in the 62nd Volksgrenadier Division, one of the units attacking us.

Our regiment (424th) had a nine mile front which is normally a division front. Therefore, some areas were out posted only. Still we were better off than the other two regiments, which were extended into German territory on the Schnee Eifel high ground and were an easy target for a double envelopment when the Germans seized the road junction at Schonberg. Our third battalion was on the left, second battalion on the right and the first battalion was in division reserve but available. Our artillery likewise had depth. Headquarters, Battery 'A' and Battery 'B' were at Heckhalenfeld, and 'C' was to the west at Steffeshausen, while Service Battery was just across the bridge over the Our River at Burg Reuland. One of the mysteries to me was why the Germans did not try for this bridge the second day. Although it had a wooden floor, it sustained self-propelled guns, overloaded ammunition trucks and prime movers with guns. A main attack route led through our sector on the good road from Pronsfeld to St. Vith, via

Winterspelt. The main attack was centered there and soon had the Germans in the middle of our regimental sector. It would have been easier for them to cross the Our at our location.

I was most fortunate in serving under able commanders. Captain Martin Dolitsky of Service Battery came from the ranks and was commissioned through OCS Class I at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He was a most able and helpful officer. Lt. Col. Philip Hoover had been a gunnery instructor at Ft. Sill and was a cool, confident leader. Although he never said much to anyone, you knew instinctively whether you were doing a satisfactory job or not. Later Major Carl H. Wohlfeil, a West Pointer, would be my commander and he was a real leader and a good friend. The first two mentioned have now passed to their reward, but I did visit Colonel Wohlfeil this past summer (1984) in his home in Charleston, South Carolina. From his home on the Battery, you could see the distant forts of an earlier war. (Civil War).

I want to mention my first trip in Europe for ammunition, inasmuch as anything that could go wrong did so on that trip. First, I had no map and did not even know where I was in the woods that we had just slept in. Lt. Col. Hoover told me that I could get a map and an allocation of ammunition at St. Vith. I even had to ask where that was! On the way I passed a church in a clearing in the woods as the congregation, all dressed in black, was entering the church. How I wished I could just go in to worship and forget everything else.

At Division Artillery Headquarters, I had to get into a big argument with another officer to get a map because he only had two maps and he did not want to part with them. Finally, I prevailed after some harsh words, which I later regretted, because he was killed a few days later trying to get headquarters, division artillery trucks out of an ambush on the St. Vith-Poteau Road. At the Ammunition Supply Point (ASP) No. 125 west of Verviers, Belgium which I eventually reached at evening chow time, the workers refused to load my trucks and off they went to chow. I seized the opportunity while they were gone, and my men and I loaded the trucks with all the ammo we could get on them, thereby getting several hundred extra rounds. Had I been caught, I would have been subject to severe punishment, but as events proved, it was a wise measure. The purloined ammunition represented the margin of safety for us when the battle started. It was hard to keep enough ammunition on hand to fire at the many targets being called in by our observers. Frequently re-supplies arrived just as the batteries had fired their last rounds.

It took so long to get through all the red tape and get loaded that we started for our positions in the dark and lost our way, wandered onto Elsenborn Ridge and got stuck in an ice blizzard. Finally, we turned back into Jalhay where at 2:00 a.m. we cooked supper in a farmer's kitchen and warmed ourselves till first light before going back to St. Vith and picking up a guide to lead us into the new positions. Thus, we learned early-on to depend only on ourselves. When the battle started, I used to secretly laugh at the paper work bureaucrats at the division ammunition office and the army ammunition dumps and their lazy methods, but they were even worse when scared. When they thought they were in danger, they jammed rifles in your face and demanded the password, which we almost never had. This caused all sorts of delays.

On Tuesday, December 12th, while we were loading ammunition into a bank barn near our command post in Burg Reuland, an interesting event happened. A young lad from the village was talking with Sgt. Karl Drysmala in German. The boy volunteered the fact that his father had been home the previous evening. Karl asked him if his father was in the Belgian Army, and the boy replied 'No, my father is in the German Army.' When queried further, the boy explained that his father knew where all our outposts were and he simply moved at night around them. This information was reported to our battalion S-2, and we doubled our guard. Sure enough, that night a sentry shot an intruder. Unfortunately the intruder was a fence post, but I commended the man anyway because he drilled it very neatly in the dark! (See Gen. Manteuffel's letter, which is attached, for his response to my mention of this incident.)

An unhappy incident occurred on December 14. When I went to the Division Ammunition Officer's office to have him approve my requisition for ammunition, I was told by a private that they were not approving ammunition requests till they got their paper work straightened out! He was the only person on duty, and did not know how to contact anyone. I returned to our battery headquarters and called the battalion commander on the phone to report the problem. He told me he would get back to me, but the day passed with no word. Finally about midnight, he called and told me that Brig. Gen. McMahon had finally got an ordnance officer to straighten the matter out, and that I could now draw

ammunition. I suggested starting at first light, but the battalion commander said 'NOW,' so I had to spend the night driving much of the way blackout to Ammunition Supply Point 125 at Verviers. I had my revenge later. After our infantry regiment had suffered many casualties and was sent to a rest area, our artillery battalion was attached to the 82d Airborne Division, the 7th Armored Division, the 69th Infantry Division and others. I would always draw my ammunition from them, and even if not attached to their unit, they would still approve my requisitions with no questions asked. Our Division Ammunition Officer would send me anxious notes wondering why we were not firing. These notes were always a source of amusement.

On December 16th, I had scarcely laid down to sleep, having been out most of the night getting ammunition, when Corporal Linwood Jackson punched me in the back with the working end of his carbine and suggested I come outside and watch the fireworks. I reminded him of what he could do with the carbine, but went outside and to the east could see the light of searchlights bouncing off the clouds. Above us we could hear the whirring sound of many artillery rounds going overhead bound for the medium battalion to our west which was supporting us. Later, I started the morning's work by hauling coal to the battalion. This, no doubt, was soon enjoyed by the Germans. Late in the afternoon I was ambushed at Winterspelt as the Germans seized that key road junction. During the day, I had been hit in the boot, but not injured, by a piece of an eighty-eight millimeter shell, while talking with the Sgt. Major Howard Crank near Battalion Headquarters in Heckhalenfeld. That night I made a hurried run to Bourcy, east of Noville, and west of the 28th Infantry Division lines to get ammunition on.

This dump was being evacuated. A huge traffic Jam had resulted from units trying to get ammunition and First Army was trying to remove the ammunition to a safer location. What ammunition was left had to be pried from the frozen ground, because the boxes had sunk into the mud, and the evacuating units had not bothered to pick it up. Small arms fire could be heard nearby to the east. In the clear cold air it probably sounded closer than it was, When we finally loaded our trucks and returned to Bourcy to get on the main highway, an overturned truck blocked us. Someone gathered about fifty of us and we actually manhandled this truck over on its top and then far enough into the ditch to allow us to pass the long line of flat bed trucks which blocked two-thirds of the road. As we proceeded from Bourcy toward Burg Reuland, I fell asleep but fortunately I awoke and I noticed my driver, Cpl. Hartley, was also asleep at the wheel. Fortunately, the road was very straight at this point and no harm resulted. I stopped the column, and we all had a good pull on a bottle of Scotch which I kept under the seat for such emergencies.

This woke everyone up and we returned to Burg Reuland safely.

The next day, having been cut off from the roads by the German seizure of Winterspelt, I followed a wire line using Jeeps and three-quarter ton trucks to deliver ammunition to the firing batteries, which were now cut off. On my first trip, I witnessed a sight that looked like a wild west movie. I rolled into Heckhalenfeld through a barrage of mortar and rifle fire to suddenly see about a hundred Germans and their lone guard seated on the ground watching Battery 'A' fire missions. As soon as the missions stopped, the gun crews charged the nearby woods and attempted to drive off snipers firing at them. The spectators were sitting down, I soon realized, in order to be smaller targets. This action was repeated after every 'A' Battery fire mission, but the snipers eluded the gunners. At 'B' Battery, a sniper hit the door post where Lt. Col. Hoover, Capt. Likins, Sgt. Tate of 'B' Battery and I were discussing our next move. Three of us hit the mud, but our battalion commander simply walked inside and invited us in for coffee. I could hardly hold mine for my shaking hands!

One of my ammunition trucks going to Heckhalenfeld got through Winterspelt Just ahead of me on the afternoon of December 16. I called the driver who had reached 'B' Battery safely and told him to wait there with the men until morning and I would come and get them. Meanwhile the Germans tightened there hold on Winterspelt. Our ambulance was stopped there, but the Germans only loaded some seriously wounded Germans in with our wounded and told the driver that they would see him later! Sgt. Hartman, Capt. Dolitsky's driver got through in a Jeep, but the jeep took several bullet holes in the body. Corporals Ossie Leeth, Jesse Cox and Walter Clark drove into Winterspelt and were halted by German soldiers and were told to put their truck in a column which was being formed. They were not searched and the Germans may have thought they were German soldiers. When the column moved through town,

they simply turned off on the dirt road to Auel, and came home to Service Battery in Burg Reuland. They were not about to let the Germans get the best of them.

The Germans pressed the attack and our reserve infantry was committed. Elements of CCB 9th Armored Division came to help but the situation became serious. On the 17th while on my way for ammunition, I witnessed corps artillery units pulling out, road guards of military POWs being picked up and no replacements being dropped off, a water point pulling out and the rear area seemed very empty and lonely. At our battery position in Burg Reuland, stragglers began to congregate. Early in the afternoon, a sergeant and seven men came in from the south and reported their company of the 28th Infantry Division was overrun. I got them to promise to stay and fight with us by giving them some food.

Several officers and men came in from Service Company (424th Inf. Regt.) in Elcherath, reporting that they had been overrun. This was to our northeast. The corps artillery battalion to our north up the hill near Bracht came rolling by in very bad order and headed west. Capt. Dolitsky called the battalion commander and asked him if he wanted us to cross the river and go into perimeter defense with 'C' Battery, but the commander told us to stay put and hold the bridge because he might be needing it. A platoon from 'C' Company of the reserve battalion came down the hill from Bracht, asked for directions, and crossed the bridge toward Winterspelt. Toward dusk a lone lieutenant came in from the south driving a jeep. I met him at our Outpost and he told me that he had a message for the regimental commander (424th Infantry Regiment), Col. Reid. I asked him some questions, even though I did not know that there were Germans in American uniforms. I wanted to make sure he was who he said he was because he was driving a Jeep and officers were forbidden to drive vehicles.

During the course of the conversation, I learned he had become lost and got out on foot to reconnoiter the route. While he was gone, his driver was SO terrified that he had taken the tow rope from the Jeep and hung himself in a tree. I also learned that the message was that the 112th Infantry Regiment of the 28th Division was now west of the Our River and our right flank held nothing but Germans. Fortunately, the S-4 of the 424th Regiment was with us and he took the lieutenant forward on foot to regimental headquarters. Some time later Col. Reid had the third battalion of the 424th launch an attack, in the dark, eastward which freed a dirt trail that wound south and eventually west into Burg Reuland. This enabled our artillery to get out of Heckhalenfeld. Upon reaching Burg Reuland, our battalion commander directed that I pick positions for the batteries and lead the battalion minus his advance party to them. The reasons for this order were twofold. I was the only officer who had been in the area which we were headed for, and secondly, some months earlier on Tennessee maneuvers we had been overrun and the battalion commander had learned the value of someone searching rear areas for gun positions and information. Although I was only a first lieutenant, I was soon leading a column that contained troops from two army divisions, German prisoners, infantry and artillery wounded, and an assortment of bits and pieces of units.

Ours was not the last unit to evacuate Burg Reuland, however. Sgt. Brackett with the third section of the ammunition train returned from an ammo run and found some M-10 trailers that I had purposely left behind, because they were a menace when ambushed and could carry very little additional ammunition. He dutifully picked them up and delivered them back to me!

Capt. Wells and the engineers came out on foot, having been cut off from the roads by the Germans and being among the last to leave Heckhalenfeld. They stopped at Elcherath and salvaged some of the 424th Service Company trucks and rode out. Finally, the infantry who had successfully cleared the road came straggling in to form a line on the Our River. Chaplain Ronald Mosely came out on foot bringing the wounded of the third battalion and some Germans. The medical officer had become a casualty, and Mosely pitched in and performed surgery all afternoon of the 17th without any prior medical experience. Several Germans had surrendered to him in the course of the day, including one who had fired at him several times despite his Red Cross armband. This soldier, once he had surrendered, pitched in and helped and was one of the litter bearers on the long walk to Burg Reuland. I visited Mosely in his home in Petit Riviere, Nova Scotia this past summer (1984, where he told me this story.

I was somewhat pleased to be in command of so large a unit and pleased that I was allowed to pick the gun positions. All that changed the following day. I had picked positions that had foxholes and gun positions dug by another unit, but the Germans also had a good idea of the locations, so that there was a lot of fire on the positions. It was somewhat sobering to be shelled in both Battery 'A and Battery 'B and have to lay on the ground and take it, because no one offered me one of the foxholes I had so generously provided the batteries!

These positions were located just east of Maldange with Battalion Headquarters occupying a combination farm house and country bar in a grove of trees. At first, there was a lull in the fighting, as both adversaries moved troops to renew the battle. Service Battery, which was in a firebreak east of Beho, was ordered to move to Bovigny. Capt. Dolitsky decided to move at dusk. Just before moving, Warrant Officer Edward Reilly, our supply technician, came in and reported the ration dump at Gouvy had been set afire by the Americans as the Germans approached, and that small arms fire could be heard nearby. The 7th Armored Division had a company out posting Beho and we followed one of their tanks on the road to Bovigny. Finally the tank stopped, and since we had not met a single vehicle coming from the Bovigny area, the captain and I decided that I better reconnoiter the route. Accordingly, along with S/Sgt. John Schlessler and Cpl. William Hartley, I started out. Our route went through a long stretch of swamp and the slow pace of driving under blackout conditions soon put me to sleep. For the past four nights I had had virtually no sleep. I was fast beginning to react like a drunk, both physically and mentally.

When I awakened, I was alone in the jeep in an alley. The sky was only slightly less dark than the buildings on each side. I could not think clearly, but suddenly I heard a heel plate strike a cobblestone near me. As a figure approached, I rose up and swung my fists hitting Sgt. Schlessler in the chest. He grabbed me in a bear hug and soon explained that there was an anti-aircraft headquarters in the town and that a sentry was near the schoolyard gate up the street. He also mentioned we were in Salmchateau and that we had missed the turn-off to Bovigny. To this day, I thank God, that in my confused state I did not fire my weapon at the approaching figure!

I staggered up the street to confront a very scared sentry with his rifle in one hand and a flashlight in the other. As I started to talk to him, I heard someone crying nearby. In my confused state, I simply took the flashlight away from the sentry and walked toward the sound. I was most fortunate that the sentry did not shoot me. I found a man sitting on the ground and recognized him as the messenger for the 592nd Field Artillery. This man was a big, burly man and one that I least expected to cry. I sat down on the ground and just like a little kid, put my arm around him, and asked him why he was crying. He said the Germans had killed his lieutenant. When I asked what his lieutenant's name was, it was my turn for a shock, because it was Lt. Alexander, my bunkmate on the SS Wakefield.

After patting him on the back, and still keeping the flashlight, I staggered into the schoolhouse and woke up the officers of the A battery. As I looked about in the light of my flashlight, I could see everyone but the commander had a pistol pointed at me, which did nothing for my peace of mind. I was so tired that I could not even put sentences together. The commander proved equal to the occasion and kindly told me that our battery could occupy any buildings in town he was not using.

I returned to Service Battery, still parked along the road, about the same time Brigadier General Leo McMahan, our Division Artillery Commander, came by enroute to Vielsaim from St. Vith with a few trucks. He was cheerful and readily assented to our moving to Salmchateau instead of Bovigny, which solved my location problem for me. At that time he did not tell us of the disasters elsewhere, including his own headquarters. I learned the magnitude of the problem the next day when I met our Division Artillery Air Officer, Major Podwarney, on the road near Beho.

Earlier in the day (the 18th), Col. Malin Craig, Jr., Division Artillery Executive Officer (son of the WW1 general, who was U.S. Army Chief of Staff in the 1930s), had started to move what was left of the division artillery, except for our unit, to Poteau, while Gen. McMahan remained in St. Vith. Along the road, the Germans attacked. Craig left Headquarters Battery to position the three remaining guns of the 589th and the nine remaining guns of the 52d to return fire. Headquarters Battery, Division Artillery, was attacked on the road and the S-3 (operations officer) and part of the battery took off cross-country. Unfortunately, they reached the 592d going into position and for some unknown reason the Division Artillery S-3 ordered the battalion commander to march order and took him west of the

Meuse to positions about five kilometers west of Dinant. Dinant at that time was a very safe place with the Germans many miles away. For this, the S-3 was relieved. Cal. Craig had to play detective and go and find th, battalion and bring it back into the 'Goose Egg.' The 592d was out of action for two days. I was not present when this unfortunate incident occurred, but I was present when the 592d Joined us in the 'Goose Egg.'

The remaining three guns commanded by Major Albert Parker, S-3 of the 599th Battalion had even worse luck. They were commandeered by a corps artillery colonel and put in position at Baraque de Fraiture. There they would hold off German forces until overrun by 2nd SS Panzer troops, just as a glider company of the 82 A/B Division arrived to help them. While at Maldange, I picked up Lt. Thomas J. Wright, Jr. executive officer of C' Battery, 589th and a corporal, who had escaped the trap at Schonberg on foot, and delivered them to Baraque de Fraiture on my ammunition run. I did them no favor, for they were captured there. Service Battery, 590th FA Bn, which I later commanded, had eleven men there, and only the late Sgt. John Wagoner of Shoals, Indiana escaped. He did this when he and a few others fled a burning building along with a herd of cattle, which was driven out to confuse the attackers. Those who stayed in the building were killed or captured. Baraque de Fraiture was renamed Parker's Crossroads after its valiant defender. In 1974 when visiting the area, Belgian troops under a Major E. Engels were maneuvering at Parker's Crossroads, using Parker's defensive tactics. Major Engels was stationed at the Belgian Barracks at Vielsalm and visited us at St. Vith during our reunion.

Our brief stay in Salmchateau had some good and some bad features. On the day after our arrival, Cpl. Arthur Demers, one of our cooks who spoke some French, reported to m~ that the natives were reporting that Germans on bicycles were passing through town. I hurried to the main street, and sure enough soon caught a bike rider. He had a pass, but I was unable to determine its validity. He was unarmed, and if a fugitive as he claimed, he was carrying no family possessions, which I thought odd. Meanwhile the natives were yelling and grabbing my arms wanting me to kill him on the spot. Finally, I loaded him on the front of the jeep and delivered him to a farmhouse on the road toward Beho, where I had seen German prisoners being assembled. It turned out to be the headquarters of the 112th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division. The first person I met was Col. Gustin Nelson, the CO of the regiment. He readily assented and my prisoner very willingly went into the barbed wire enclosure. To this day I do not know whether or not I captured a prisoner, but the fellow was certainly willing to be one!

Captain Dolitsky and Sgt. Hartman went to Division Headquarters to pick up gasoline. The headquarters was located in the Belgian barracks in Vielsalm. While loading the truck, someone threw a hand grenade which exploded and sent fragments everywhere. Capt. Dolitsky was handing two cans to Sgt. Hartman on the truck, when a fragment of steel went through both cans. Luckily the gasoline did not ignite or they would have been badly burned. We never learned who threw the grenade, but it is doubtful if the Germans were anywhere close.

On another occasion, Capt. Dolitsky and I went to the Division G-2 Section to check out the road situation. No one was in the office, so we looked at the maps. A senior-type field officer came in clad in a towel and demanded to know our business. We told him we were seeking information. He told us we had no business there and to get out. Capt. Dolitsky mentioned that his map was out of date in our sector and that we could give him information. He became very angry and again ordered us to leave, and stated that he was taking a shower and did not want to be disturbed. We left, but it seemed to us most odd that the G-2 'brass' had time for showers under the circumstances. Outside the building, Capt. Dolitsky and I had a good laugh when we realized what a spectacle this officer would make walking to a prison camp in a towel.

On the brighter side, we stayed in a house occupied by an old man and woman along with their three teenaged granddaughters and a grandson. The parents of the children were in a labor camp. At the kitchen table we all wrote what we thought were our last letters home, and from the kitchen, when we left, the family gave us a puppy, which we promptly named Snafu. It was a great pet, but died of distemper in Brittany when we moved west to contain the Germans in Lorient later in the war.

