REMINISCENCES

OF WORLD WAR II

Wendell H. Hall

On the Cover

The four shoulder patches represent the following, left to right, top to bottom:
28th Anti-Aircraft Battalion, Officer Candidate Gunnery School
Camp Wallace, Texas

Army Specialized Training (ASTP), University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma

The 103rd Infantry "Cactus" Division, Camp Howze, Texas
411th Infantry Regiment, Anti-Tank (AT) Company
and the European Theater of Operations (ETO)
France, German, Austria, Italy

The 45th Infantry "Thunderbird" Division
Dachau, Germany

The ribbons and stars represent various campaigns and battles.
They never were explained to us. In any event, it seemed like one continuous campaign and battle to us.

The single hash mark stands for the highest rank I attained:
Private First Class (Pfc)

The rifle with wreath is the Combat Infantryman medal.
At Camp Howze I earned the same medal on the firing range, but without a wreath, as an Expert Rifleman—the highest rating.

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Reminiscences of World War II

Wendell H. Hall

My niece Sherlene and her husband Dan Bartholomew have chided me for scattering scraps of information about my involvement in World War II in haphazard fashion throughout my novel *Miss Universe Alice* (available free of charge on the internet at www.nuspel.org). Also, my virtual twin brother Donald has asked me to prepare an account of some of my experiences for partial inclusion in his forthcoming memoirs of World War II entitled *Victory, Where Is Thy Reward?*.... So here goes:

When at age 19, it was obvious that I was about to be drafted, I opted to enlist in the U.S. Army while at Weber College, Ogden, Utah. I wanted to join the Army Air Force but figured my eyesight was too poor for that. My mind was set on becoming a pilot and my poor brain didn't seem to get that I could set my poor eyes on being a mechanic or something other than an aircraft driver. My two older brothers had enlisted in the Navy; Donald, simultaneously with me, signed up with the Army. Later, youngest brother Delbert was with the Army in the Korean War. Father Howard Hall served in the Army in World War I.

On April 9, 1943, at the end of the winter quarter at Weber, all of us enlistees met at the old Union Depot at the west end of Ogden's notorious 25th Street and boarded a train to the Union Depot in Salt Lake City. We were going off to war but you'd think it was going to be a picnic... all the fun and chatter and horse-play going on. One of the guys went to the end of the car I was on with Donald, stood on his hands with his feet high in the air and then did at least a dozen push-ups on one hand only. Can't remember his name, now, but it was well-known that his brain was almost as mighty as his muscles. What a show-off! We were all duly impressed.

From Union Station in Salt Lake, we were bussed to Fort Douglas, on the foothills of the Wasatch Mountains above the University of Utah. First off, we were given a quickie physical exam. One after another in rapid succession, bare-arse naked, we had our rectums and genitals checked (The so-called "short-arm" inspection. How insulting!) and if found to be warm and breathing we passed and were inducted into

the Army of the United States of America.

The first evening there and on following ones, a World War I veteran led us in the singing of songs intended to buck up young inductees who for the most part were away from home for the first time in their lives. I remember some lines from an old British World War I favorite that he taught us.

"So chin up, Tommy Atkins, be a stout fellow, chin up, cheerio, carry on!" British soldiers had been called "Tommies" for over a century and Tommy Atkins was supposed to epitomize them. Probably our favorite participation was in rousing renditions of *Parly Voo.*

Mademoiselle from Armentières

Chorus: Mademoiselle from Armentières, parlez-vous?
Mademoiselle from Armentières,
She hasn't been kissed for forty years,
Hinky-dinky parlez-vous.

Oh, Mademoiselle from Armentières, parlez-vous?
Mademoiselle from Armentières, parlez-vous?
She got the palm and the croix de guerre,
For washin' soldiers' underwear,
Hinky-dinky parlez-vous.

The colonel got the Croix de Guerre, parlez-vous?
The colonel got the Croix de Guerre, parlez-vous?
The colonel got the Croix de Guerre,
The son-of-a-gun was never there!
Hinky-dinky parlez-vous.

We appreciated that old guy with all our hearts.... that he would come up there every night to cheer us up. We didn't understand half of any of the songs and had no idea what "parly voo," "kwa d'ger" and "palm" meant or where "Arm 'n teers" was, but they were all rousing good tunes and we loved them. That old veteran was 'there'

when we needed him. A volunteer, giving freely and gladly of his time.

From Fort Douglas I was sent to Camp Wallace, Texas, south of Houston, for training in an anti-aircraft battalion. The first morning there I went on "sick call." Had a red rash all over my body. Not scarlet fever, not measles. Turned out it was only the result of sleeping under a typical G.I. (government issue), olive drab blanket in the heat and humidity of south Texas: heat rash. All of us were officer candidates and our preparation was very high level, with day-long courses mainly in math. I thought I was very good at that but the competition was so keen I had to really dig in and study hard. Our instructors were all former math professors, enlisted or drafted into the Army, and very sharp.