When we left Salmchateau, we thought we would never see these people again, but twenty-five days later the town was freed by the 75th Infantry Division and they were all safe but hungry. The Germans had eaten all the food. With

the help of the quartermaster, we solved the food problem. In return, one of the girls gave me a German officer's map case which contained maps, personal letters, and of all things a copy of the receipt the German officer gave the girls' grandfather when taking his horses. Nothing of value was in the case.

In one of the letters, the officer's girl friend reported the daily bombing of her home town (Rheydt, Germany), and the fact that morale was low.

Meanwhile, the 'Goose Egg' was being steadily made smaller by stubborn German attacks. The 7th Armored Division, what was left of the 106th Division, CCB of 9th Armored Division' and the 112th Infantry Regiment of the 28th Division held on as best they could. On my last trip into the pocket our 12 guns (591st FA Bn), lined up on. beside the other along a dirt road, were firing south, and on the other side of the road, the P guns of the medium battalion (592d FA Bo) were doing the same thing firing north. These 21 guns were all that was left of the 48 guns of Division Artillery. Al) up and down this road I could clearly hear small arms fire, which seemed very close indeed.

While still at Maldange (inside the Goose Egg), one scene still remains memorable to me. It was the most discouraging time that I encountered. Toward dusk, I went into the command post to report to Lt. Cal. Hoover and to get his orders for the night. The building was shaking with incoming and outgoing explosions. The room next door was full of wounded and the commander was seated on a chair reading a letter. He finally looked up and said to me, 'There is one thing certain about all this. We will not get out alive.' He then got up and walked away leaving a very discouraged lieutenant without any instructions. As I left the building, I met Chaplain Mosely bringing in two dead infantrymen in a trailer attached to his jeep. As I walked to the rear of the command post to get my Jeep, I could see the Germans pounding 7th armored tanks in the valley toward Crombach with artillery bursts. As I pulled out, 'A' Battery across the road was hitting the foxholes as rounds were bursting high in the air overhead. At that time I returned to Salmchateau and pondered the colonel's words. This was indeed a low point for me. By morning I was in good spirits, however.

On the twenty-second of December, I sent nine trucks for ammunition. I instructed Sgt. Datte to load all the 7th Armored Division would give him from their train, located at Sprimont, north of Aywaille, and for Sgt. Brackett to take the rest of the trucks to ASP 125 or anywhere there was ammunition. They left, passing through Parker's Crossroads (Baraque de Fraiture, and turning north as the battle was heating up. They did not return that day. Since the battalion was fast running out of ammunition, I took the parts truck, the ration truck, and another truck on which I had smoke ammunition stored and headed west. Lt. Howard Kriz, the battalion motor officer, went to the firing batteries and obtained three trucks and tried a different route. The smoke ammunition I stacked in an alley, not knowing whether we would stay in Salmchateau or not. When I returned twenty-five days later, it was still there. The Germans had not even booby trapped it.

As I was leaving Salmchateau, I saw a military policeman hit by an air burst on the road ahead of me toward Baraque de Fraiture. Civilians dragged him into a building. To the southwest I could see a tank firing at the crossroad. This caused me to turn west on the road to Basse Bodeaux. When I arrived there, I turned west to Werbomont, since I knew the territory around Werbomont. This was fortunate, inasmuch as if I had continued on the shorter northern route, I would have run into Task Force Peiper in the Ambleve Valley. Capt. Dolitsky stayed at Salmchateau and came out with the battalion the next day. Sgt. Brackett, my third section chief, got through on the same route I took from Salmchateau, and this gave Capt. Dolitsky 1200 rounds to take to the firing batteries.

Eventually, all of us made it through for ammunition, but Sgt. Datte had the greatest adventure. He picked up 900 rounds of 105 mm ammunition from the 7th Armored Division's trains at Sprimont, and while returning ran into the final battle at Parker's Crossroads. He turned back to Werbomont and there turned east to Trois Pants and somewhere along the way joined forces with Lt. Pratt and some trucks of the 590th FA Bn now hauling ammunition for the division. Along the way they were ambushed and the right front tire of my lead truck was flattened and Pratt's windshield was shot out. A private first class I had court-martialed for throwing a pick away in the States must have decided I might make him pay for the trucks, so single-handedly he charged the Germans and created so much confusion on that the trucks were able to back away and the tire was repaired. Later a fire fight developed, with some

paratroopers coming from Vielsalm to join the melee. During this fight Corporals Ekstrom and Cox along with a paratrooper ran between two buildings, and were greeted with a burst of fire. The paratrooper was killed, but both my men were unscathed. Our fabulous luck remained with us. Although shot at many times, not one member was killed or wounded, despite being in the battle from December 16, 1944 until January 25, 1945. In contrast, I had three men wounded in Service Battery, 590th FA Battalion the Sunday after the war was over near Kerbihan, France, while containing the Lorient Pocket.

While still in the area of the fire fight, Sgt. Datte met a British Captain, who turned out to be one of six sent by Field Marshall Montgomery to find out what was going on in the St. Vith sector. Inasmuch as Lt. Pratt had left with his trucks, the British Captain, spent a half-hour with Sgt. Datte while waiting for the road to be opened into Vielsalm. I always told Sgt. Datte that he talked the British Captain into straightening the line and withdrawing from the 'Goose Egg.' At any rate, Field Marshall Montgomery's decision to withdraw to a new line was the correct decision, because a major part of four divisions could have been captured in the 'Goose Egg,' and without ammunition, would have been 'easy pickings.'

At Aywaille, where Datte and I finally got together, we saw four Germans in American uniforms captured by the bridge guards. This was the first that we knew that the rumor was true, and that there were Germans around in American uniforms. They passed within a few feet of us and the only thing I noticed was that one had an overcoat reaching to his ankles. Lucky for us they surrendered instead of fighting. (See Gen. Manteuffel's remarks in attached letter.)

The story of the escape from the 'Goose Egg' is an interesting one, and although lacking in coordination, it was almost entirely successful. Only a small number of vehicles were lost and 23,000 troops from four divisions were saved to fight another day. It was quite a job sorting units out, since troops came out as they could break off from the fire fights.

On the day before Christmas, Lt. Col. Hoover ordered me to have 600 rounds of artillery ammunition at the command post at first light for an attack on Manhay on Christmas Day. When I arrived, the battalion had moved, and unfortunately left no message for me. I decided that they had gone east and moved on toward Parker's Crossroads via Werbomont. I traveled some distance and saw no one. Finally a soldier jumped out of a foxhole and ran over to me to report that he was the front line and that the next soldier I would greet would not be so friendly. I inquired as to why the Germans did not shoot at me, if they were so close, and he replied that they were as cold as he was. He said they were chopping wood and building fires. I took his word for it and on the way back located Headquarters, 2d Battalion, 424th Infantry Regiment in a farmhouse. I went in and our liaison officer, Capt. Lawrence Fick of Columbus, Ohio introduced me to Lt. Col. Leonard Unanoff the battalion commander. The commander graciously showed me his attack plan and told me where our battalion was located. That afternoon, the 7th Armored and 2d Battalion, 424th Infantry attacked Manhay. The attack failed and my new acquaintance of the morning was relieved of his command, unjustly I thought. This attack finished off the last battalion of infantry that the division had, and our artillery battalion then furnished direct support fire for the 82d Airborne Division around Basse Bodeaux as the year ended.

On 25 December we witnessed the waves of bombers going east and saw six P-51 fighters shot down by German anti-aircraft fire.

On 28 December our division drew 7,000 rations. Everybody took all they wanted and there were plenty left with the quartermaster. From this it appears that the 14,000 fine soldiers at [Camp Atterbury, Indiana](#) in August were now some 6,000 used up old men. Our battalion (591st) had fired 12,000 rounds of artillery ammunition and the ammo train had hauled 16,000 rounds or 300 tons in December. Driftwood had lived up to its name!

Robert C. Ringer
4280 Kendale Road
Columbus, Ohio 43220
9 May 1985

Attachments x

Letter January 26, 1970 from Gen. Manteuffel

~~Contents of dispatch case~~

Command Posts of 591st FA Bn

Ammunition Allocations before battle Missions fired by 591st FA Bn

Pictures and biosketch, retired from USAR in 1972.

The above is an accurate transcription of the first-person account I prepared For the Columbus, Ohio World War II Round Table. authorize the deposition of one copy of this account with the US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

Hasso von Manteuffel Fifth Panzer Army
(German) Commander who in 1970 kindly
responded to a letter from me about the
battle for ST. Vith Belgium.



HASSO von MANTEUFFE
8918 Diessen om Ammersee
Marlo-Hilf-Strobe-7

Jan. 26th, 1970.

Dear Mr. Ringer,

Many thanks for your kind and very interesting letter Jan. 2 nd, 1970. I am glad to be informed by your letter that you came back (out of the war!) , injured and without being in captivity! All places you mentioned in your letter are well-known to me during the war and after the war, because I visited several times St. Vith, Bastogne etc. The best report about St. Vith and about the 106th Inf. Division is in my opinion, "Decision At St. Vith - the story of the 106th - the division Hitler smashed in the Battle Of The Bulge" by Charles WHITING (Ballantine Books, Inc. New York, N. Y.) and the official report by Hugh I. Cole, "The Ardennes: Battle Of The Bulge", Office of the Chief of Military History, Washington ,D.C. 1965. I worked with Cole and some other books (I have more than ten books in this matter !). I received the invitation for the reunion of the 106thth division for July last year, but not before July 18 th (for July 19th) and so it was too far from Diessen to St. Vith - 635 kilometers! But I sent my speech I had in view on this day, to the 106th Inf. Div. Association for publishing in their magazine. I wonder, that Bastogne has an honorable place in American Military History and St. Vith is hardly mentioned! (I experienced that fact each time I have been in the States!) ! The Battle of The Bulge was not fought only solely at Bastogne or by the admirable coming into action of Patton's Third army, here at St. Vith were all elements of tragedy, heroism and self sacrifice which go to make up human experience as its most acute phase! The actions of our army around St. Vith exerted a great influence on the issue/result of the German intention/purpose and that in manifold regard-briefly: the schedule of the right wing of my army- a whole army-corps was delayed by your defense round St. Vith, in spite of the ill-fated elements of the 106 division. These troops in this area hold up the German corps five days longer than our time-table allowed and so they forced to detour the attacking forces so much the more as my right neighbor (the 6th SS. Panzer Army) have had no success. The 106th Division was outflanked and encircled and overwhelmed by the Germans! In their rear!! By Powerful German forces and in superiority in numbers and arms! It is in my opinion very wrong to blame the 106th Inf. division. Details you may find in the mentioned book - fully agree with the author. It was of great interest for me what you wrote about the little boy and his father they passed our and your lines in Dec. 1944. The misfortune for your side was a complete failure of you Intelligence Service!.

The operation "Greiff" (Skorzeny) was absolutely against martial law, against the usage of war and against my feelings. I was not informed about this operation before Dec. 16th in the morning! I agree of course to quote my remarks at St. Vith.

All for now, but if you have more questions in this field (St. Vith or The Battle of The Bulge) I am willing to give you more information later .

With kindest regards and my very best wishes, dear Mr. Ringer,
Yours sincerely,

(S)

COMMAND POSTS ETC - 591st FA Bn during the Battle of the Ardennes

<u>DATE</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>BATTALION CP</u>	<u>SV BATTERY CP</u>
Nov 10, 1944	Sailed from Boston		
Nov 18	Arrived Liverpool		
Nov 19	Arrived Gloucester Reservoir Camp		
Nov 30	Weymouth to Le Havre could not land hence up River Seines to Rouen to land		
Dec 10	Arrived Ardennes	Heckhalenfeld Btry C Steffeshausen	Berg Reuland
Dec. 19 ^r	Moved West	Maldange	Beho
Dec. 21	Moved again	Commanster	Salmchateau
Dec 23	Out of gooseegg	Ville	Harze
Dec 25		Fayes	Ville
Dec 28		Veucy Le Marteau	Eronheid
Jan 5, 1945		Basse Bodeaux	"
Jan 8		Arbelfontaine	"
Jan 11		Mouistier	Targnon
Jan 14		Ster	Mouistier
Jan 23		Ondeval	Massacre Crossroads
Jan 23		Montenau	Ondeval
Jan 27	Tp rest area	Limont	Limont
Feb 4		Bullingen	Butgenbach
Feb 5		Hunningen	"
Mar 9		Neuhof	Hunningen
Mar 15	Depart Losheim Gap For St Quentin France		
April 2	Arrive Rennes Airport to Reorganize.		

S-E-C-R-E-T

31

591/5-4

*AUTH: CG 106 DIV ARTY *
*DATE: 10 DEC 1944 *
*INITIALS: *

CG 106 DIV ARTY
APO 445 US ARMY
13 DEC 1944

AMMUNITION ALLOCATION NO. 1

1. The following expenditures of ammunition are authorized for the period 100600 to 140800 Dec 1944. Authority: Ammunition Allocation No. 20. Hq VIII Corps Artillery 9 Dec 1944.

a. 105 How HE M2:

To 559 FA Bn	850
To 590 FA Bn	770
To 591 FA Bn	770
To 275 AMP FA Bn	850

b. 155 How to 591 FA Bn

HE M102	125
HE M107, Cng M868	150
HE M107, Cng M4 or M4A1	225

2. The following special conditions apply:

- a. Shell 105 How HE M2 drawn with fuze M48, M48A1 or M48 as desired depending on availability.
- b. Shell HE M102 may be fired with either Cng M2 M2 or M2 M2 as available.
- c. No more Cng M4 or M4A1 than the figures allocated above may be used with Shell HE M107. Where possible, Cng M2 M2 will be substituted for M4 or M4A1, substituting on a round for round basis.
- d. Smoke (either RP or BB) will not be expended from basic load without specific allocation, except in case of extreme emergency.
- e. Unexpended balances on this allocation will revert to Army control.

Revised
Brig Gen

OFFICIALS:

5-5

 TO: CG 103 DIV ARTY *
 DATE: 10 DEC 1944 *
 INITIALS: *[Signature]* *

HQ 103 DIV ARTY
 APO 445 US ARMY
 14 DEC 1944

AMMUNITION ALLOCATION NO. 2

1. The following expenditures of ammunition are authorized for the period 140000 to 180000 Dec 1944. Authority: Ammunition Allocation No. 21 Hq VIII Corps Artillery 12 Dec 1944.

a. 105 How HE M2:

To 562 FA Bn	1000
To 590 FA Bn	1000
To 591 FA Bn	1000
To 275 2ND FA Bn	1000

10 Dec 376 72 4
16 Dec 2598 195 27
16

b. 155 How to 592 FA Bn

HE M102	125
HE M107, Cng HE CR	150
HE M107, Cng M4 or M41	225

c. 8" Gun HE to 580 TB Bn

Full M48 Normal Charge	70
Full M48 Reduced Charge	500

2. The following special conditions apply:

- a. Shell 105 How HE M2 may be drawn with Full M48, M41 or M4 as desired depending on availability.
- b. Shell HE M102 may be fired with either Cng M2 M3 or M3 CR as available.
- c. No more Cng M4 or M41 than the figures allocated above may be used with Shell HE M107. Where possible, Cng M3 CR will be substituted for M4 or M41, substituting on a round for round basis.
- d. Normal Charge for 8" Gun may be drawn from direct or indirect position.
- e. Unexpended balance from this allocation will carry forward.

Benjamin
 Brig Gen

OFFICIAL:

MISSIONS FIRED & ROUNDS FIRED

591ST FA BN

Beginning action December 10, 1944

Date	Btry	Number of Missions		Rounds Expended	
		Btry	Bn	Btry	Bn
10 Dec	A	0			
	B	16		135	
	C	23		241	
	Total	39	4	376	72
11 Dec	A	3		15	
	B	23		95	
	C	16		68	
	Total	42	6	554	94
12 Dec	A	14		116	
	B	29		110	
	C	19		19	
	Total	62	6	799	94
13 Dec	A	24		139	
	B	24		187	
	C	10		79	
	Total	58	8	1204	120
14 Dec	A	16		88	
	B	21		93	
	C	19		105	
	Total	56	13	1490	181
15 Dec	A	10		63	
	B	12		84	
	C	15		116	
	Total	37	14	1753	195
16 Dec	A	56		1063	
	B	67		986	
	C	31		549	
	Total	154	14	4361	195

Date	Btry	Number of Missions		Rounds Expended	
		Btry	Bn	Btry	Bn
17 Dec	A	52		625	
	B	55		569	
	C	50		458	
	Total	605	16	6003	212
18 Dec	A	1		34	
	B	1		19	
	C	5		118	
	Total	612	16	6174	212
19 Dec	A	16		383	
	B	6		60	
	C	12		117	
	Total	646	16	6734	212
20 Dec	A	33		554	
	B	44		467	
	C	39		336	
	Total	762	46	8091	1340
21 Dec	A	17		194	
	B	42		340	
	C	39		308	
	Total	860	54	8933	1543
22 Dec	A	6		41	
	B	5		20	
	C	6		18	
	Total	877	54	9012	1543
23 Dec	A	33		367	
	B	34		435	
	C	14		355	
	Total	958	59	10169	1598
24 Dec	A	Bn out of action this date			

Date	Btry	Number of Missions		Rounds Expended	
		Btry	Bn	Btry	Bn
25 Dec	A	2		8	
	B	2		8	
	C	2		8	
	Total	964	61	10193	1622
26 Dec	A	67		416	
	B	134		713	
	C	89		561	
	Total	1254	61	11883	2302
27 Dec	A	19		345	
	B	19		330	
	C	18		301	
	Total	1310	98	12859	2984
28 Dec	A	42		273	
	B	40		286	
	C	49		321	
	Total	1441	117	13739	3529
29 Dec	A	9		131	
	B	4		94	
	C	25		169	
	Total	1479	124	14143	3826
30 Dec	A	30		110	
	B	29		94	
	C	31		103	
	Total	1569	131	14450	3993
31 Dec	A	5		57	
	B	6		61	
	C	3		37	
	Total	1583	136	14605	4128
1 Jan	A	7		62	
	B	15		121	
	C	14		115	
	Total	1619	143	14803	4300

Biographical Sketch
Robert Clinton Ringer
Colonel USAR Retired

Born in Marion, Marion County, Ohio on November 10, 1916 Graduated from Marion Harding High School June 1931. Worked at various jobs for four years then entered The Ohio State University in 1938. Graduated in 1942 with a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration. Commissioned through the Army ROTC Program June 15, 1942 and entered the Army on the same day as a Second Lieutenant, Artillery.

Served in various assignments at Fort Bragg, N. C. and briefly as an ROTC Instructor at The Ohio State University during 1942_143. Assigned as the Ammunition Officer, 591st Field Artillery Battalion 106th Infantry Division January 1944. Served in the northern France, Ardennes-Alsace and Rhineland Campaigns in Europe. March 1945 assigned as Battery Commander 590th Field Artillery Battalion. 591st Field Artillery Battalion received the Belgian Fourragere (1940) awarded under Decree 7253 13 July 1950 by Charles Prince of Belgium, Regent of the Kingdom.

Employed as Payroll: Assistant, Payroll Director, and Associate to the Vice President for Personnel Services during thirty five years of service at The Ohio State University 1946_ 1981. Retired March 1981. Received the Ohio State University Distinguished Service Award March 1982.

Served in the U. S. Army Reserve 1946-1972 as a Battery Commander, Battalion Commander, Fire Support Coordinator, and Division Artillery Commander the latter in the 83rd Infantry Division Reinforcement Training Unit and the former three assignments in the 83rd Infantry Division TJSAR. Served as Commander of the 14142nd Military Intelligence Detachment (~Strategic). Retired as Colonel USAR 1972. Received the Army Meritorious Service Medal in 1972.

Married Mary Jane Walcutt of Columbus, Ohio February 18, 1943. Two sons Michael and Mark and one granddaughter Kristin Lee Ringer as of 1985.

As of 2004 I have two more granddaughters, Kelli Michele Ringer and Paige Perfect.