All those high-powered courses and no college credit! I decided to sign up for a correspondence course from Brigham Young University in Differential Calculus. I worked hard at it and mailed all completed assignments off in a timely manner. It disappointed me that the professor never once made a personal comment on the returned, corrected papers. A lonely soljer boy far from home and the prof never once made a personal notation. "Good show, fella! Thanks for doing your part for our national security." Would have taken him but a minute.

We had training with various types of anti-aircraft weapons, the most exciting being heavy artillery. Daredevil pilots would cross the firing range pulling targets not very far behind them as we boomed away with live ammunition. I remember, my first time, the range officer said, "Not at the plane, you idiot! At the target!" Yes, sir, lieutenant, sir! But aren't we supposed to lead it, according to height and velocity as we've been taught, lieutenant sir! Believe me, brother, I was scared to lead the target at all, but the training was supposed to make experts out of us while not bringing down the super brave pilots. Later on, headed for combat in the European Theater of Operations aboard the Santa Maria (an old freighter that we said was Columbus's flagship converted from sails to steam propulsion), the first thing I noticed on ascending the gangplank was the Bofors antiaircraft guns. Hoped I could be assigned to them, avoiding somewhat the boredom of a long crossing marked mainly by occasional zig-zagging to foil potential German submarine attacks.

At Camp Wallace I had to make a very difficult decision. Continue on in the anti-aircraft, accept an ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program) assignment in Engineering at the University of Oklahoma, or go to Tulane University in New Orleans for an all-expense-paid career in Medicine, the only stipulation being that I'd have to remain in the Army as a second lieutenant for a period of two years after normal demobilization. Since my career plans were to follow the lead of oldest brother Tracy in Chemistry, I decided that engineering would be best. Somehow, I had scored very high on a medical aptitude test, and therefore the Tulane opportunity.

During maneuvers in a barren area of Galveston, off the coast from Houston, I accepted the challenge of a buddy to swim across a channel to a small island with him. Didn't look too far. An excellent swimmer, he was soon out of sight. Before long, about half-way, it seemed, my predicament was either to continue on or turn back. Didn't know if I could make it either way. Decided to go back, knowing I couldn't swim the whole distance twice. Still quite far from shore, feebly stroking away, totally exhausted, facing a watery grave, I prayed as fervently as in all my life up to that point. "Amen"..... and I felt so buoyed up it seemed as though I was being carried along. The tide, the flow, something was going my way, and before long my feet touched bottom. Didn't know whether I was at all worthy of such a blessing, but in thanksgiving determined—as so often in my life—to repent of all my folly and do much better from that moment onward.

At Okie U, great experiences. Splendid professors and training. What it had to do with the war effort was very unclear. Not at all related to my experiences as an employee of the Engineering Section at the Army Supply Depot in Ogden, Utah, where I registered the arrival of tremendous equipment, from huge trucks, bulldozers and road graders to sheep-foot rollers, pontoon bridges, metal segments of aircraft landing strips, etc., etc. Later, on crossing the Rhine River on such a bridge... Hmmmm.... Did this thing come from Ogden? But it became clear to me that the ASTP was intended for one purpose only: to save U.S. higher education from extinction. Relatively few girls went to college back then and besides, like "Rosie the Riveter," they were working at all kinds of jobs in support of the war effort. No girls in our classes. I

don't recall seeing any fairer-than-thou students on campus at all. In all seriousness, that's what it was all about. And now I can proudly say that I not only helped save the world from Hitler but was a key (one small one) to the uninterrupted survival of the great Univ. of Oklahoma. Murmurings and mutterings, however about "What are these guys doing here while my boy is risking his life at the front?" apparently caused our sudden departure from Norman after two quarters.

Seemed like quite a demotion, from the Anti-Aircraft to the Infantry at Camp Howze (how-zee), Texas—103rd Division, 411th Regiment, AT (Anti-Tank) Company. From the AA to the AT. I've often complained as a professor that in the U.S. students have to repeat high school all over again with required "general education" courses, whereas in enlightened countries like Argentina, for example, students go directly from the *liceo* (secondary school) to professional institutions, be it in Law, Chemistry, Journalism, Medicine, or whatever. Having drilled for hours at high school ROTC, I was quite bored to repeat that all over again: Column left! Column right! Parade rest! Present arms! Oh, well, my salute became snappier than ever, so superior it bordered on Clintonesque. All this drilling has an interesting history. It's primary purpose was to condition raw recruits to instantly obey commands.... As in *The Charge of the Light Brigade:* "Yours not to reason why, yours but to do and die."

I was an expert clerk-typist, by training plus experience at the Army Supply Depot. So my official classification as an infantryman—apparently based on a critical national short supply—was *Assistant Driver, Weapons Carrier*. Wo ho! Wo ho! Hey! Wow! A weapons carrier (i.e., a truck)! I had driven once, around the block, in Vern Newman's new Oldsmobile (no automatic drives, only manual shift back then), giving him quite a scare. Vern was our much loved and admired Explorer Scout leader. It was my 15th birthday and this was his special treat for me. The effects of the Great Depression lingered. Our dad didn't have a car.

About a week after my arrival at Howze, I was appointed by our company commander to be his personal orderly—a position not found in the official table of organization. I had to accompany Captain Sunbake almost everywhere, serving no

purpose. (So nick-named by the troops for his service in the Regular Army in Nicaragua, where he supposedly got his brains fried.) I mainly just sat in the back of his Jeep. The way the older guys gawked at me and snickered made me wonder what was going on. I was very young-looking for my age. Youthful physiognomy was in my genes. One of our darling daughters, Teresa, still looked like a teenager after giving birth to six children. I still delight in kidding her. If I go to her door and she answers, I inquire, "Is your Mommy home?" Once she accompanied her oldest son to get his driver's license and was told that a parent had to come. A sister would not do.

A few days later, the company was participating in maneuvers away from the barracks. I had my own pup tent and olive drab woolen blankets. The first night, before I could set up my own tent, the captain motioned me toward his large headquarters one. I innocently entered. With no preamble, Sunbake began to show me feelthy peektures. Thanks to the indirect lesson imparted in the eighth grade by a certain district music supervisor (who pointed his finger directly at me and called me a disgusting, dimwitted little clown for trying to round my lips as taught and apparently—in my deep desire to please the teacher and this alpha male—had rounded them a displeasing trifle too much), I wasn't totally, mindlessly, submissive to authority, although the Army was already rather mindlessly trying to drill that deeply into me. I mumbled that I didn't look at pictures like that and shuffled out of the tent.

Although I had only seen First Lieutenant "Abby" Abendroth, executive officer of our company, at morning inspections and drills, it took only one look to see what kind of man he was. I went directly to his tent and haltingly told him what had happened. I don't know whether Abby said eleven words or twelve to Sunbake, but the next day I was back with my squad. No "orderly," period, for the captain after that. No pervert, whatever his rank, could attempt to prey on vulnerable boys thinking that Abby might stand mutely by without coming to their defense. Later, in combat, it made me feel inexpressibly more secure knowing that Abby was there, doing things courageously, skillfully and right—it mattered not what lesser men might do or fail to do.

Can the greatness of a sergeant be overrated? A mere sergeant like Ardel "Sandy" Coulter? "Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example," said Mark Twain. Among other remarkable things, in addition to being such a strong, sturdy, knowledgeable, sensible example, Coulter was great because to him you didn't have to be one of the boys to be one of the boys. You could refrain from smoking, drinking and cursing and still be one of his boys. You could be a "98-lb. weakling" (in the words of the Charles Atlas ads of the day that promised monstrous biceps, pecs and abs for a nominal sum) and be one of Sandy's boys. You were expected to seriously do your best, however.

Peer pressure can be so distorting, freakish, crushing. In today's gangs, you may have to disfigure or mutilate your body with unnatural things in unnatural places, do drugs, or even cut or shoot someone to belong. Sandy was peerless in controlling and rejecting pressure. "Everybody's different," he would say. "Thank the Lord!"

I was a reader. Another of Mark Twain's good ones: "Someone who can read and doesn't has no advantage over someone who can't." I was friendly enough, and appreciated the much good in the guys, but preferred to sit on my bunk reading rather than be with the gang that devoted lots of free time to gambling, smoking, drinking beer, cursing, and telling raunchy high tales and jokes. Once after a visit to the latrine, I reentered the barracks just as this gang, with tremendous outbursts of raucous laughter, was taking the Lord's name in vain in every unimaginable way. "Tone it down!" Sandy said. "Rugged's here."

Ardel gave me this nickname. No sarcasm. No irony. On Sunday afternoons after church services, I would go with the other guys to the U.S.O. (United Service Organization) club in the nearby town of Gainesville, Texas but would head for the library in the basement. I was the only one there ever, as I recall.... Always alone, with one exception. Two of my buddies, Pollacks from Chicago, came staggering down the steps one evening with a bottle of whiskey.

"Hall, we're going to give you a little drink!"