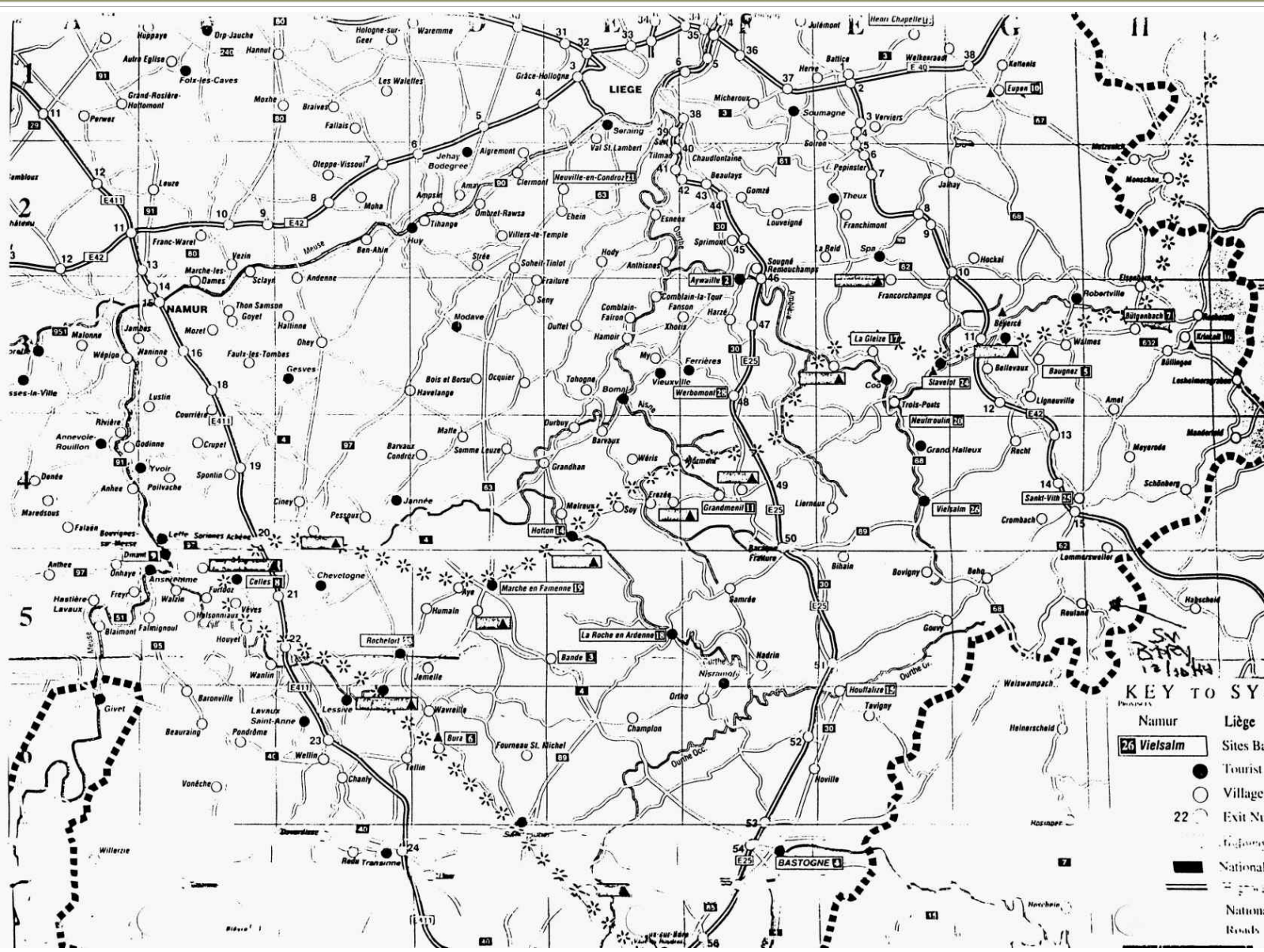
Note: It has been my good fortune to live into my 87th year and attend a reunion in Milwaukee, WI of 5 of my comrades and their wives along with my son Michael.

They are:

Charles Datte Clifton Hts Pa.
Florian Frank Avoca, WI
~ohn Howard Wauwatosa WI
Merlin Theisen Waukesha WI
Raymond Panice Orland Park, Il

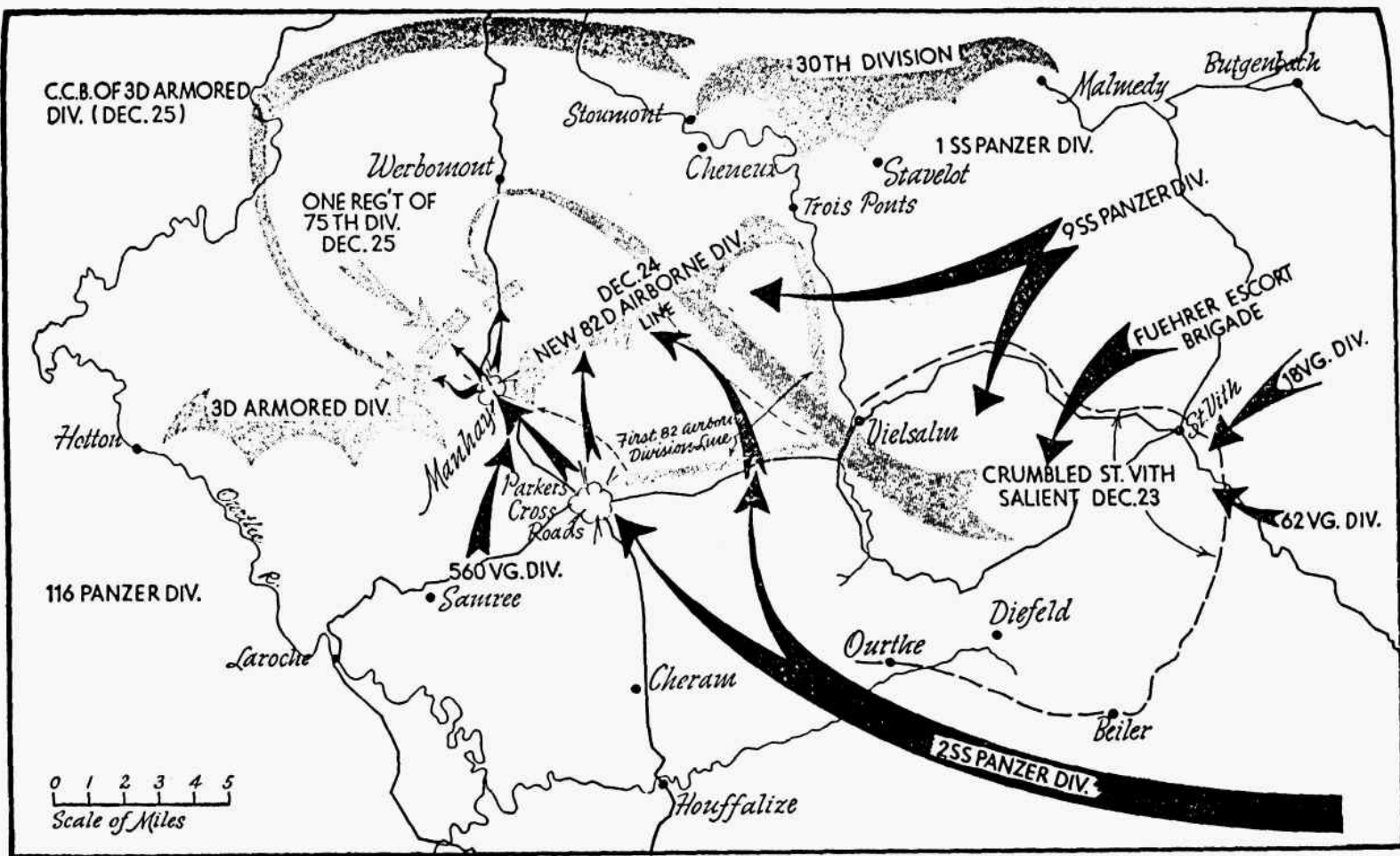
First Lieutenant Robert C. Ringer on December 23, 1944 near Harre, Belgium during the Battle of the Ardennes.





KEY TO SY
 PROFILES

Namur	Liège
Vielsalm	Sites Ba
	Tourist
	Village
	Exit Nu
	Regions
	National
	Nation
	Roads



THE FIGHT FOR MANHAY (DEC. 23-27)

THE FORTIFIED GOOSE EGG

by
Robert Ringer
1 May 1986

From 18 to 25 December 1944, elements of four divisions battled to prevent the Germans from crossing the Salm River and acquiring the road net leading west toward the Meuse. Finally, it was necessary to withdraw. This was successfully accomplished in a daylight withdrawal while still engaging the enemy. This could not or would not have been accomplished except for the following reasons:

General Montgomery was now in command and from the colonels he sent forward to ascertain the situation he learned of the condition of the troops in the goose egg and ordered a straightening of the line as he called it. No American commander politically could have withdrawn the troops at this point. In my opinion Montgomery was correct because we were about out of ammunition, the infantrymen of all units were totally exhausted, and we faced a very strong force.

2. The timely arrival of the 82d A/B Division after a long road march from France provided a secure screen through which to withdraw.

3. Major Albert Parker's three howitzer, 110 man command at Baraque de Fraiture would finally be overrun by elements of the 2d SS Panzer Division. This gave the enemy an opportunity to seize Salmchateau and Vielsaim and close the pocket once and for all.

In the pocket (goose egg) were the 7th Armored Division, 106th Inf. Div., CCB 9th Armored Div., and the 112th Regt. of the 28th Inf. Div. The 106th was at one-third strength having lost two regiments on the Schnee Eifel. CCB 9th Armd. Div. had lost its Service Company and Service Battery on the first day of the battle. The 112th Regt. was cut-off from its Division and the 7th Armd. Div. had suffered severe losses.

On 22 December Service Battery 591st FA Bn was located at Salmchateau, east of Parker's Crossroads (Baraque de Fraiture) and south of Vielsaim. Just north of Vielsaim, the Germans were attacking Trois Ponts and Parker's Crossroads to the west of Salmchateau was under siege.

On the 22d, I sent nine trucks for ammunition with Sgts. Charles Datte and James Brackett in command. Sgt. Datte was to go to Ayaille and obtain all the ammunition the 7th Armored Division Trains would give us and Sgt. Brackett was to take the remainder of the trucks and go wherever there was an ammo dump open. He was to go first to ASP 125 east of Liege, if it was still operating, and then wherever he could get ammo. I urged them to be back by midnight. I went to Vielsalm with Capt. Dolitsky to pick up supplies. We were loading gasoline into the back of the captain's 3/4 ton truck, when someone tossed a grenade, which exploded nearby and a piece of steel pierced both cans. Capt. Dolitsky was holding but did not start a fire.

We never did find out who tossed the grenade, but it certainly wasn't the Germans! We walked into the Division Headquarters G-2 Section which was not attended at the time and looked at the maps. A senior officer came in wrapped in a towel and ordered us out. We told him we had later information than he had about the Salmchateau area. This really made him mad! He told us to get out so that he could take a shower. We went outside and broke up laughing at the thought of the Germans capturing the officer and his walking through the woods to a POW camp dressed in a towel.

Later I went forward to our battalion headquarters. This was located in a tent on a cross roads near Commaster. No showers were available there unless you preferred shrapnel! Lt. Col. Hoover was talking with Captain James Shields who had graduated in ROTC with me. (Class of 1942 at Ohio State University) It turned out he was from Gen. Middleton's VIII Corps Artillery Headquarters. He had been sent to find out what was cooking. Gen. Middleton was organizing the defense of Bastogne by that time, and Shields had to take a long round about trip to reach us. At this time our remaining two battalions of the 106th Div. artillery were close to a nearby dirt road with only about 100 yards separating the battalions. The 591st (our battalion) was firing south and the medium battalion (155mm), the 592d, was firing north. The guns were about thirty feet apart which illustrates how small the pocket was.

Actually, the pocket in which 22,000 troops were located was about four miles wide at its widest point, and seven miles long. When coming and going on the dirt road from Vielsalm to our battalion, I could clearly hear automatic weapons fire which in the cold air sounded mighty close to the road, but probably was not as close as it sounded. I passed one Hq. where a sentry was stationed at the front door. He was a good target for a sniper. Sentries should have cover.

The only guidance I received at headquarters was to bring forward all ammunition, which we promptly did. I did not take HC Smoke forward, because it was already so foggy that smoke would have been of no use.

Night came and the trucks sent for ammunition did not return. Several of us sat around the kitchen table in the house of Wilhelm Hommes and wrote what we thought was our final letter home, and hoped that the Division would get the mail through before all Hell busted loose.

Morning came. I took the parts truck, the ration truck, and the truck with HC Smoke on it and started for ammunition. The contents of the trucks were unloaded and left in a cul-de-sac in the town. Thirty days later I returned and picked

up my HC Smoke. The Germans had not even booby-trapped it. The motor crew managed to get the parts trucks supplies out when they left. Lt. Kriz, the motor officer, went to the firing batteries and obtained three trucks and took a different route to find ammunition, Since our trucks sent out the day before had not returned, we were certain we were surrounded.

As I went west, I could see the Germans shelling the town ahead, and a road guard was hit and fell in the street. People ran out of a house and dragged him to safety. This meant the Germans were past Baraque de Fraiture, now known as Parker's Crossroads. This caused me to turn north toward Bass. Bodeaux. Somewhere along the way an armored car overtook me. Major Podworney, the Division Air Officer, was driving the armored car, and Brig. Gen. McMahon, the Artillery Commander, was the passenger. Gen. McMahon told me not to go to Manhay, as it was in enemy hands. I had not even received the original message for service elements of the 106th Division to assemble at Manhay. When Gen. McMahon learned of my mission, he sent me on my way. Being unfamiliar with the road beyond Basse Bodeaux, I turned west toward Werbomont, to get in familiar territory. Had I gone north I would have encountered Kampfgruppe Peiper in the Ambleve Valley. So much for luck.

At Ayaille, north of Werbomont, I met Sgt. Datte with his three trucks now empty. He had had an exciting night. On the way back he had been shot at near Parker's Crossroads. He had retraced his route to Werbomont, then east to Trois Ponts only to fall into an ambush. The Germans shot the right front tire off of the lead truck and the windshield out of another truck without hitting anyone. Pfc. Theodore Zagva grabbed his carbine and charged the Germans and actually drove them back far enough into the woods so that Sgt. Datte could get the trucks out of danger. While repairing the tire, one of Gen. Montgomery's colonels came up and spent about a half-hour with Sgt. Datte inquiring about the situation. I subsequently told Sgt. Datte that he did a fine selling job on the colonel to get us out of the 'goose egg. Later a Lt. colonel from the 7th Armored Division came along and took Sgt. Datte's ammunition on the grounds that his unit was out of ammo and they were under severe attack. I guess since the 7th Armored Division Trains had provided the ammunition in the first place, they were justified in taking it back. Datte went back to Ayaille, where we met near the bridge.

While we were standing on the street in Ayaille, four soldiers came by walking toward the bridge. One had an overcoat that reached to his ankles, and my thought was that the quartermaster must be really hard up these days. As the soldiers reached the bridge, other soldiers in nearby houses came out and seized them. This was the first that I had heard of Germans in American uniform. Had they started shooting, Datte and I would have been choice targets.

Between us we now had six trucks, and we went to ASP 125. Everywhere guards, mainly Belgian, challenged us and we did not get the trucks loaded until about 2 A.M. It was interesting to see how much more interest the dump personnel demonstrated in helping us to get ammo to the troops than they showed before the attack. Danger can cut red tapes

Fortunately, my men knew a bootlegger in a nearby town. We went to his house near a huge Catholic church. We had some spam and he had some potatoes and wine, and at 3 A.M. we ate our first meal in the past 24 hours. His wife and sister had their suitcases packed which were standing by the front door, and they were ready to flee. His sister had been a prisoner and had escaped from the Germans, and she did not dare to get caught again. I remember the luxury of putting my half frozen feet in the oven of the coal stove and dozing for an hour. What a wonderful thing that was'

On the way back to the battalion, we met Mess Sgt. Hardee standing by the road. He reported part of the battery had gone to Manhay as ordered only to meet the Germans coming in from the other end of town. They had then returned to the main supply route where he had found a barn full of hay for us to sleep in and he parked the vehicles and waited for the rest of us. Warrant Officer Edward Reilly had gone forward to try to locate our units. Altogether the battery was in five different segments and miraculously, all came together on the road near Harre, even though none of us knew where to go to find the other segments of the unit. I went forward toward Vielsalm and passed a column of artillery moving west. Lt. Col. Hoover, our battalion commander, was in the column and he reported the withdrawal was now in progress. He picked a large field and he and I began to pull our vehicles from the column. Everyone was

mixed together due to the fact that units had to break-off their engagement with the enemy and not all could move at the same time. All day long this move continued, although elements of the 1st SS Panzer, the Fuehrer Escort Brigade, the 18th, and 62d Volksgrenadiers, 3rd Parachute Division, and the entire 2d SS Panzer Division were attacking.

Enough cannot be said for the heroic action of Major Albert Parker and his 110 men and three howitzers. Had they not held for two days until overwhelmed, the pocket would have been closed at Salmchateau and Vielsaim and a great disaster could have ensued before the 82d Airborne could have reached us. Eleven men from Service Battery 590th FA Bn, which I later commanded, were with Parker. Only Sgt. John Wagoner of Shoals, Indiana returned. When the house containing Parker's command post was assaulted, Capt. Huxel, the third commander at the crossroads (Parker was wounded and evacuated and Maj. Goldstein had gone to the 3rd Armd. Division for help) gave everyone a choice. Make a run for it or surrender. He and Sgt. Wagoner chased three cows out the barn door, and with others, ran out and for some reason the Germans did not shoot at the cows. When they ran out with the cows, they escaped to join Capt. Woodruff's Company 'F', 325th Glider Infantry Regiment, which was on their approach march to the crossroads, where they, too, were overwhelmed by German armor. Few escaped from either unit. Their sacrifice enabled the 22,000 troops in the pocket to escape. Interestingly, one of the last units out was a (note: two troops E and F my high school buddy Dick Slack brought the last tank out) from the 14th Cavalry Group, that much maligned unit on which the first hammer blow struck far to the east.

Christmas Day, only two days after the withdrawal from the 'goose egg,' an attack was launched by the 7th Armd. Div. and the 106th Inf. Division on Manhay, which was occupied by the 2d SB Panzer Troops. These SS troops had shot some of the people who stayed and surrendered at Parker's Command Post and on this Holy Day they shot at Father Boyle, who fearlessly carried wounded 61's off the battlefield. I have this information from PFC. Bob Butler of Willoughby, Ohio who was one of the wounded Boyle carried off. Miraculously they did not hit him on his many trips.

On Christmas Day I was ordered to bring up ammunition at first light for the attack on Manhay. I arrived at the field where the battalion had been assembled the night before and found no one there. I reasoned that we must have attacked earlier and moved forward eastward from Werbomont. I traveled some distance and saw no one. Suddenly a corporal jumped from a foxhole and hailed me. He told me he was on the American front line and that Germans were just ahead in the trees. This corporal probably saved my life! I inquired from the corporal as to why the Germans were not firing at me and he said they were as cold as he was and were cutting wood and building fires. I retraced my route and found the infantry battalion command post. Here Capt. Fick our Liaison Officer introduced me to Lt. Col. Umanoff, the infantry commander. The latter kindly showed me the attack plan for the day and told me where the artillery was located.

The attack failed despite the fact that the 2d Battalion of the 424th Infantry was slaughtered. To make matters worse, someone's artillery fired into our troops. Our claim was that the tanks would not support us, but the commander of the 7th Armored Division being in charge, Lt. Col. Umanoff was relieved. I guess someone had to be the goat. Ironically it was all for naught, since the Germans pulled out of Manhay during the night and we could have had it without a fight had we waited. Manhay represented the turning point for the 106th Division and from then on we were always on the attack.

Our losses had been staggering. We lost the Division Commander to a heart attack. We lost all three infantry regiment commanders, eight of nine infantry battalion commanders, two of four artillery battalion commanders, eleven of twenty-one battery commanders, and an unknown number of infantry company commanders. Troop losses in ten days were approximately two out of every three soldiers in the Division.

On the USS Wakefield on our trip from Boston to Liverpool , I was billeted in a stateroom with 23 other lieutenants and captains who were battery or acting battery commanders or key staff officers. Six of us survived. Capt John Pitts who slept above me, Lt. Isaac Alexander who slept beside me, Capt. Edward Chateneauf, who was on the other side of Alexander and Capt. Thomas Rockwell, who slept in the bunk ahead of mine were all killed, I thanked the Lord for my being a survivor!

The above is an accurate transcription of the first-person account I prepared for the Columbus World War II Round Table on 1 May 1986. I authorize the deposition of one copy of this account with the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

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SUMMARY OF SERVICE AFTER ESCAPING FROM THE FORTIFIED GOOSE EGG AND FIGHTING THE BATTLE OF MANHAY BELGIUM.

ON 28 Dec 1944 we were attached to the 82nd Airborne Division and our combat team and a parachute infantry battalion straightened the line to the Salm River We took the town of Arbelfontaine and found all the people shot by the SS. Even the dogs were killed for trying to protect their owners. General Gavin led the attack which was just like a Civil War Battle. The Artillery moved up with Infantry and I was on a dirt Rd with extra ammunition. I had the privilege of saluting General Gavin on his way back to his Headquarters. His Airborne Division was a great group of fighters.

We were then attached as general support to the 30th Infantry Division another fine group and fired general support as they drove Peiper from the Ambleve Valley. On 25 January we got our first rest getting a week in Limont, Belgium. I thought I had died and gone to heaven.

Next we returned to the front and were attached to the 69th Infantry Division while they broke the Siegfried Line in the Losheim Gap. Had lots of friends injured by mines.

In March we left the front stopping in St. Quentin, France then on west to Rennes where we received replacements and I left my old battalion and became Service Battery Commander of the 590th FA Bn.

Incidentally, I had a distant cousin who was an Infantry Sergeant named Lewis Barry in the 69th. Recently I learned that Bob Mouch of the Last Mans Club was in the 69th. Each year I attend the Berry Reunion in Abingdon, Va. where Lewis Barry is the host. We have lots of fun with my Southern cousins. Over a hundred attend each year.

We had a month of basic training at Rennes and went to the siege of Lorient, France and were attached to the 66th Infantry Division. On the Sunday after the War ended, I had an officer and three men wounded while moving into Port Louis. where a C Battery Ammo Truck blew up. I and a private were fired upon probably by the Free French as all the Germans were surrendering and wanted to go home or to New York!!!

I returned on the liner America to Newport News, Va. Went to Fort Bragg and served as Regt. Adjutant and came home in February 1946.

A SHORT TRIP TO KERBIHAN

by

Robert C. Ringer

24 October 1985

This account of life in Brittany in 1945 was written shortly after the events occurred. A few corrections were made later. Brief notes about the more recent activities of the major participants conclude this account.

Prior to our venture in Brittany, the 106th Infantry Division had endured the Battle of the Ardennes Forest in December 1944, thereby suffering many casualties. Two regimental combat teams had been virtually wiped out, and there were many casualties in the remainder of the division.

Only one organized group came out of the Schnee Eifel hill mass after the trap was sprung by the Germans with the capture of Schonberg. 1st Lt. Ivan Long brought the I & R Platoon and a platoon from "D" Company of the 423rd Infantry Regiment out by hiding by day and moving by compass at night. Others escaped as individuals, but their number was not great. This action left the division with one infantry regiment and two artillery battalions as its principal combat units.

As a result of these losses, I became the Battery Commander of Service Battery of the 590th Field Artillery Battalion and also served as Battalion Supply Officer. This was a 105mm (towed) battalion, whose mission was the support of the reconstituted 423rd Infantry Regiment. In this battalion-, I had some interesting survivors among my command. Sgt. Milford Oswald, the lone survivor of "B" Battery became one of my motor sergeants. Pfc. John Sheffchick was the lone survivor of the first section of the ammunition train. Sgt. John Wagoner was the lone survivor of eleven men from Service Battery who fought with Major Parker's 589th Field Artillery at Baraque de Fraiture, now known as Parker's Crossroads. At Parker's three 105 mm howitzers and about 100 men held the 2nd SS Panzer Division at bay for two and three quarters days, thus enabling elements of four divisions to escape a second and larger double envelopment than the one on the Schnee Eifel, Finally, I had Cpl. Diehl who with Mess Sergeant Stone went to examine a crater made by a railroad gun shell in the battery area near Heuem Belgium. While there, the Germans put another round in the same place. Sgt. Stone was blown to bits, while Cpl. Diehl suffered only a cut on his hand. Soldiers such as these must have wondered why they survived when others did not.

The Division was brought to full, authorized strength at Rennes Airport in Brittany. A parade and ceremony was held to present the colors to the survivors of each unit destroyed in the Ardennes. What a sobering sight to, see small groups marching where hundreds had been before. The 423d Infantry Regiment had only eighty men including the forty-four Lt. Long had led out of the trap. Our battalion had six officers and thirty-nine enlisted men. The Reconnaissance Troop had the smallest number. Only five enlisted men marched forward to receive the unit colors.

The 590th Field Artillery Battalion Commander was Major Carl H. Wohlfeil, a native of South Carolina and a graduate of West Point. He and I were formerly in the 591st Field Artillery Battalion, one of the units which survived the action in December. In the 590th only six officers and thirty-nine men remained after the action in the Ardennes. Sufficient enlisted replacements were received to fill the units. Some were recruits with six weeks training who had been flown in from the U.S. to France. Others were over strength from the Communication Zone. Finally, there were prisoners from the Camp Edwards Disciplinary Barracks in Massachusetts, and the veterans of the division, some of whom were definitely heroes and others who had done much less than expected. To make my task more complicated the outgoing battery commander promoted every one he could the day before I arrived. This action, for example, gave me a mess sergeant who was an auto mechanic, and other similar mis-assignments. One of my supply sergeants could not read or write. On the other hand individuals who had not met minimum standards had been promoted, which left deserving individuals performing non-commissioned officers' tasks while remaining at lower ranks. My first task was to remedy these actions, which led to further problems until everyone got the word that there was a new broom sweeping the floor.

The Service Battery officer situation presented other problems. Warrant Officer Collins, the supply technician, had been killed at La Roche, Belgium. He was not replaced, thus, I had his work to perform as well as my own. The ammunition officer had been captured, hence, Lt. Jerry Pratt was both ammunition and battery motor officer. The battalion motor officer was frequently away. The reason for this was that I had received old vehicles, and new drivers. This kept the tow truck and the hospitals busy. For a long time we did not have a doctor, so S/Sgt. James I. Clark performed the doctor's duties. He had had plenty of experience in the Ardennes patching up the wounded as a medic in the 592nd FA En. (155 mm howitzer). Lt. Pratt, mentioned previously, along with Sgt. Connors, stayed behind to - destroy equipment when Service Battery of 590th was overrun at Heuem, Belgium. Lt. Pratt escaped on foot, and was in the fire fight at Trois Ponts when my 1st section of the ammunition train of the 591st FA Battalion was ambushed. Later he was temporarily blinded by an arcing high tension line, when anti-aircraft fire dropped the line in his vicinity. He proved to be my strong right hand in the days we served together.

In March, after the division broke through the Siegfried Line at Neuhof in the Losheim Gap, it was removed from the line and assembled at St. Quentin, France. From there it was ordered to Rennes Airport in Brittany, where we received our replacements, and I joined the 590th Field Artillery Battalion. After brief service practice for the artillery at Camp Coetquidon, we moved to the vicinity of Lorient and were placed in general support of the 872nd Field Artillery Battalion of the 66th Infantry Division. The 66th had relieved the 94th Infantry Division, which had contained the German Troops in the Lorient and St. Nazaire area from mid-September 1944 until early January 1945. There were an estimated 25,000 Germans in the Lorient-Port Louis area one of the west coast French ports. Inasmuch as ports with more direct access to Germany had become available, troops were used to contain Germans at Lorient, St. Nazaire, La Rochell, Bordeaux, and other places. Perhaps the casualties in the reduction of Brest made the high command aware of potential losses, if these well defended ports were attacked.

Service Battery occupied a wooded area southeast of Pluoay, where the 66th Division had its major supply installations. An engineer waterpoint was nearby, otherwise only sheep, cattle and stolid farmers occupied our area. The local population ignored us completely, and looked the other way if we approached. A Calvados distiller set up his copper tanks in the area. Apples were thrown on the ground, often in the mud and then fed into the giant Rube Goldberg apparatus. Out came a mixture which sold readily. It was lethal and my men soon learned to quit drinking the stuff. This required a lot of will power.

On the night it was reported that the war in Europe was over, the French population in the area linked arms in lines of eight or ten and danced on the roads all night. They sang a mournful dirge about "Le guerre est fini", while we stood like country hicks along the road and watched. No one spoke to us or asked us to join in. I guess I should not have been surprised because a few year later then President Charles De Gaulle came to the area and the farmers pelted him with potatoes and apples, the latter perhaps left over from the still. All in all the damp, cool weather gave me a sore throat, the population was unfriendly, the mud was everywhere and we longed to go to Germany where all the excitement was, according to the Stars and Stripes. The German speaking Belgians in the St. Vith area had treated us better than our Allies from Brittany, and we were a sad lot.

Fortunately, the personnel of the 66th Division were friendly and most helpful. The artillery staff we were supporting regaled us with stories of shooting up theatres and brothels in the Lorient area. I thought this a somewhat odd situation inasmuch as they were going to take over the area eventually. Inasmuch as I had many pieces of equipment and supplies to obtain for the new unit, the supply sections of the 66th Division helped all they could. In particular, a quartermaster captain was of special help and we became good friends.

Down the road a few miles from the 66th Infantry supply installation were 25,000 Germans commanded by Lt. Gen. Wilhelm Fahrmbacher who had previously been commander of the XXV Corps defending the beach areas along the French coast. Some of his troops had scooted into Lorient during the Allied breakout in the Cotentin Peninsula the previous summer. No doubt Gen. Fahrmbacher liked his assignment, since he probably would have been court-martialed and shot for losing the beach head positions, if he had been able to go to Germany. The areas around Lorient were well defended by mines and booby traps. Frequent truces were held to evacuate French civilians, send in Red Cross supplies, and decide upon local ground rules. Gen. Fahrmbacher's chief opponent was Maj. Gen. Herman B.

Kramer, CG of the 66th Infantry Division. Gen. Kramer wanted to fight and within the limits of his orders sought to get the Germans to do something, but the Germans knew a good deal when they saw it. The Germans even had vacations to islands off shore, and other surrounded areas on the coast. Think of what a travel agent could offer. Perhaps a trip to St. Nazaire and brothels that were not shelled every day. Mail even arrived from Germany by air and submarine. They had plenty to eat and drink, including Spanish oranges. I met Gen. Fahrmbacher face-to-face once, and Gen. Kramer twice. Both of the meetings were distinctly unsatisfactory for me.

One day it was reported that the war was over, the Germans had surrendered, nobody would shoot at any one else, and we could get out of this dark, damp, miserable woods and move to the area of Port Louis opposite Lorient on the Blavet River. About this time I had to furnish the 66th Infantry Division fifteen trucks to haul their loot out of Lorient. For my cooperation they sent me one Mauser rifle and one bottle of wine or cognac per man. This was absolutely the worst liquor I have ever tasted. The battery got rid of the liquor in one night, much to our sorrow the next day. When I tried to go to Lorient on my own, I was arrested for trespassing. As I later found out, the reason we were assigned the Port Louis area was the fact that there was not much there to enjoy. Empty buildings and no civilians.

Just before we parted company, I visited my quartermaster captain friend and he provided enough steaks and leftovers for a good dinner for the battery at Port Louis. He also invited me out into the motor park where he showed me a beautiful house trailer which had just been prepared for the Division Commander. While we were talking and I was admiring the trailer, who should arrive but Gen. Kramer. He was in a towering rage which I gathered had something to do with the trailer. I had never heard such an outburst and like the captain, I stood paralyzed with fear. My knees began to quiver and I wanted to run. Soldiers and civilians watched in awe. Abruptly the one-way conversation ended, the general strode off leaving us too stunned to even salute. I never learned why he did not like the wonderful trailer.

A few days later on Sunday, May 13th, the sun finally came out in all its glory. Warm breezes from the Mediterranean replaced the cold wind from the Atlantic. Best of all we were moving to Kerbihan near Port Louis where houses would be available and we could quit sleep ing on the ground. We had covered the ground with boards to keep the mud out of our sleeping bags. We had about sixty miles to cover which I estimated would make our arrival time about noon. I instructed the advance party to find tables, dishes, perhaps even table cloths, so we could have a real sit-down dinner of steak and trimmings.

Our battalion was delayed in starting the motor march by another battalion that was having difficulty crossing bridges to our west. This gave me time to think, and that was a big mistake! Inasmuch as the Calvados distillers had caused some casualties in the battalion when drunks fired their weapons, I decided to take up all small arms ammunition from everyone and store it on the trucks. I also removed some truck tops in order that everyone could enjoy the sunlight. Finally, I decided to take along the lumber we had used as flooring, because we might be fooled and wind up sleeping on the ground again. Naturally, this was carelessly tossed on the trucks. After all, the war was over wasn't it?

I had 2,500 gallons of gasoline in five gallon cans on one of the trucks. Due to the moist climate, these cans were rusted and some cans leaked from time to time. I had this truck follow my jeep so that I could watch it and have it off-loaded in case of trouble. I then placed two supply trucks between it and the trucks carrying troops to protect them from any accident. I thought all was secure.

Being the last unit to move caused us to get a late start, then rush to close up with the battalion and eat all the dust and dirt. Finally, we reached Hennebont, worked our way through the narrow streets, and crossed the Blavet River on a rickety steel bridge. A one hundred yard interval had to be maintained to keep from destroying the bridge. I began to think about a dinner in terms of mid-afternoon.

Once across the river, we turned west on a narrow dirt road. High weeds abounded in the ditches. Our path from this point had been cleared of mines by the surrendering Germans, under the direction of French troops, for use by the

Americans. The policy of "close enough for government work," applied to their efforts. Mines and booby traps were not cleared from the ditches and in one case not even from the road.

We moved so slowly that I dozed off. When I awakened I was looking at trip wires and booby traps in the ditch almost close enough to touch. I passed back the word to keep vehicles in the middle of the road, stay on the vehicles, and stay alert. My driver was Pfc. Russell T. Brown, the son of a prominent surgeon in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He carefully negotiated the jeep forward until we rounded a curve and could see ahead a few hundred feet. Down the road at a road junction stood Lt. Pratt and Cpl. Diehl waiting to lead us to our new home. The last ammunition truck of "C" Battery had turned east and only their maintenance 3/4 ton truck stood between us and our turn west. Forget a noon meal, we'll have dinner at four, I thought.

Suddenly, a tremendous blast rent the air. The last "C" Battery ammunition truck lunged forward a few yards and squatted down like a setting hen. The rear wheels had been blasted from under the truck. The towed trailer shot in the opposite direction some yards and stopped. The canvas top fell in on the troops inside the truck. Fire began to lick around the base of the truck bed as the gas tank ruptured. A few seconds passed during which only the sound of falling gravel and metal was heard. Lt. Pratt and Cpl. Diehl raced toward the burning truck. This action provided them with their second Purple Hearts. The "C" Battery motor crew did likewise. They succeeded in getting all but one man out of the truck before the heat drove them off. After the fire got real warm, the ammunition began to explode. Some blew up on the ground. Other rounds made crazy arcs in the air and exploded. Red smoke added to the bizarre scene. I could neither go forward nor back up my battery vehicles. The gasoline was in an especially vulnerable position at right angles and only 100 yards from the fire. Even my troops had to stay close to the trucks, because of the booby traps in the ditches. For what I thought was all eternity, but what was actually only about forty minutes, the fire burned then sputtered out to small patches of smoke. What a relief that was!

About the time the fire was out, Major Wohlfeil and Sgt. Clark arrived from Kerbihan with a jeep and an ambulance. The injured were loaded into the ambulance, including Lt. Pratt and Cpl. Diehl who had burns on their hands and faces. The ambulance left in the direction of Locquimaic where the aid station was now in operation.

Major Wohlfeil remained at the scene. I sent my battery toward Kerbihan under command of 1st Sgt. Orville Nelson and I remained behind along with my medic Cpl. Wikoff to inspect the wreckage. The three of us moved toward the truck when it had cooled enough for us to approach. I saw a shiny object on the ground and bent over to pick it up. It proved to be a piece of a fuse for an artillery shell. As I was bent over, another artillery shell in the truck exploded. Cpl. Wikoff was hit in the knee, the major was shaken by the concussion and once again I escaped without a scratch. Later Cpl. Wikoff lost his hearing. Major Wohlfeil took my medic and went into Hennebont to a hospital over the road that my battery had just vacated. I hurried on toward Kerbihan. Later we learned that there were seven Teller mines in the road and most of the battalion had passed over them and only two of them had exploded causing the tragedy.

About half way to Kerbihan a huge crater made by an aerial bomb had destroyed the road. The trucks could not negotiate the shoulders of the crater with trailers attached, so the trailers were left behind to be picked up by smaller vehicles later. I noticed one of my young soldiers playing "cops and robbers" amidst the trailers, pointing his gun at a nearby hedgerow and pretending to fire. He was Pfc. Kenneth Tomblin of Burnsville, West Virginia. He informed me that unseen snipers were firing at and hitting the trailers. A second guard had been left, but he ran away when the shots were fired. Inasmuch as I had taken the small arms ammunition from the troops, I could not blame him too much for departing. I sent my jeep driver for men, guns, and ammo, and joined Tomblin who was guarding the trailers. When they returned we fired at the hedgerow, and there was no further activity from that source. Once again we could not investigate the area because of trip wires and booby traps, so we never learned who was firing at us.

I finally arrived at Kerbihan, taking fourteen hours to go sixty miles. Darkness was approaching. The kitchen truck was missing. The battery vehicles were still on the road inasmuch as no one knew whether the fields were mined or not. The village was deserted and all furnishings had been removed from the houses. Just another mournful spot to camp in. Finally, someone located a very old woman and she had her first jeep ride, to come and locate a field -

suitable for parking trucks. Finally, by sign language, she understood what we wanted. She was determined to demonstrate to us -that the field was free of mines. She went into the field and trotted in ever widening circles to show us that the field was clear. For this she received my last rations, two "D" bars that I had in my pocket.

As we finished the task of parking the vehicles, I received a message to report to the aid station at Locquimaic, just west of Kerbihan. Major Wohlfeil was there and returned Lt. Pratt and Cpl. Diehl to me complete with bandages. Cpl. Wikoff was in a hospital and my kitchen truck was in Hennebont. The French authorities would not let anyone move toward Port Louis until a guide was sent to lead them to the area. This meant that my driver had another thirty mile run to make and dinner would be served at midnight. The battalion commander had another message for me. It seemed that a lot of lumber fell off my trucks on the journey to Kerbihan, and he had been told about it at the hospital in Hennebont. I was informed that if I ever did that again, I would personally be out picking it up. I left before he could remember any more of my mistakes of the day.

Finally, about midnight the kitchen truck arrived. As might be expected the motor sergeant turned mess sergeant had decided to cut up the steaks and make stew under the circumstances. We had our dinner sitting on the floor of an empty house, eating stew out of, you guessed it, our mess kits. So much for prior planning!

Our stay proved uneventful. Civilians did not return to the area. Finally, we were alerted to move to Germany. We would go to the farm fields west of Mayen, Germany and start basic training. This town was only a few miles east of where we had started our adventure in December. When we pulled out of Kerbihan, I was in the last vehicle in the column. I was going to make certain I did not have to cross France to pick up lumber or other gear strewn along the roads. The battalion motor section, of course, followed, but they were always miles behind working on disabled vehicles.

We had traveled only a few miles when up ahead I could see a small town in which all the buildings were painted white. They gleamed in the bright sunlight like a dazzling star. There was a curve in the road in the middle of the town as the road turned north. The troops in the part of my column that was visible were having a field day in the bars and stores, inasmuch as the column was halted. I moved up the narrow street doubling the column to get the troops back on the trucks. As I neared the curve, I heard sirens and thought a fire engine was coming. Around the corner came a Jeep full of military policemen all decked out in white gloves, belts, and other rear area attire. The jeep barely made it past me on the narrow street and stopped a short distance to my rear. A second Jeep did the same thing. Next came a sedan and there was no room for it to pass. The driver, lucky for me, elected to try for the high curb rather than hit my jeep. The result was a screeching of metal on the curb as the vehicle swung around and came to rest with the left rear window very close to Pfc. Brown, my driver. When the occupants finally quit -bouncing about and seated themselves, I realized I was in for a lot of trouble. Maj. Gen. Kramer was staring at Pfc. Brown. Behind him, Lt. Gen. Fahrmbacher was seating himself. A trace of a smile was on his face, which he was careful not to let Gen. Kramer see. I could imagine he was thinking how did dumb lieutenants who bunched up their vehicles in towns, and generals who raced madly over the countryside ever defeat the Third Reich: I was paralyzed with fear once again. I knew what was coming. The military police looked like a pack of hounds gathering around a fox as they swaggered toward me, and I knew who the fox was!

Pfc. Brown, who was not a great respecter of rank, solved my problem for me. He suddenly slammed the jeep gears into reverse, and madly backed up into our position behind our column of trucks. MPs scattered to avoid the jeep, and the whole scene was rather ludicrous. Silently we sat there and waited. The jeeps passed with the military police looking straight ahead. Next came the sedan and both generals were animatedly talking to each other and paying no attention to me. What a sense of relief came over me as they went on their way!

When they were well on their way, I said to my driver, "Remind me to put you in for the Distinguished Service Medal." He replied, "Just send me home. That will be sufficient."

Now a word about some of the participants in the 1945 activities. Within the past two years it has been my pleasure to visit my former commander (now Col. Carl H. Wohlfeil, retired) at his home on the Battery at Charleston, S.C. He

showed me Fort Sumter. I tactfully did not tell him my great grandfather, Pvt. John Bond, had been to that area before me with Gen. Sherman. We had a grand reunion. Also, when I visited Lt. Jerry Pratt at his summer home on a lake west of Honesdale, Pennsylvania, he conjured up a tornado for my benefit, Just to make things seem like the good old days. Trees on the north side of his house were twisted off, and on the south side blown on my car. The neighbor's living room ceiling departed through a small open window, and a glass topped table was set on top of another neighbor's chimney. Pratt had to hold his sliding door in place by bracing himself against it, while I mopped up water that was pouring into his house. Unfortunately he had an Airedale dog that did not like me. As I worked, the dog held on to my pants leg. I told Pratt that I would look pretty ridiculous arriving at the Pearly Gates with a mop in my hand, and a stupid Airedale hanging on to my leg. He said that a lot of battery commanders had come to worse ends.

It was my privilege to spend some time at the 1985 Division Reunion at the Sheraton Hotel in Morgantown, West Virginia visiting with Lt. Long. He had brought the only organized unit out of the Schnee Eifel. He had become a company commander the same day I became a battery commander. Neither of us was promoted to captain because of the freeze on promotions in Europe. He is now enjoying retirement in California. He told me that while he and his men were hiding under the low hanging branches of spruce and pine trees in the Schnee Eifel, German soldiers passed close enough that he could have reached out and grabbed their boots. They knew Americans were in the woods but they could not find them. S/Sgt. James I. Clark is now a physician in Natchez , Mississippi . Even though he was a native of Michigan, he now sounds like a Mississippi native when he speaks.

A short trip to Kerbihan is not recommended.

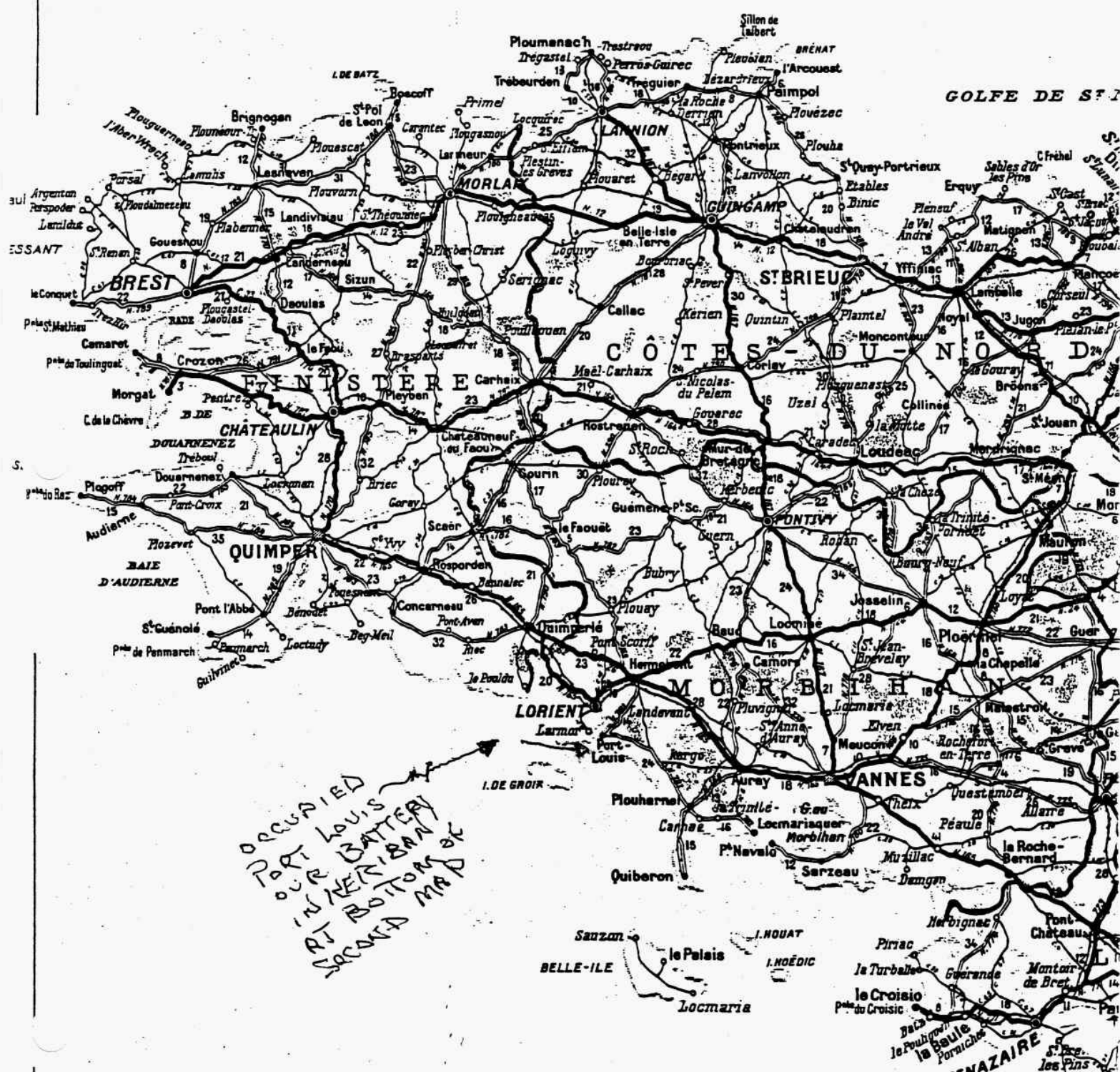
The above is an accurate transcription of the presentation made to the Columbus World War II Round Table on 24 October 1985. I authorize the deposition of one copy of this transcription with the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

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JERSEY ISLANDS

I. JERSEY

LES MINOL



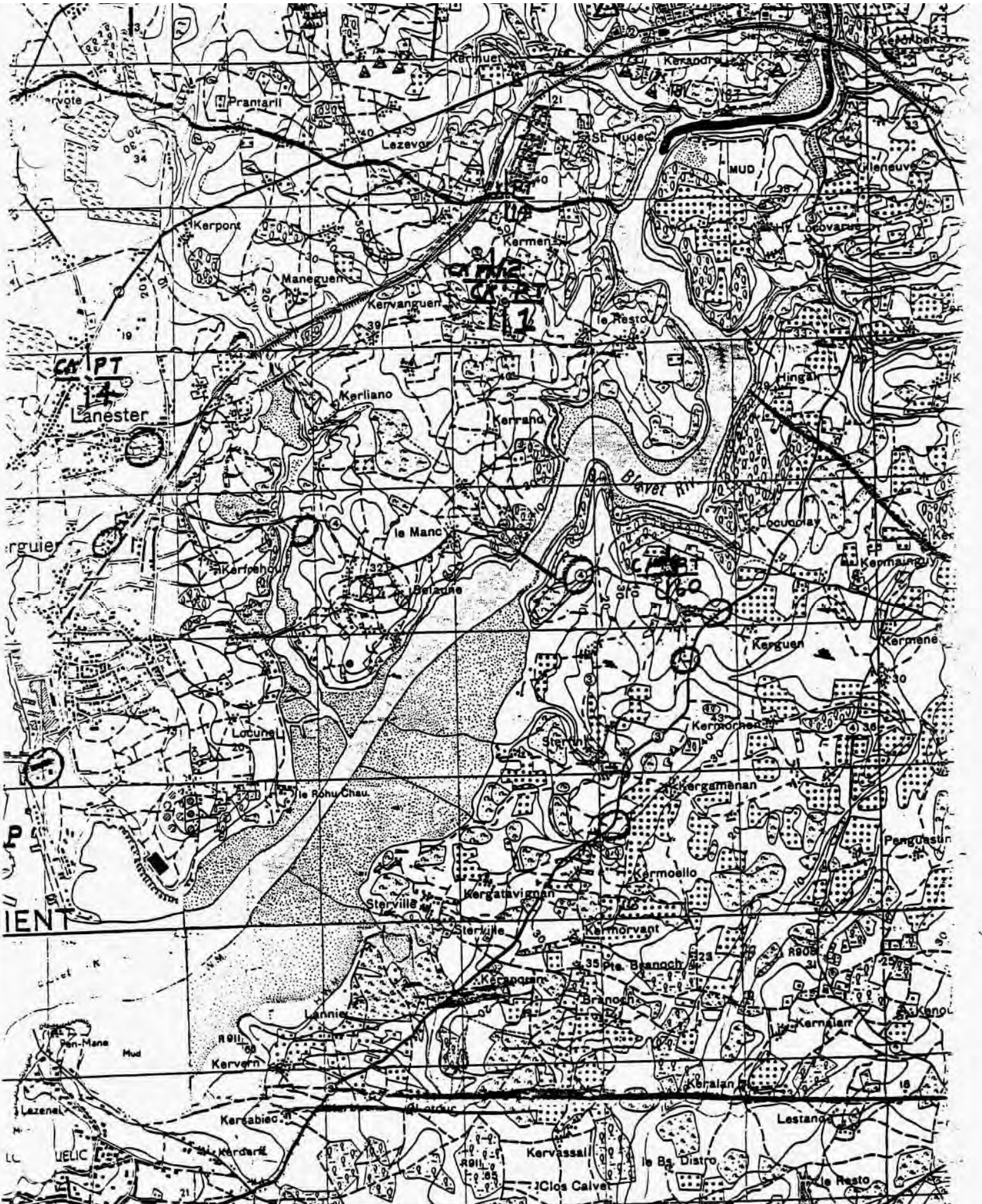
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CÔTES-DU-NORD

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PORT LOUIS
BATTERY
IN NEAR BOTTOM
OF ROCKS MADE

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ST NAZAIRE



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POST WAR GERMANY - 1945

A lot of things have happened in Europe since I first agreed to give this report on "Germany in 1945." Inasmuch as we are now seeing groups of countries coining together for economic reasons, it might be well to think about Germany and the German people before and after 1945. If we used only one word to describe the Germans, I would use the word "work!" A French joke of yesteryear was that if the Germans would only stay in bed one hour longer each day, the French could keep up with them from a work standpoint. Similarly, work was the major consideration when King George III got south Germans to go to Nova Scotia to farm when the English from the London slums could not feed themselves in the New World. The Quakers of Pennsylvania were only too glad to have German farmers on the frontier both for their industriousness and also as a buffer against Indian raids.

In my own case, all of my forebearers came to the United States between 1720 and 1800. All landed at Philadelphia. The Germans and Welsh moved westward. The Irish Scotch moved down the great valley of Virginia and on to the southwest with only one family, my great great grandfather (John Berry) coming north to Ohio.

When I entered Germany in 1944-45, I had mixed emotions about the German people. Both of my grandfathers had descended from German Swiss stock from the southern part of Germany, and the province of Zurich in Switzerland. I was, thus, going back into the land of my forefathers. My people had gone up the Rhine to Holland, over to the Isle of Wight, and on to America. I traveled from Weymouth, past the Isle of Wight, to Germany, via the land route from Le Havre used by many other immigrants headed to America. I remembered the bad things the German Task Force Peiper had done in the Ardennes, at Baugnez, St. Vith, Trois Pontois, and La Gleize, which I had beheld with my own eyes, and thus hated the Germans involved. I also remembered the Germans who captured our ambulance, and after loading some of their wounded in with ours, told the driver to go on and that they would see him in Liege. I recall the three German soldiers who picked up one of my badly wounded friends and carried him to a tree, and placed him on the side of the tree away from the firing, and even lit a cigarette and put it in his mouth for him, before continuing their attack on us. I had many different emotions about the Germans.

I want to digress a minute, and tell you that I have done some work on my genealogy and as a matter of interest provide you with some examples of first-person accounts from another war. I was helped in my research by a book by John W. Heisey, Genealogy Help, Hints and Hopes. Heisey trained 13 months in the U.S. and lasted 13 days in combat before being wounded. He was a point man for "C" Company, 342 Inf. Regiment, 86 Infantry Division. I will read just a few paragraphs from his book in order to show how closely related we all are. In addition, I want to read two paragraphs from the memoirs of my great uncle, Sergeant James F. Mohr of Battery "H," 5th U. S. Artillery in the Civil War. I will also pass around the Personal Recollections of S. A. McNeill of Richwood, Ohio, who was in the same regiment, the 31st OVI, with my great grandfather, John Bond.

Atrocities were not solely the property of the Germans, for I will pass around an article from the Northwest Arkansas Time, Fayetteville, Arkansas, which re-tells the story of men who came to the Union Army in order to swear allegiance to the U.S., but who were callously taken to a field and shot. These included two ministers, three cousins of mine and three other prominent citizens. No one paid for this crime either. With this background, I will proceed with my story of Germany in 1945 as seen from my point of view.

The year 1945 was a year to remember! Germany surrendered in May and Japan, convinced by two atomic bomb bursts, did so in August. For many of us without enough points to be separated from the service, the surrender of Japan was most welcome. None of us wanted to invade that country! In January and February, 1945, through ice, sleet and snow, to say nothing of mud, the 106th Infantry Division finally broke through the Siegfried Line in the Losheim Gap area. The V Corps and Third Army pinched us out at that point. Our one combat team Division went first to St. Quentin, France, then far to the west to Rennes in Brittany.

The units lost in the Ardennes were reactivated and I became S-4 (supply officer and battery commander of Service Battery), 590th FA Battalion, a 105 mm howitzer battalion supporting the 423rd Infantry Regiment. From the 591st Battalion came Major Carl H. Wohlfeil, a West Pointer, to be battalion commander, and Lts. William McCue, and

Gordon True to command "A" and "C" Batteries. The survivors of the old 590th consisted of six officers and 39 enlisted men. In Service Battery, there had been two, killed, nine missing and probably dead, eight Wounded, one, Corporal Diehl, wounded twice, and fifteen captured. This was the price a service battery paid for being on one of the main attack routes in the German drive on St. Vith. Of the eleven men who were sent to support the remnants of the 589th FA Battalion at Baraque de Fraiture (Parker's Crossroads), Cpl. Duke, a cook, was wounded and evacuated, and Sgt. John Wagoner escaped when the command post caught fire, and the last commander of the 589th, Capt. Huxel, ran some cows out of the burning barn enabling some men to escape.

As I mentioned in an earlier account on the Lorient pocket, my replacements were young men with 12 weeks training, the cast-offs of the Communication Zone, prisoners from Camp Edwards Disciplinary Barracks in Massachusetts, and a few men returning from attachments to other units. I also had a Cpl. R , who was sent to me because he did his job too well. He was a military police NCO in charge of a detachment guarding a train of supplies bound for the front. The French frequently left box cars with cigarettes, etc, unsealed so their friends could loot the goodies when the train was put on a siding somewhere. A raid was conducted on the corporal's train, and when they failed to obey his order to stop, he shot several French civilians, which created a big row between the two governments. The American Rear Area Command solved the problem by sending the man who did his duty to the front! This is not the first time that happened in military history.

Shortly after the breakthrough into Germany, the 106th received reinforcements at Rennes, France and became a five regiment division, when the 3rd and 159th Infantry Regiments from the Aleutians joined the 106th Division. Plans were made to relieve the 66th Infantry Division in the pocket at Lorient and St. Nazaire, but so many prisoners were being taken in Germany that the Division minus the newly activated units was sent to guard prisoners. From Holland to Switzerland the Division was spread out on both sides of the Rhine. Over 1,500,000 POWs were processed in and out of the camps. Prison stockades were flimsy things with barbed wire surrounding an open field. A kitchen tent and equipment along with mess gear was placed in the area, along with shovels to dig straddle trenches. When mess equipment ran out, dishes from nearby houses were commandeered. No tents or bedding were provided, and the Germans still lived better than many of our comrades who were their prisoners. A German NCO was placed in charge of each camp and soon organized the prisoners. Some foreign nationals complained the Germans were shorting them food, but none looked like our boys did when freed from the Stalags. My former battalion required sixty truck loads of bread daily to feed the prisoners they had under their control. Coal miners were immediately sent home, and farmers soon followed. Others were sent home daily. No doubt some war criminals escaped, but that could not be helped. It was a huge task well done by those who had to handle these hordes. As might be expected, fraternization rules were bent. My old service battery had an engraver and two young boys from the prisoners with them. The former engraved shell casings for souvenirs and the boys were there to protect them from assailants in the camps.

Meanwhile, the reactivated units remained until the war ended in the Lorient pocket. Shortly thereafter, in May, we moved across France and Luxembourg to farmland west of Koblenz, near Mayen and Montréal. At this point we were exactly 45 kilometers east of the positions we had occupied on 10 December 1944, and we had gone all the way to the Atlantic Ocean to get there!

Upon arrival, we were told to strike our pyramidal tents and pitch pup tents and start basic training. To the veterans this was an insult beyond belief; to the replacements, just more busy work. After a day of this stuff, I moved my battery into a large woods and set up a camp for show, and back in the forest we put up the pyramidal tents for our use. I would have gotten away with it, but two young ladies believing in the free enterprise system, set up their own tent on the far side of the woods and opened for business. Nobody bother to tell me about their tent. Battalion headquarters found out about it, and I was called on the carpet for my hidden tent camp, and the girl's business operation. I argued so much about all the hypocrisy that they sent me on a week's trip to England with Lt. Jack Grey, the pilot of one of our light planes. Needless to say, we were overjoyed to get away for a while.

We left from Euskirchen to Heathrow on an Air Corps plane, and when we returned we found the French in charge, as a result of a change of zones. We stayed on the plane and wound up in Frankfurt. Despite the fact that it was SHAEF Headquarters, we could not learn where our unit was nor could we get any transportation. We did know that our

former unit was located in Heilbronn. We solved the problem by walking downtown and starting to hitch-hike near a bridge. After waiting a long time, an MP officer, with driver and interpreter arrived, and we thought they had come to arrest us. Instead, he told us if we had not gotten a ride before he finished his business in Frankfurt, he would take us to Mannheim. He did return and pick us up. We got into a conversation with his German interpreter who told us he had returned to Germany and was interned for the war simply because he had been visiting his parents. Furthermore, he was from Upper Sandusky, close to my home town of Marion, Ohio, and we both knew many people in both towns. This brought on a lot of nostalgia about home. The MP officer even stopped at a Puerto Rican unit near Darmstadt and got the unit to feed us, and finally left us on the east side of Mannheim on the autobahn to Heidelberg. From there we picked up several truck rides to a unit about 20 kilometers from Heilbronn, where we knew my former battalion was located. Our luck ran out when we reached the end of a corps area that had no communication south. There was a medical unit that offered to put us up, but we decided to keep going, and at dusk one of my former drivers pulled up with an ammo truck and we rode in style to Heilbronn. After a days visit, we were jeeped to our new unit now in a wheat field northeast of Karlsruhe. Fortunately, basic training was over, and Service Battery then moved north to a hamlet called Gholhausen which we renamed Ghouhousing! Here I had difficulty with the burgomeister until a German lieutenant, Kurt Warre, offered his assistance. He had been a medical student, and was sent to the Eastern Front as a medical officer. He fled to the American lines when the Russians came into Austria. He was of great help, but he may have not been all he said he was.

Shortly after that we moved into a larger town, Bretton. I occupied the house of one Emma Voglander, aged 69, and her mother, aged 89. With regret I put them out of their house, but Emma was made of strong stuff, and looked so much like one of my German great aunts that she soon had me under control, and she was back in her kitchen happy as a lark.

In August, the great shuffle started, some going home to their families, others going home for transfer to the Pacific Theater. First, in came troops from the 35th Infantry Division, and the 106th Infantry Division was scheduled to go home as a high point unit. Out went one-half of my battery homeward bound. Next out went the 35th, except for a few people. At one time we had a battalion of six officers and 50 men commanded by a Capt. Wehr of the 35th Division. He and I and 54 others had 84 vehicles, so we each had our choice of transportation. Finally, in came an anti-aircraft unit from Italy, which had been overseas since the early action in North Africa. I expected the worst, but found them to be a well-disciplined and friendly group. The man who replaced me temporarily as Service Battery commander, Capt. Evan Davis, was a Kansas architect who still visits me when he passes through Columbus to show his antique car at the Hershey, Pennsylvania Antique Auto Show.

Finally, I became battery commander again, and we left Europe for the United States. I had taken Service Battery, 591st FA Battalion overseas, and brought Service Battery, 590th FA Battalion back, had twice the amount of time for promotion that was required, but was not promoted due to a freeze on promotions. This worked out all right because had I been an S-4 with the right rank and MOS, I would have probably gone to the Pacific Theater on one of the levies.

One final anecdote relating to Emma Voglander, whose house I occupied in Bretton. One day we heard a lot of noise outside the house. Looking out the window I was amazed to discover that Emma who was 69, and a one-armed man were cutting wood with an antiquated power saw. I called everyone together in the command post and had them witness why Germany would not take long to get back on its feet. It was the work ethic again which enabled them to survive.

It was interesting how Germany scattered their light industry to escape the bombing. In Gholhausen, I found that the town hall had been converted into a motorcycle factory that was producing motorcycles until the war ended. On the outskirts of Bretton, a building which appeared to be a long barn in a field was a fuse assembly operation with an assembly line producing fuses until the war ended. No railroad tracks led to the building. Boxes of fuses were hauled on carts along dirt trails to the railroad, thus concealing the operation from the air. In closing, inasmuch as an estimated sixty million Americans have at least one German ancestor, there was some degree of empathy and

understanding between the Americans and the Germans similar to that between the Union and the Confederate forces, and civilians on both sides during the Civil War.

The above is an accurate transcription of the first-person account presented at the Columbus World War II Round Table on 5 April 1990. I authorize the deposition of one copy of this account with the U. S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

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106th INFANTRY DIVISION TOUR OF EUROPE SEPT. 7-21, 1974
(30th Anniversary of the Battle of the Ardennes)

Our tour consisted of 41 Americans, a British guide, his Canadian born wife, and a ?risian bus driver. Sixteen of the Americans and the British guide were veterans of the Ardennes. The rest were relatives and friends. Our group ranged in age from Sandy Saucermann, age 7 1/2, to Pappy Prewitt, age 83. We had a comfortable 49 passenger bus as our home for the tour. It was a happy congenial group.

I departed from Columbus via TWA at 3:45 PM Saturday, Sept. 7th, for Kennedy Airport. I arrived at 5:15 PM. Icelandic Airlines was only two blocks away and within walking distance. There I met the others departing from New York. Fourteen tourists departed from Chicago and four others joined us in St. Vith. Bob Gallagher and Maggie Link of Galaxy tours met us and remained with the group until we departed at 12:30 AM (about three hours late). At that hour no one checked passports or luggage; we simply got on the plane with all the other passengers. Every one of the 250 seats was filled.

As we flew toward Iceland we dropped five hours in time and it was only a short time till sunrise at 3:23 AM their time occurred. It was a beautiful sight to see the sun rise and the changing colors and patterns on the ocean below. We landed at the Reykjavik airport to refuel and for a short break. The landscape is black and green. The black is volcanic ash and the green a type of moss that grows here and there. It is a bleak, windy place. The temperature was 47 degrees. Coffee was 55 cents a cup and of poor quality. Prices on gifts were very high.

Departing Iceland we landed at Luxembourg Airport around 4 PM. On Sundays a crowd comes out to watch the planes land. They applauded politely as we walked to the terminal. Only Luxair, Icelandic, and Air Bahamas land here so an arrival is something of an event. Icelandic has no first class and tries to fly with a full load of passengers and freight. In addition landing fees in Luxembourg are low. For these reasons this is the only airline that showed a profit on overseas air travel last year.

Our guide met us. He was Jack Scurr a native of Yorkshire and a resident of London. His wife Rocky who was born in Hamilton, Ontario was there to greet us also. She had not been on a trip for a long time so this was a pleasure trip for her. Both of them proved to be wonderful friends to us all. Our driver Gilbert Justin of Paris was also a fine person. He kept the bus in spotless condition and he no doubt saved our lives several times with his skillful driving. He was a former boxer and the customs people seemed to get the idea. He also proved to be an excellent dancer!

Our passports were stamped and we boarded the bus which was to be our home for the next three weeks and went to the nearby Hotel Aerogolf. The bus was German built and extremely comfortable. In addition you could see the scenery from all the seats. The Hotel was very modern and comfortable. We inspected the golf course and picked up some delicious beech nuts which were under the trees in the front of the hotel.

Our guide was a member of the 52d Lowland Division in the Battle of the Ardennes. They were at the western tip near Celles. He knew how we felt because in 1940 he was evacuated at Dunkerque put ashore at Boulogne to form a new

defensive line during the Blitzkrieg. He was veterinary sergeant in a mule drawn artillery outfit and they were holding ground two days south of Boulogne before the troops they were to support arrived. Such is the confusion in a breakthrough.

Our first meal at the Aerogolf consisted of an appetizer of salmon and chicken loaf, a rk thick soup, roast veal, french fries, green beans in delicious garlic sauce, and a fruit cup. Seconds were available. The food was delicious, the linen spotless and the service superb. We found this to be the case throughout Europe even in Czechoslovakia, where other things leave a lot to be desired.

Drinks are ordered and paid for separately from meals in Europe. Standard fare is beer and white or red wine. Coffee and tea are served at breakfast. Water is served only on demand, and I mean demand! Although we saw many dairy herds, I was never served milk. Breakfasts always consisted of hard rolls with cheese and/or marmalade. In Yugoslavia, Silvovits plum brandy) is a favorite drink, but I could not handle much of it.

On Monday Sept. 8 we toured Luxembourg City. We visited Hamm Cemetery and placed a wreath in memory of our comrades there. We visited the German military cemetery adjacent to the American. The American cemetery has a huge marble memorial with chapel and marble crosses on the graves. I took a picture of my friend Captain John Pitt's marker. He bunked above me on the Wakefield going to Europe and was killed in his gun position the first day of the battle. His sister was a Red Cross girl and visited the gun position the day before. She is married and lives in Champaign, Illinois. General Patton is buried in Hamm Cemetery. The German Cemetery has small name plaques flush with the ground. A walk to a large memorial is bordered by flowers. Scattered throughout are clusters of five small stone crosses. With lots of trees and flowers, it was a most impressive setting. In the German cemetery there were also lots of flowers on individual graves.

We traveled northwest through Arlon, Martelange to Bastogne. The vice mayor and his wife met us and took us to a reception in the town hall. The vice mayor and Sherod Collins, my roommate, and our Association President handled the greetings and exchanged gifts. Champagne flowed freely. I quit after six glasses! In the town I took pictures of St. Henri, an 11th century church, horses and wagons still being used, the American tank in the town square, and various signs. Our noon lunch was in a little restaurant that had a glass roof like a greenhouse. A sudden rainstorm came up and we had fun dodging the rain as it poured it. We then went to the huge memorial just outside town. The 106th designation is finally correct on the memorial. When Doug Coffey, Jim Wells and others had an audience with King Baudioun some years ago, Doug told him the "six" was missing, and we were not the 10th Infantry Division. The King had it corrected only they put in a zero instead of a six and we were then the 100th Division, another unit not in the Bulge. Finally, Coffey got the Mayor of Bastogne to have it corrected so our unit designation is now correct. Seems like the fate which dogged us in 1944, the poor publicity we received in the United States kept our memorial from being correct for many years!

In the afternoon we traveled to Noville north of Bastogne where heavy fighting took place. The town of Bourcy just east of Noville was where I picked up ammunition until Panzer Lehr troops and I arrived the same evening of December 16, 1944. I was fortunate to get out before a massive traffic jam developed, trapping many trucks, in Bourcy. Our tour followed my old ammunition route to St. Vith. We passed through Houffalize where the 17th Airborne have their memorial. Then we turned on secondary roads through Cheraim, Gouvy (where the big ration dump was located), Beho, Maldigen, Grufflingen and to St. Vith.

The road is still a narrow paved road. Only a few new houses have been built in the towns and the area looked much the same as it did to me then. The end of the rain storm left the clouds hanging at tree-top level. The Schnee Eifel had much the same appearance that it did in 1944, huge pine forests, low hanging clouds, and beautiful scenery. It seemed almost as if I had stepped back in time!

Just east of Maldigen the tavern which was our second command post is gone. Trees cover the spot. It was on high ground and during the battle from the rear you could see the Seventh Armored Division tanks being mauled by artillery as they withdrew toward Crombach from St. Vith and from the front our own firing batteries were getting the

same treatment. It was an active spot! The farmhouse which C Battery used is still standing as is the railroad station which was used by the Division Ammunition Officer. E. C. White who was on the tour with me is an old friend from C Battery. He was the survey sergeant and later a forward observer.

All of the Ardennes area is populated with herds of milk cows. Milking is done with portable milking machines run by generators or by hand. It is done in the fields. Milk is placed in cans along the road. Each morning trucks with a siphon device remove the milk and leave the cans. I did not see any refrigeration units.

Our St. Vith home was the Hotel Rathskeller. It is a small hotel but had enough rooms for our party. The owner-operator was Charles Marquet formerly a German Officer who had been our guest at Fort Leonard Wood as a prisoner of war. Food was excellent but we had only one toilet on each floor of the hotel. Some rooms had washbasins and others showers. With such accommodations we all got very well acquainted early in the trip! The town is a vacation spot and caters to hunters in the winter, due to the huge forests nearby.

By coincidence the 2nd Infantry Division arrived the same day as we did. We had taken over their positions on December 10 and they had been north near Butgenbach and Krinkelt during the battle. The Second held their memorial service at 8 AM and we held ours at 11AM giving all an opportunity to attend both. Our memorial is on the high school grounds and serves a useful purpose. We built a room on the back that provides a bicycle shelter for the high school students. A picture of the memorial is in the scrapbook. It is very beautiful as well as practical. The mayor of St. Vith and Sherod Collins made appropriate remarks and a church service in English and German was conducted by Kurt Fagnoul, the high school English teacher.

Following the ceremony, we adjourned to a large hall where further ceremonies, champagne, and a fine dinner were enjoyed. The mayor, former Mayor Pipp, the chief of city police, the chief of rural police, merchants and townspeople joined us.

On Tuesday evening, Dr. Delaval, a surgeon from Vielsalm and good friend of the Division, joined us for dinner. The doctor wrote a book several years ago published in Germany which defended our actions at St. Vith. Field Marshal Felix von Manteuffel overall commander of Fifth Panzer Army which attacked us said much the same thing in a letter to me in 1970. He stated that St. Vith was the key. It had to be taken in 48 hours and when the 106th and Seventh Armored Division prevented that, it was all over for the great offensive. The German television station in Prum ran their films of the battle for the benefit of the 106th and Second Infantry Division people in St. Vith. Many townspeople were also interested since it was their town which was smashed and is now so beautifully rebuilt.

During the evening Major Engels, a Belgian troop commander at the barracks in Vielsalm, came to see me. Someone had told him that I was a survivor of the Battle of Baraque de Fraiture commonly known as Parker's Crossroads (named after the heroic commander). Engels was maneuvering in the area just today and a lady who owned the house where the final battle took place came to see him and told him she would like to talk with any survivor. Major Albert Parker was the Acting Battalion Commander of the 589th Field Artillery. He had only the three guns which Eric Wood had gotten through Schonberg and about 150 men from a number of units. At this town he held off the German 2nd SS Panzer Division for twenty-four hours and long enough for elements of four army divisions to escape the second encirclement at Vielsalm. Lt. Eric Fisher Wood lost his fourth gun in Schonberg to a tank and took to the woods and fought the Germans single-handedly. Peter Maraite, a woodsman living in Meyerode fed Wood. Wood disrupted the Germans' supply lines. Finally Sepp Dietrich put hundreds of troops in the woods chasing Lt. Wood. His body along with seven dead Germans was not found until after the war. A marker stands in the woods where he fell. Peter Maraite has passed on to his reward also. Wood's father was a Brigadier General, one of the founders of the American Legion in Paris in 1919, and visited my Battery after the war when we were in a woods near Mayen, Germany.

I was not in the Parker's Crossroads affair. I did take Lt. Wright and a corporal who had escaped at Schonberg and who were hitchhiking over to Parkers to join their unit. The battery which I later commanded had eleven men there and only Sergeant John Wagoner of Shoals, Indiana escaped. I was able to relate what Wagoner had told me many years ago and provide his address to Major Engels.

One other interesting event occurred that night. While we were talking Earl Hirt of Greeley, Colorado and the commander of the 37th Field Artillery, 2d Infantry Division, came in. He was the commander of the unit which we replaced at Heckhalenfeld on December 10th, six days before the battle. I had only seen him once thirty years ago, but I remembered that he told us that we were fortunate to get this quiet sector to gain experience. I reminded him of his rash statement and we both had a good laugh!

Jim Wells who commanded C Company 81st Engineers, Bob Howells who was an Infantry Platoon leader and later supply officer with 2nd Battalion 424 and I got our maps out and spent the evening with Major Engels, Dr. Delaval, our English guide, the commander of the 37th Field artillery, and our German host. Quite a combination of people! At the time of the battle, Engels was a twelve year old boy. On Christmas eve, 1944 he helped the priest at Martelange conduct mass for American soldiers while the battle raged near that town. He is soon to be named Chief of Tactics at the Belgian Infantry School!

For the next day and a half we traveled from Auw on the northeast to Grosskampfenberg southeast of St. Vith and Parker's Crossroads southwest and Liege on the northwest covering many familiar areas. Many places look much the same as they did. Near the church at Auw, I took a picture of two pretty little girls. At this church Corporal Edward Withee earned the Distinguished Service Cross for holding off a large force of the 18th Grenadiers while Captain Harold Harmon withdrew "A" Company of the 81st Engineers and formed a new defensive line west of the town. In Bleialf we stopped at the church near which Doug Coffey spent his first night as a prisoner in a barn and Wayne Black spent his in an orchard. Both wound up at Bad Orb and survived the bombing of the rail yard in Limburg. Black weighed 97 pounds when freed. At Schlausenbach we talked with a tavern owner who was a 12 year old boy when some of the 422 Infantry were captured there. His daughter is married to an American and they live in the same town. We have a radar station nearby, at the present time. We visited Radscheid where Dr. Bullard had his aid station and where some of the 590th Field Artillery were captured.

We crossed the border into Germany and from the old German positions we could see what tremendous observation they had on our division front. Bob Howell showed us the town of Berg into which he as well as the Germans used to patrol and which neither held.

We stopped in Winterspelt which changed hands several times since it was the chief town on the direct route to St. Vith from Pronsfeld. I took a picture of what the Germans saw when I passed the last house in town on the Heckhalenfeld road and met them face to face. Bill ?rtley's skill at driving in reverse enabled us to escape in a hail of gunfire. Nothing has been built between the house and the woods about 200 yards to the west where the road goes through a series of hairpin turns and plunges into a valley finally arriving at Heckhalenfeld. It is the same as it was!

Heckhalenfeld which was our first battalion command post looks much the same as it did. Walt Bandurak talked with an old lady who lived in the house where he had his aid station. Her daughter and granddaughter were cutting flowers in their beautiful garden and all three generations joined our conversation. The old lady who must have been in her eighties was very happy to receive a visitor. (Bandurak and his ambulance were captured at Winterspelt but the Germans merely loaded in some of their wounded and sent him on to St. Vith.) Jim Wells located the dirt road over which his engineers and the infantry withdrew west of the Our after they had cleared another road for our artillery to escape on the night of December 17. I saw the fields where we ran ammunition cross country from Steffeshausen on the Our River to Heckhalenfeld after the Germans seized the roads. We used jeeps and three quarter ton trucks and the firing batteries also used their small vehicles.

At Berg Reuland I saw the coal and feed store of Anton Schutz which we used for Service Battery. It is now a house and has been stuccoed and painted white. It was formerly a red brick building. The deep ditch filled with stones by the road into which I almost fell on the dark night of December 17 had not Graf ton Copeland caught my coat and saved me is now filled in The wooden bridge on the Our is now stone and steel. The little Catholic shrine built into the steep hill at the road junction is intact. The concrete block building used by the motor crew is in bad repair. An account by Frau Nikolaus Paule tells of the hardships the townspeople endured. When we left the night of December 17 our

infantry front line became the river edge for two days. Then the troops were forced out. In came German troops armed with automatic pistols, panzer faust, etc. The people in the town were without electricity and could get no information until a German lieutenant finally told them that the attack was over and the troops were coming back. The Germans were in terrible condition as they moved east. Our air force bombed the town killing three people, knocking the north wall of the castle ruins down and breaking most of the windows. A German tank and supporting infantry dug in on the edge of the town. The people asked them to move on since the Americans would attack the tank and cause more damage. The Germans obligingly moved across the river and the town was spared more damage. The 90th Infantry Division entered the town and moved east. My college classmate and friend Hugh Higgins was a forward observer with this division and was wounded just east of the town. (My mother took Hugh and I to the train when we left for the Army in 1942). I started my portion of the Ardennes Battle in Berg Reuland and Hugh finished his near the town. Hugh is a Major General in the Regular Army today.

It was at Berg Reuland that a little boy told Karl Dryzmala of our battery that his father had been home last night. When Karl asked if he was in the Belgian Army, the boy said no the German Army. We doubled the guard that night! Hitler would have been mighty sore if he had known there was at least one line crosser two nights before the battle where everything depended on secrecy on their part! Our front was so wide that we could not have a continuous line of troops so it was possible to slip through!

During the afternoon of December 17th and the early evening Berg Reuland was a busy place. Ammunition was being hauled cross country to our unit's cut off in Heckhalenfeld. Corps Artillery units were moving west through the town, a squad of riflemen from the 28th Infantry Division joined us. They were retreating from Lutzkampen. Men of Service Company overrun at Elkareth joined us, and we all watched as Military police road guards were picked up and not replaced.

That night a Lieutenant from the 28th Division arrived with a message for our Regimental Commander that all 28th Division troops of his regiment were now west of the Our River and that we alone were the only regiment east of the Our not completely surrounded. I found a guide to take him to regiment and not long thereafter a general withdrawal started. When our artillery got out of Heckhalenfeld by a roundabout route, our Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Philip Hoover handed me the most important assignment I ever had. Because I was the only officer who had been west of the Oudler-Grufflingen road he had me pick gun positions for the battalion. In addition, he went forward and assigned even though I was only a Lieutenant the task of bringing the battalion to the new positions. When I moved out I had troops from two different Infantry Divisions, infantry artillery and anti-aircraft units, German prisoners and wounded soldiers in the column. After a lot of hair-raising events, I finally got the guns into the area.

German attention to detail provided some humor on our trip from St. Vith through the battle area. We crossed the border at a remote crossing near Manderfeld and were delayed because we didn't have the right currency to pay the road tax. This was finally taken care of and we proceeded into Germany. When we headed for St. Vith we crossed at the Lommersweiler crossing. Unfortunately we had traveled 61 kilometers instead of 51 which we paid for. Instead of altering the record the Germans got out their instructions manual to see what they should do. Meanwhile the Belgian guards who had no road tax to worry with, were laughing and drinking beer. Finally Jim Hennings broke the stalemate. He went out and started to move the traffic backed up by our bus on into Belgium. Finally the German guard caught on and rushed out to stop it. Hennings just grinned at him and told him that he had been a prisoner at Bad Orb and was entitled to get even. The guard started laughing and said he had been a prisoner in New Jersey and that he knew he had had the better of it! The Germans then decided that if we paid a mark and two Pfennings about 40 cents more everything would be okay. We gladly paid and they wished us well as we departed.

Parker's Crossroads now is the intersection of two wide highways. A radar tower, tavern and a few houses are located there. I did not locate the lady who wanted to see one of the survivors of the battle, since we stayed there only a short time.

Salmchateau and Vielsalm in the Salm River valley look much the same. The Belgian Barracks are exactly as they were. Dr. Delaval greeted us at his house but we couldn't stay. Trois Points where Charles Datte with the first section

of our ammunition train was ambushed looks the same as it did except a new bridge has replaced the one blown just before Kampfgruppe Pieper hit the place. It was here that Datto talked with one of General Sir Bernard Montgomery's colonels who had been sent down for a first hand look at the overall situation. We are grateful that Monty saw fit to pull us out of the pocket before it was too late. The American leaders did not agree with Monty's actions but those of us who were about to get sacked are eternally grateful!

Saw the bridge in Ayaille near which a number of us were standing when security forces captured the four Germans in American uniforms as they approached the bridge. Three of them were later executed as spies. They were from Skorzeny's special unit in American clothing which were to cause confusion and terror in the rear areas but never really accomplished much.

We visited Anthisnes where our Division Headquarters was located. The Catholic church was hit by a meteor last November and burned. It looked like a bomb had hit it. The people Sherod Collins knew had died or moved away. In Vienne Jim Wells met a man who had been a boy while he was there. This man and his son came down to the bus and met us. In Plainveaux Bob Howell met a lady who had been an eleven year old girl when Bob used her father's garage to repair vehicles in. Her husband spoke English. We took pictures of the family in front of the garage which has been greatly enlarged and repairs several makes of vehicles. Bob had a photo of the parents and little girl taken in the 1940's and the first person we showed it to in town directed us to the garage!

We visited Henri Chappelle cemetery where some of our comrades are buried. It is in a beautiful setting overlooking a valley. From there we went to a cafeteria (the only one I saw in Europe) for lunch. My French being somewhat faulty, I wound up with three desserts and no main course. How does fruit cup, fruit with ice cream, and fruit with whipping cream washed down with beer sound for a meal?

Jean Schuette's husband had told her to get a picture of Joseys Bar, his favorite, in Liege. The only information we had was that it was near a Catholic church and a steel mill yet we found it. It was on a narrow heavily traveled street and we managed to create a massive traffic jam, got a good cussing from a guy with a truckload of fresh concrete, and were politely escorted to a parking spot in a steel mill parking lot by the police. Josey had gotten rich and moved on so the bar was only an empty building but we got Jack a picture anyway!

We passed through the beautiful resort town of Spa and saw Doug and Irene Coffey who were in Spa visiting a girl who had been an exchange student and lived with them for a year in New Jersey. At Francorchamps we rode on the famous race track a portion of which is used as regular highway when races are not going on.

At Massacre Crossroads where our Battery used Henri Lajolois' house and barn to live in shortly after the massacre, the house and barn are still the same except that additions have been made to both buildings. The road is much wider and a monument stands on the southeast corner for those flash observation battery troops that Peiper's soldiers killed after they surrendered. A tavern occupies the other corner of the road junction. We patronized the tavern!

In Butgenbach, where we stayed nearly a month when the roads bogged down in a sea of mud in February 1945, the buildings look the same except for fresh paint. Near the town is the 1st Infantry Division memorial on the sight of a position where they suffered heavy casualties. Went to Meyerode and Medell located in a valley about a mile apart. Took pictures of the church where E. C. White, of our tour, spent time in the steeple as an artillery observer. The Germans used the church steeple in Meyerode for the same purpose.

Back in St. Vith, Bob Howells pointed out the spot near the high school where he picked up some abandoned rations for the Second Battalion while Seventh Armored Tanks held the Germans off long enough for him to get what he could. They were pulling out of St. Vith at the time, under intense pressure. Bob wasn't too popular with his battalion because what he salvaged turned out to be orange marmalade and stale bread!

St. Vith now has 3,000 people. In 1944 about 2,700 people lived there. Having been virtually rebuilt, it is a beautiful town. The church bells boom loudly at 6:30 AM and at dark most of the town goes to bed. The people were very

friendly. Bicycles, school books, brief cases and packages are left along the curb while people shop with apparent safety. Apparently people in Europe respect other people's property because we saw other instances. Everywhere it was safe to walk late at night.

On Wednesday, September 11th, we headed south this time through Ettelbruck past the ~-~tton monument, Luxembourg City, Metz, and St. Avoird where we lunched at the Hotel L'Europa in grand style. St. Avoird is the place where the movie "The Train" with Burt Lancaster was made. Stopped south of Metz at a Maginot Line position. In the afternoon stopped in Saverne where we had excellent Mutzig Beer in a rather dirty little inn. I didn't check the glass too carefully, but figured the alcohol would kill most anything!

We passed through Strassbourg where skyscrapers appear on the horizon, crossed the Rhine, and reached Germany. Our halt at customs was only long enough to pay the road tax. We saw the occupants of a red VW who must have made the customs guards mad, because they dumped everything these people owned out in the street including even unrolling their blankets. They really had a big argument going and it was fun to watch but not participate in!

We climbed eastward into the Black Forest. At dusk, this was very impressive because for miles we climbed up the mountains around hairpin turns and through forests of towering pine trees. It took a mighty skillful driver to round these turns and avoid oncoming traffic with a bus. Our home in Freudenstadt was a beautiful old hotel, the Waldlust high on a mountain. For the fourth night in a row, Sherod Collins and I drew a room without a bath. Many of the rooms were luxurious suites, but ours was simply a room. I guess Bob Howell and his wife decided that for the good of the bus passengers, they better let us wash, so they let us use their bathtub while they took a walk till we got clean! We had an excellent dinner served by a little old lady who must have been 80 years old and a pretty young blond. In the morning we shopped in the city and the crowd bought a lot of cuckoo clocks, most of which were shipped home.

At noon we stopped at the Swiss Niagara Falls, the Rhine Falls at Steffeshausen, and had good dinner. Some took a boat ride under the falls, but I chickened out when I saw there were no life preservers and how rough the water was.

Later we passed through the town of Donau-eschingen where Prince Furstenberg, a relative of Jackie Kennedy, was having a horse show. This town contains a spring which is the source of the Danube River which we saw.

Friday night, September 13th, we stayed in big busy Zurich at the Hotel Waldorf which was a modest hotel six blocks from the railway station. Collins and I finally got a bathroom of our own here! Visited the famous watch and jewelry store the "Buchere". At the Buchere, pretty girls speaking many languages display jewelry and watches on tables for the personal attention of each customer. They will take as much time as you want, and if you buy nothing that is no problem. They are very kind and gracious to anyone who visits the store.

The Swiss flag is the only square flag in the world and has a white cross on a red square. It was liberally displayed all over Zurich.

Jim Henning's wife became ill with a strep throat. A doctor was summoned to the Hotel. He administered a shot of penicillin and charged \$50.00. It appears prices for medical services are high everywhere!

On Friday night Sherod Collins and I walked all over town and down the river bank to Lake Zurich. It is completely safe to walk around at night in Zurich and most other places in Europe. We looked in on some of the bars and night clubs and in one the Salvation Army girls were singing. It is a tradition that on certain nights they visit the bars and conduct singing religious services in Zurich. Traffic was heavy even at night with street cars, autos, motorcycles, and bikes all competing with pedestrians.

Our hotel was located in the Zurichburg section of Zurich. This is an area from which some of my ancestors migrated to Nersheim, Germany in the 1600's. I missed the cloister at Fahr where there are records of one branch of my family. A Swiss friend Werner Kiefer is going to take a picture and forward it to me of the cloister. He reports the cloister has been restored and is in good condition. The name Dubendorf which is a name of a town close by was the surname

adopted by one line of my family when surnames became the custom. When the family moved to Germany, the name was changed in the 1600's to Diefenderfer. From Germany they came to Emmaus, Pennsylvania in the 1700's.

The railroad station in Zurich occupies the center of town. The Swiss use four languages plus a dialect that they would like to make their national language and in addition, most Swiss in the big cities speak English. Zurich was a Roman garrison town and is the country of the Helvetians. The large clock on the church, which I photographed, is the largest on the continent and only Big Ben in London is larger.

We made a noon stop in Valduz, the capital of Lichenstein. Since 1919, it has been affiliated with Switzerland and has Prinz Francis Joseph II, the last of the Hapsburg rulers, as its leader. He lives in a modest castle on a hill overlooking the town. Baron Edward, his brother, is the public relations man for the town and also owns the biggest and best store. His prices were very reasonable and everyone bought small items like they were going out of style. Monaco and Lichenstein are the only principalities in Europe today. The latter is 61 square miles in size and has 23,000 inhabitants. One American, Paul Gallico, is a citizen. He wrote The Snow Goose and The Poseidon Adventure stories in Valduz. Taxes are 4% for everyone, and a legislature is elected every four years after a twenty-four campaign! Sounds like two good ideas! At this time of the year, large herds of cattle come down from the mountains at dusk and remain in the valleys for the winter. Two events occurred in Valduz that I remember. I had a wonderful ice cream sundae with real whipping cream and fruit on it in Valduz, and I left my camera lay on a counter and didn't miss it for quite a while. When I retraced my steps, an alert clerk hailed me and produced my camera. She had been looking for me. Since she was so pretty and so helpful, I gave her a nice tip which she only reluctantly accepted. All over Europe, honesty seems to prevail. I was never short changed anywhere and clerks and others were always helpful.

In the afternoon we traveled eastward and climbed the Aarlberg Pass into Austria. In the pass, we stopped the bus and climbed up on the hills and took pictures. I picked up a nice rock sample. It isn't a high pass but it is impressive.

In the evening (Saturday) we arrived at the beautiful Hotel Post in St. Anton. It is an old hotel and the rooms are beautifully paneled in wood. It is a ski resort. From my window I could look out and see the many trains moving from Innsbruck to Zurich. Rail service is excellent in Europe.

Werner Kiefer, a Swiss millionaire friend of Bob Howells, joined us and spent the night with us. I had breakfast with him. He had a door, window, and balcony manufacturing business which he sold just before the bust came, hence he can travel and do what he wants to.

In the evening, we gathered with about 200 Austrians in the basement of the hotel where a Tyrolian musical and dance festival was held. Beautiful music and native costumes enhanced the performance. Musical saws, a zither, base viol, violin, and accordions provided the music. Dances featured farming activities the coming of winter, etc. Great quantities of beer were consumed and everyone sang "Eidelweiss" and other Austrian tunes. The only bad feature was that there was only one exit and a fire would have been a disaster. No one seems to have any fire concerns in Europe, however. Hotels invariably have open stairwells near elevators, etc.

Our evening meal was delightful in St. Anton. The first course did not look very appetizing, but it was unusually good. Tiny strips of bologna, cheese, dill pickle, & onion laced with seasoning was wonderful. Then we had dumpling soup, veal, beets, carrots, and ice cream laced with a liberal supply of beer and white wine.

The next morning, Sunday September 14th, we turned out for the church parade. The home guard in their leiederhosen and plumed caps with their ancient muskets formed up behind a band and everyone marched to the 12th century Catholic church for mass. Unfortunately, we could not star because we had to push on to Innsbruck.

Innsbruck, a city of 100,000 was having their own parade. This was a photographer's dream. Veterans were being honored at a huge open-air mass in the center of the old city. All of the home guard units in their distinctive feathered caps and dress marched by us 'us regular troops in battle garb, and World War II veterans in uniform from France, Italy, Austria, Belgium, and Germany. Several bands played music including "Onward Christian Soldiers". We ate at

the Hotel Grief f, took pictures, and went to a church where a statue of the Madonna, found in the fourth century by farmers, is enshrined. The church survived many wars and a cannon ball from the peasants revolt under Andreas Hofer in the 1500's appears in the wall near the Madonna.

Leaving Innsbruck, we passed through the lowest pass in the Alps the Brenner Pass into Italy. 400 Roman expeditions used the pass and it has been a gateway to the north ever since. Border passage was easy. All the guard asked was if we had anything to declare. They did not even stamp passports. Inflation is rampant; the lira was 650 to the dollar. Small change had to be taken in hard rolls or candy. We stopped at Bersenglarice (glass mountain) and took pictures, drank beer, and coffee at the Resthaus Alpena Flora.

In Cortina, we had another fine hotel, the Hotel Europa. Cortina hosted the 1956 Olympics and is an ice skating and ski resort. Instead of having spaghetti or pizza, we had turkey for dinner and we also had turkey in our bag lunch which we took with us for the following afternoon. No one can ever escape bag lunches! We walked about the town, some had ice cream cones at a store, and we watched a man sweep the streets with a broom!

The next morning, we went to Forni PiSoto where we stopped for a break. Bandurak had fun with little kids in the town giving them suckers. They were bashful and ran away. One mother made her little boy come out and wave at us. He was about two years old and could run like a deer. He waved once and headed right back into his house! Had a picture taken of Rocky, Jack and myself with me reading an Italian newspaper to Jack, our English guide! Unbelievable!

At Trieste, we proceeded eastward to the Yugoslavia border. The border guards did stamp all passports and some time was spent exchanging money. The dinar was six to a dollar. Photographs could not be taken at the border. The road was rather narrow and rough but we proceeded through a sparsely settled farm area where the land was poor to Opatija and then Rijeka. The soil in this area is under laid with porous limestone which caused the rock to erode and huge craters covered the landscape. It looked like the craters of the moon. The good soil washes into these craters and the farmers raised crops in them.'

Our hotel in Rijeka was the Bonavia in the heart of the business district. The hotel was clean but rather dismal in appearance. The food and service were both excellent. The hotel was built into a steep hill and steps beside the hotel provided access for pedestrians to the streets higher up. Inasmuch as our room abutted the steps, we could hear people passing by all night long. The streets were narrow and our bus had difficulty in moving about. Terrific traffic jams resulted from trucks and cars going both ways on narrow streets. Battle scars from the 3 May 45 battle appear on many of the old buildings. That was when the partisans finally drove out the Germans. Now many young men estimated at one million annually go to Germany to work and bring back considerable money which helps the economy. Individuals employing less than five people can own their own businesses. Individuals can own a home of four rooms or less and the size of the rooms can be anything. Consequently, capitalism flourishes alongside communism. Church membership apparently is not questioned either. Tito maintains a large army, thus he deters any Russian takeover. While we were there, some Stalinists were arrested in Serbia and many army units moved to the eastern borders.

Our guide was Eva Simonich, a middle aged lady with a real sense of humor. I had my picture taken with her on a Polaroid camera, then she held up the picture while I took her picture. We visited the castle which has some portions built by the Romans and some by the French. The castle and a nearby church were built or rebuilt for the most part in the 12th century as a defense against the Turks. Garbage can pick-up by trucks which have a device that picks up the can and empties it into the truck is used; hence all cans are made the same. Streets in the downtown area are washed with water trucks at night.

We went along the coast to Bakarac where fishermen on long ladders extended over the water were waiting for the annual run of tuna. The tuna come into the harbor for a brief period led by a swordfish and the nets are ready and the harvest must be done quickly because they leave very shortly after they enter the harbor.

We saw Tito's summer house which is a modest affair with an orange tiled roof on the Adriatic near Bakar. A huge shipyard with the largest crane in Europe built by Krupp is in the city of Rijeka. Russian ships as well as others are dry-docked there. All of Austria's imports from the sea come through these ports. The old border prior to 1945 split Rijeka at the canal, in the center of town. Now the border is nearer Trieste. Italians still live in Rijeka. Had lunch in a Yugoslav restaurant in Opatija. The ham pizza was delicious. Met a French student who had a guitar and was with three Croatian students. Walt Bandurak plays the guitar so the French student insisted he play a tune and one of the girls hugged him while he played "Home on the Range" and we shot pictures. Everyone in Opatija and Rijeka were friendly and some, like the French student, could speak English.

Our guide Eva had an interesting tale to tell. She gave birth to a baby in a house in Rijeka in February 1945 unattended. She then went up the hillside to a Catholic church which she showed us to have the baby blessed. This church was between the Germans in the city and the partisans on the hill. On the way, an air raid occurred and she lost the baby. After the raid she found the baby and had it blessed. The baby is now a dentist in Munich, Germany! Later in 1945, she spent five days with the baby and others in a cave in the city while the Germans and partisans fought. They were without food or water until the barefooted partisans and some Americans came and brought food and water. We saw the cave. At noon we had to go past our guide's house so she could shut off the fire under her soup pot. She was to be with us only in the morning but we liked her so well, we insisted she go with us to Lipica.

At Lipica near the Italian border we saw the Lipizzaner horses and the farm where the emperor of Austria started the breed many years ago. The colts are black till age seven and grey till age 12 and then turn white. They have about 200 horses and you can buy a colt for about \$12,000. This area once belonged to Austria, then Italy, and now Yugoslavia. The Germans took all the horses during the war but General Patton got the farm twelve horses after the war to start the stables again. This general area has been the home of the Celts followed by Romans in the 1st century, Byzantines in the 3rd, Slavs in the 6th, Charlemagne in the 9th, feudal barons in the 13th, Vienna Hapsburgs in the 16th, Italy in 1919 and now is a part of Yugoslavia. The state is Croatia. It is a mixture of many groups. At Lipica we strayed over the border on a dirt road, but the Italians just laughed and helped us turn the bus around and return. The principal car is a locally made Strahaja. It stalls frequently and motorists race their motors to avoid stalling and honk their horns. Driving is a hazard and people pass without any clear view accounting for many accidents.

On Wednesday September 18th, we left for Zagreb passing through Karlstadt now called Kalowice. Roadside stands with pigs roasting on spits, figs, plums and grapes for sale were seen. Had lunch at a truck stop and played a Johnny Cash record on a juke box there.

Our hotel was in a small town north of Zagreb called Stulpice Toplice and the hotel was named after a peasant hero Matica Gubic who led a peasants revolt and was killed by the land owners many years ago. The town has radioactive sands and a hospital for rheumatic and other ailments. At the hotel, the food was excellent and a combo played native and American tunes. Once again "Home on the Range" was the tune they knew best! Our group and some Croatians danced and had a good time. The next day we went to Zagreb and on the way saw a three car pile up in which a German lady staying at our hotel was killed. A red VW was trying to pass and hit her car head on. This caused traffic to behave for awhile. But on the way back our bus was following four trucks. At one point seven cars were trying to pass all of us bumper to bumper. Apparently accidents only have a temporary effect on driving!

In Zagreb we visited St. Stephen's church where the exiled Cardinal Stepiriac is buried, with Tito's approval. People still pray at his grave. The church was destroyed by an earthquake 94 years ago and rebuilt. Part of a Roman wall adjoins the church. Saw St. Mark's church with the crests on the roof and Metrovic's famous religious statues inside. Saw the Croatian government offices where President Nixon resided when in Zagreb. The people of that city like him because he talked Tito into restoring the cable car system which was about to be eliminated. The castle at the top of the cable car run has a cannon that is fired only at noon.

When our astronauts landed on the moon, an exception was made, and it was fired at 3:00 AM. Saw the church and buildings which were used in the movie "Fiddler on the Roof". Had lunch with Wayne Black in an outdoor restaurant where we could watch the pretty girls pass by! Visited an open-air market.

Went to Kumarov and saw Tito's birthplace. Rather impressive little farming town off the beaten path. The house was a modest story and a half with a statue in the side yard. A handsome young soldier and a lady were on duty at the house. Mrs. Wells took the soldier's picture on a Polaroid camera and gave it to him. He had never seen such a camera and his amazement and joy were unbounded. He would look at the picture then hold it behind him so others could not see it. At this point he was willing to give us the place. About the same time a man, his wife, and daughter arrived to visit the memorial. It turned out the man was a partisan with Tito and he showed us his picture with Tito on a wall in the house. Mrs. Wells took his picture beside Tito's statue. When he saw it, he was so overjoyed that he grabbed her and kissed her several times, much to her embarrassment. By this time everyone was getting friendly and we passed out candy to the kids. They were very shy but most happy to get the candy. Many buckeye trees grow in this area and I picked up a few for souvenirs.

On Friday, September 20th, we went to Ljubljana in Slovenia and stayed at Hotel Slon, a very nice hotel. Visited the castle, a modern art gallery, and an open-air market. Shopped in the stores. In the hotel we played the slot machines in the casino and listened to beautiful violin music. Strange the communists have gambling houses. At the Hotel Slon, Jim Hennings celebrated his 51st birthday and his wife bought red wine for all. We had a young man for a guide who had lived in Washington as a small boy while his father was with the embassy. He was able to answer many questions for us and was a most likeable chap.

We went north the next day visiting the resort area at Lake Bled and then went into Austria.

In Austria hay is placed in little barns high up in the mountains and when the snows come, it is baled and moved to the valleys in midwinter on sleds. Here in Slovenia the hay is put on racks that have a little roof over them and is dried in the fields. In Croatia hay is stacked in shocks like wheat.

In Austria we had one of our best meals, weinerschnitzel and red cabbage in Villach and then proceeded over the second highest pass in Europe, the Gros Glockner. It was foggy and driving was slow and hazardous. At the summit the clouds lifted briefly and we took a few pictures. That night we stayed at the Grand Hotel by the lake in Zell Am Zee, a beautiful town and lake. Again excellent food.

On Sunday, September 21st, we stopped in Salzburg a city of 100,000 people. This was Mozart's birthplace. Saw the convent where part of "The Sound of Music" was filmed, visited the 500 year old cathedral just as they were celebrating mass for the 500th anniversary, and spent some time in the old city. Had lunch in Linz and then started northward in a rainstorm for the Czech border.

At the border we went through a passport check and search of the bus and luggage compartments. We met Tony our guide at this point. Although passports are handled in seat number order, mine was brought out first and handed to me even though I was in the middle of the bus. This made me wonder if they were telling me that they knew I formerly held a Top Secret clearance and my last branch in the Reserve was Military Intelligence! I resolved to be very law-abiding! I was asked in Praha if I wanted to buy black market money but I firmly turned it down. It was a long gloomy ride through a countryside which was drab in contrast to Austria where everything is painted and neat. We stopped at a filthy bar enroute to use the restrooms and have a drink, but it stunk so bad I remained outside.

Finally we arrived at the Hotel Flora which had seen better days. The elevator was broken and we carried luggage up six floors for some of the women and older people. The stench in all bathrooms was terrible, toilet paper was hung on string, every chair in the lounge had broken springs, window glass was broken in some cases, and the beds were hard, but the sheets were clean. An air of hopelessness pervaded everything.

Stores are meagerly stocked and the guide said there was a manpower shortage, but it was evident that it was more a lack of incentive than anything else. The country has 128,000 square miles and 14 1/2 million people. Coal is of poor quality and buildings were dirty from coal soot. Large communal farms and orchards prevailed. Carp farming was a big business also. Since the people own nothing but what is on their backs, everything just falls down and is left where it falls. Praha is pockmarked with huge holes where a subway is being built but little work was being done. Saw the castle and Charles Bridge. Saw the John Huss statue and went to Lidice where the Germans wiped out the town. Had a movie and tape played for us putting blame on the west and praising the Russians while matter of factly covering the assassination of Reynhard Heydrich which led to the Lidice incident.

Through the auspices of the Catholic Bishop of Newark, New Jersey our embassy was prevailed upon to host a party for us. Jack Berry, the charge de affairs from Atlanta, Georgia, and Col. Barnett USMC, the military attaché with their families and staff made us most welcome. The drinks, food, and especially the peanuts were wonderful! A number of Czechs who fought with the west in WWII were present and we enjoyed talking with them. Col. Gibbons, a British visitor, also was at the affair. We made our Czech guide (spy) stay outside where two Czech soldiers kept the embassy under surveillance. He must have wondered what was going on inside and probably caught hell for not finding out. One of our Czech friends who went back to the hotel with us is the guide at the Jewish Synagogue! He laughed at what lengths the commies would go to give him a lousy job. (Others of the group are garbage collectors.) The synagogue is the second oldest in Europe and we paid him a visit there the next day.

In the evening we danced at the hotel along with some East German young people. They were 1 very glum and even when dancing did not smile. A couple of them danced with our ladies.

Cars in Czechoslovakia are the Skoda at \$4,500 and the Tetra at \$19,500, and only party officials can afford them. Most people ride the street cars. You buy a ticket and put it in a punch on the car. An inspector may come along and if your ticket is not punched, you are fined the equivalent of \$5.00 on the spot. Some of our people were checked. Went shopping with some of my Georgia friends and our Czech guide suddenly turned up, when we thought we had lost him. Since he showed up, we made him spend the day guiding us around.

From Praha we went to Pilsen and saw the Gambrinus and Pilsener breweries and the Skoda auto works. The Second Infantry Division visited there earlier in the week. They were east of Pilsen when World War II ended.

At 1:10 PM we crossed the border into Germany. This was a scary experience. First, we were stopped at a huge steel barrier from which radiated mine fields, electrified fences, smoothly raked earth to detect crossing, plus big guard dogs. We were left to cool our heels about 45 minutes, then moved down the road to a holding area. We were permitted to go into a store and bar while the bus was searched. The driver had to remove the motor grill, rear steps, and other parts of the bus. Our passports were taken. After an hour or so, we had to line up on a white line in the rain while the guard stood in the bus and read off our names. As we entered, he looked us over and gave us our passports. I was relieved when my name was called out. After we were aboard, our English guide told Tony, the Czech guide, to tell the soldier that American soldiers died for Czechoslovakia. The soldier merely blinked his eyes because he dare not show any emotion since he was watched from the machine gun towers. We then pulled to another steel roadblock and waited for thirty minutes then were released. On the German side we paid the road tax and were waved on. Our English guide mentioned that it's interesting how our former enemies treated us compared to our former friends! As we left the Czech border, we opened the bus windows and sang "God Bless America" at the top of our voices!

On the German side every town was prosperous and buildings painted. What a contrast!

Left Bonn at 7:30 Friday, September 27th, and went to Luxembourg city and the Hotel Aerogolf. Left the Chicago group there and went to the airport. Departed on Icelandic at 2:00 PM. Stopped in Iceland while they repaired a starter motor on the plane. Arrived at Kennedy Airport at 10:30 PM New York time.

Helped my Georgia friends get to Delta with their luggage then took a cab to La Guardia. Cost of cab \$10.00. Paid \$32.00 for a room to sleep in at the Sheraton Hotel for four hours. It was near the airport. Flew TWA 707 to Columbus Saturday morning. Plane only partly filled, with none in first class. Pilot mentioned we were at 31,000 feet when we passed over Lancaster, Pa. Arrived in Columbus around 10:00 AM Saturday, September 28, 1974. No problem clearing storms in NYC. Our tour bus mileage was 4,523 kilometers or about 2,825 miles in 21 days. We visited eleven countries.

In the first town, Waidus, we stopped and in one hour's time, a woman had whipped up a dinner of steak, potatoes, celery roots, lettuce salad, ice cream, and beer. to feed 44 people on short notice. We bought bananas at a stand, the passed through Ansbach where there is a large American garrison and on Huber, the famous old walled city. We stayed at the Goldener Hirsch, in the old city. We watched the famous clock strike the hour and two come out from windows beside the clock and drink a toast as the clock old clock in a medieval town. Our group spent the evening in a small club drinking and dancing to very beautiful music. The club had hanging gardens of live vines which hung down from about three stories above the dance floor.

Went by bus to Bingen and got on a Rhine boat and traveled up the Rhine to St. Goar. Took many pictures and had delicious bratwurst and sauerkraut for dinner and passed through Koblenz, where I used to cross on a pontoon bridge. Remagen, where only the bridge piers remain of the famous Remagen bridge, We stayed in the luxurious Hotel am Tulpenfeld in the government of Germany arrive at his headquarters with a large police escort. for \$80.00 a day!

Our guide had a little farewell song to the tune of "Take it to the Lord in Prayer" which he sang to us when we left him:

When this blessed trip is over
Oh how happy I shall be
When I get back to old England
No more 106th for me.
No more rising at five-thirty
No more counting heads all day
And if you have any problems
Take them to the Lord, not me!

Sept. 7 - 21, 1974

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
106th Inf. Div. Tour

BANDURAK, Walter - 219 1/2 Maple Avenue North, Greensburg, Pa. 15601 (Medic w/C Company
BANDURAK, Lillian 81st Engineers. Wounded
at Heckhalenfeld, Germany
December 17.)

BARTZ, Richard - 216 Rustie Avenue, Pittsburg, Pa. 15210 (Division Headquarters Co.)

BEALS, Carol - 217 E. Davenport Street, Iowa City, Iowa (Widow of sergeant in 422 Infantry Regt.)

BLACK, T. Wayne - 425 Allen Street, Apt. 301, Waterloo, Iowa 50701 (Intelligence Sergeant, 422
Infantry Regt. Captured at
Schlaussenbach. Prisoner at
Bad Orb.)

BRITTON, Benjamin - 36 Warren Road, Auburn, Mass. 01501 (Company E 424 Infantry Regt. Wounded
BRITTON, Avis at Bracht.)

BROWN, Marilyn - c/o Eugene Saucerman, Route #23, Box 50, Terre Haute, Ind. 47802

COFFEY, Doug - 41 Lowell Avenue, West Orange, N.J. 07052 (Communication Sgt. 590th Field
COFFEY, Isabel Artillery. Captured near Bleialf.
prisoner at Bad Orb.)

COFFEY, Vivian - 45 Cherry Street, West Orange, N. J. 07052 (Sister-in-law of Doug.)

COLLINS, Sherod - 625 Channing Drive, N.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30318 (Service Co. 423 Inf. Regt.)

DOBE, Gabrielle - 264 Belmont St., Manchester, N.H. 03103 (Wife of disabled soldier from 422
Inf. Regt.)

HENNING, James - 1045 E. 8th St., Lockport, Ill. (Company H 422 Infantry Regt. Captured near
HENNING, Clara Shonberg. Prisoner at Bad Orb.)

HOWELL, Robert - 904 E. College St., Griffin, GA. 30223 (2d Battalion 424 Inf. Regt. Platoon
HOWELL, Louise leader and later supply officer.)

LASATER, Marvin - c/o E. C. White, Box 465, Whiteface, Texas 79379 (Guest of E.C. White. Texas
LASATER, Lena cotton farmer.)

MC GRAW, Laverne - 1112 W. Windemere, Royal Oak, MI. 48073 (Guest of Jeanne Schuette)

PREWETT, E.A.H. - Rt. #2, Box 730, Brentwood, Calif. 94513 (Father of Edward - age 83)

FAGAN, Doris - 1183 Stanford Ave., Palo Alto, Calif. 94306

PREWETT, Edward A. - Rt. #2, Box 730, Brentwood, Calif. 94513 (B Company 424 Inf. Regt.)

PREWETT, Mary

RINGER, Robert - 4280 Kendale Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43221 (Ammunition officer 591st Field
Artillery and supply officer 590th
Field Artillery)

SAUCERMAN, Eugene - Rt. #23, Box 50, Terre Haute, Ind. 47802 (D Co. 422 Inf. Regt. Captured
SAUCERMAN, Sally near Shonberg. Prisoner at Bad Orb.)

SAUCERMAN, Sandra (Miss) age 7 1/2

SCHUTTE, Jean - 2415 Otter Dr., Warren, MI. 48092 (Wife of soldier in 422 Inf Regt.)

SENN, Mary - c/o James Wells, Box 89, Atlanta, Georgia 30903 (Guest of Wells family)

VILLWOCK, Russell - 6908 W. Higgins Ave., Chicago, Ill. (Division Signal Co.)

VILLWOCK, Jacqueline

WALKER, Robert - 598 Terrace Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220 (D Co. 422 Inf. Regt. Captured
WALKER, June near Shonberg. Prisoner at Bad
Orb)

WELLS, James - Box 89, Augusta, Georgia 30903 (Commander C Co. 81st Engineers. Wounded near
WELLS, Maydean Losheim.)

WHITE, E. C. - Box 465, Whiteface, Texas 79379 (Survey Sergeant C Battery 591st Field
WHITE, Zada Artillery and Forward Observer.)

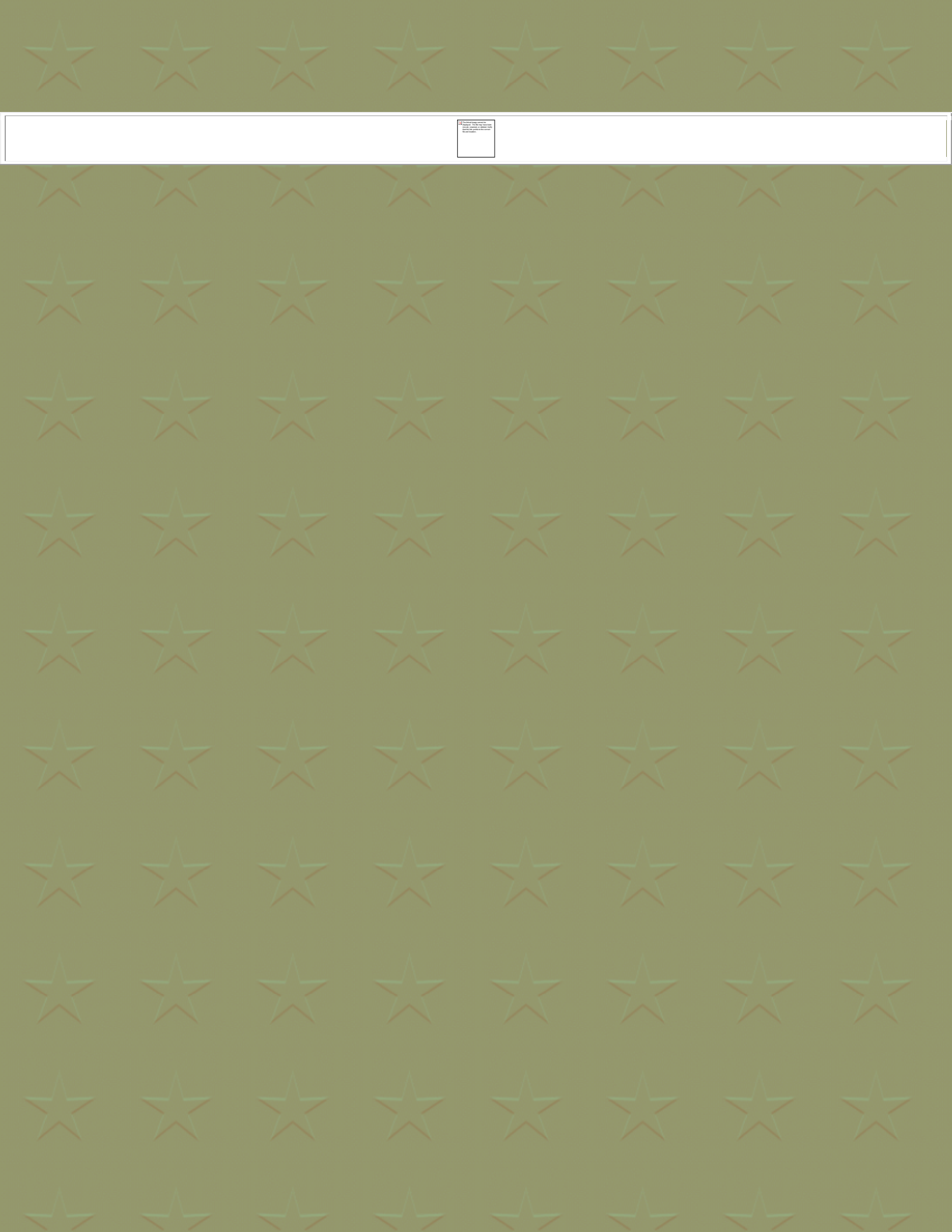
WILLIAMS, Ellen - 11 Park Avenue, Westmont, N.J. 08108 (Sister-in-law of Doug Coffey)

Summary - Sixteen of the 41 travellers were in the 106th Infantry Division.

Five were prisoners and four were wounded of the sixteen on the trip.

Newly Commissioned Second Lieutenant Robert C. Ringer
June 1942 (Artillery) Commission presented by Gove. John
Bricker (later Senator) at ceremony near University
Hospital.





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August 7 1983

Life now spins out on anonymous axis

She lives now in the middle-class anonymity of an apartment complex in north Columbus. It is a place where, in large measure, the commerce of her life no longer incites the curious nor intrigues the press. The name Mildred Gillars simply doesn't mean much to folks anymore. Time has bleached the anger and passion from the memory of her deeds, and no one calls her Axis Sally anymore.

Mildred Gillars' life takes shape in yellowed clippings, in old stories that flicker across the microfilm scanner in the newspaper morgue.

Born with the century in Portland, Maine, she attended Ohio Wesleyan University, beginning in 1918. School officials would later remember her as a "completely undisciplined and noticeably eccentric" young woman. She shocked the campus by wearing knickers, impressed classmates with her considerable dramatic talent, then left without completing her studies.

SHE WENT TO Cleveland, sold novelty jewelry in a department store, tried to find a little work in theater. Eventually she left for New York in pursuit of an acting career, then from New York to Canada, France and, finally, Germany. She was there when the war broke out.

Some say she was hand-picked by Nazi Reich Minister for Public Enlightenment Joseph Paul Goebbels, and that she worked willingly as a propagandist in the Fuhrer's cause. She would later deny that, portraying herself as an unwilling conscript, arguing that a stolen passport kept her from leaving Germany in 1941.

She maintained it was not her voice that encouraged American GIs to lay down arms and go home. Whose voice then followed the Allied advance from North Africa to the Rhine? Who played the Crosby records and

32

On March 10, 1949, a jury of seven men and five women filed into the courtroom and presented the verdict: guilty.

She was sentenced to 10 to 30 years in prison.

A dozen years passed. In 1961, the gates of the federal women's reformatory at Alderson, W.Va., opened to a 60-year-old Mildred Gillars. During her prison years she had taken solace in the Catholic faith and came to know the nuns who worked with Alderson inmates. That contact brought her to a teaching job in north Columbus at the convent school of the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus.

Her parole invited a resurgence of journalistic reflection. She steadfastly protested her innocence. For a brief time her name danced again across the wire service teletypes. Then it was gone.

In 1973, she completed the studies she had begun 55 years earlier at Ohio Wesleyan and received a bachelor's degree in speech. She left the convent.

SHE IS 82 NOW, and has little inclination to discuss the life of Mildred Gillars with the press.

"I'm really not interested," she says with the strained civility one musters when dealing with telephone solicitors and Jehovah's Witnesses. She seems to have lost even the desire to see her side of the story in print. "My friends and my students have seen the light of day," she wearily explains, "and that's all that matters."

She suggests the journalist might learn something by reading Heinrich Boll's *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum*. It is a novel about a woman who shoots a journalist who hounds her life.

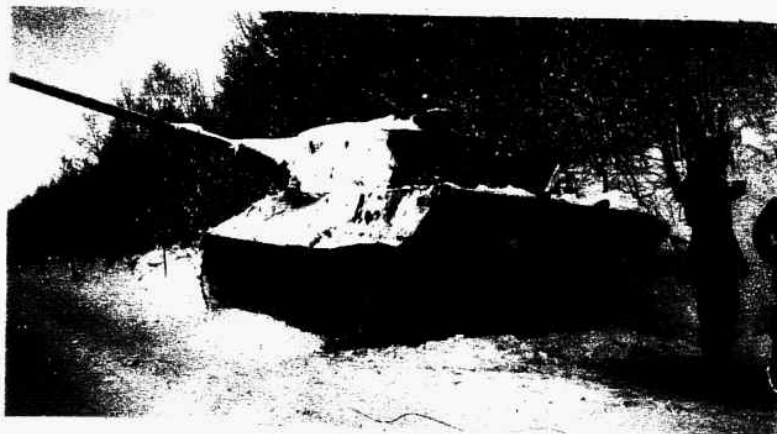
"But I wouldn't go to that extreme," she



German Children Bretten Ger.
1945 Each day they came to see
me and I would give them gum
or candy. They would thank me
and leave.



Changing the guard at
Buckingham Palace
London, England 1945



Tiger Tank (German) near
Francorchamps, Belgium
1944 (Task Force Peiper)

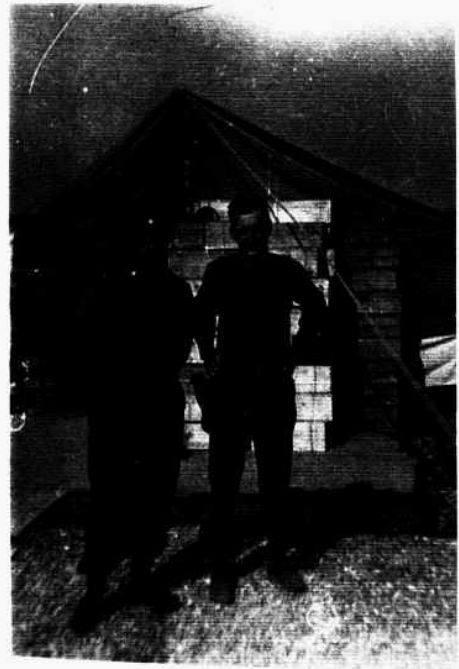


1947 Convention in
Indianapolis, In Joe
E. Brown the famous
actor and friend of
the 106th Inf Div

My Commanders in the 106th Infantry Division WWII



Brig Genl Leo McMahon
Capt. M M Dolitsky
Indianapolis In 1947



Lt COL Philip F. Hoover
Lt Robert C. Ringer
Heilbronn Germany 1945



Received Army Meritorius Service Medal - 1982

424th Infantry - "After Battle" and "Personal" Reports



A report by Robert C. Ringer, 591st FAB Ammunition Officer.

As Ammunition Officer for the 591st Field Artillery Battalion, 105 mm Howitzer, the Direct Support Battalion of the 424 Infantry Regiment, I was an observer of what went on over a wide area.

Most author's if they say anything, state that the 424th made a disorganized withdrawal to the west. On the contrary, both withdrawals were expertly conducted by Col A. Reid and his people. The proof is that the units including the artillery lived to fight another day.

The Infantry and Artillery Supply units cooperated in every way. On 12 Dec 1944, all officers and men of Service Battery at the request of the 424 took off our goggles and sent them to line

We fired 50,000 artillery rounds from 10 December until 15 March 1945. For a single day the most fired was on Dec 16 2,598 rounds and on 25 Dec (Manhay) 2,370 rounds. This was done with the worn out howitzers from the 2nd Division. Traversing gears were worn and frequently rounds had to be rammed in and the cases out because the tubes were in poor condition. One of the great mysteries came when Corps Artillery pulled all three of their medium and heavy artillery battalions out at noon on 17 Dec and leave only our battalion and a few tanks to do the support job.

In addition to the Infantry, I would like to praise LTC Philip Hoover and Capt M.M. Dolitsky of our Battery for their



Dec. 1944 Our first Command Post Berg Reuland Belgium on
the German Border. Anton Schutz coal and feed store
L to R Lr Ringer and Capt Dolitsky

1974 visit to the building now an apartment building.



ST VITH BELGIUM AFTER BEING REBUILT SINCE WORLD WAR II



ADVENTURES IN EUROPEIN 1944-45 AND A RETURN IN 1974

(Includes maps and photos and a letter from Field Marshal Hasso Von Manteuffel in reply to a letter I sent him)

Belgian Monument Donated to the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge in November 1994. Located on the Campus of the Valley Forge Military Academy, Valley Forge, Pa.





Page last revised
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