"Thanks anyway, but my parents taught me not to drink and I'm not going to."

"You're going to!"

Older guys, bigger than I, they took me to the floor. One straddled me while the other attempted to force the bottle into my mouth.

I hate to even think of it or mention it, but something has to be said here. When I was 15, sliding on the ice down Kershaw Street hill, hands foolishly in my pockets, I fell and broke 2-1/2 of my upper front teeth plus shattering the tips of lower ones, giving one of them a very bad jolt. One of the last times I went to the dentist (We're talkin' 2002), he showed me an X-ray and reported what had to be done. "And what about my loose tooth?" "What loose tooth?" I had to wiggle it about with my finger to show him. Hey! What an amazing tooth. How admirable. It's still hanging in there after all these years (65 as I type this). The dentist explained what could be done and how much it would cost (a fortune!), so I said I'd just hang in there with it.

This tragedy happened just as I was beginning to notice girls in a different way! (I had no sisters and didn't quite know what to make of these attractive, beguiling, but strange creatures.) And now I had a horrible gap in my mouth. No girl would want to even look my way. Great Depression days.... No money for a dentist. For years, I would hardly open my mouth. My smile, especially for photos, was very tight.

At age 18, with good jobs becoming readily available because of the approaching war, I finally earned enough to get the job done. A good fit, a good match. As I aged, though, the false bridge remained a dazzling white while the other teeth yellowed somewhat. Made me a hit in Latin America. People always commented on my wonderful smile. They are so kind.

While at it, I got some new eyes as well as new teeth. So this's what the world looks like? No wonder I'd missed those blinding fast pitches of Reed Evans and bobbled those easy grounders to second base (my favorite position). You have to be able to see the ball, not a blur. Reed's pitches were still a blur, however.

Some years later, as a professor, I attended a lecture by a much ballyhooed man (hometown boy makes good), who spoke of his recent visit to the Soviet Union. An event. The height of the cold war. Few Americans ever went behind the Iron Curtain. The man could say no good about the Russians. His every word dripped with derision. "You should see the stainless steel false teeth they have! Never saw anything

so crude!"

I felt overcome with despair. Communism was taking over around the globe. A menace everywhere. How could "ugly Americans" hope to turn back the tide? What poor, miserable denizen of a "third-world" country, a "developing" nation, wouldn't give his or her eyeteeth for an American dental job? Totally out of the question. Who made affordable stainless steel teeth an option? The Soviets. What people could these "denizens" best relate to? Rich Americans? To the Russians, of course.

So when I hissed through tightly clenched jaws, "You'll have to break my teeth first!" I alone could understand what a loss to me that would be. I struggled desperately but they were too big and heavy for me. Fortunately, the sound of the struggle brought G.I.s running downstairs who pulled the Pollacks off of me. ("Pollack" was not politically incorrect back then. My two friends didn't mind referring to themselves as "Pollacks" at all.)

The next day, the two Poles were more than slightly hung over. I wasn't sure they had any clear notion what had happened in the library. A 10-mile forced march with full equipment was scheduled for that night. In the heat of a Texas summer. It would have been murder to do it during the day, though the Texas-size mosquitos wouldn't be out like at night. I must point out that the M1 rifle carried by a "98-lb. weakling" weighs exactly the same as the one carried by the 250-pound athlete. True also of gas mask, canteen, bed roll, ammunition, folding shovel, bayonet, steel helmet.... O.K., O.K. My shoes and socks weighed less.

Everyone knew that the "meat wagon" was following on our heels. No one wanted to experience the disgrace of having to be picked up by it. All marched steadily along for starters. Little by little, though, as mile after mile went by, guys started lagging behind. The heat and the humidity were just too much. Finally, the two Pollacks—well ahead of me in the ranks initially—fell back, fell back, until they were just ahead of me. Keeping up the pace, I finally had to pass them by. Sgt. Coulter, who not only kept up but also went back and forth checking things out and offering encouragement, happened to be there at that moment. "Hey, look at Rugged!" he exclaimed. And "Rugged," I was, from then on. No one expressed it derisively. It just

became a nickname like any other. Like that of Buck Private Charles "Half-track" Hall, for example. Because of his huge feet. Half-tracks are armored vehicles with tank treads in back and regular wheels and tires in front; hence, the name. Half-track's nickname should have been "IQ," he was such a brain. The poor Pollacks, thanks to their untimely swigs of whiskey, had to ride back to camp in the meat wagon—an ordinary Army truck covered by a tarp with benches on each side.

On boarding a bus one day (to Dallas, as I recall), I saw that there was only one other passenger. Not wanting to seem unfriendly, anti-social or shy (What Hall could be like that?), I went to the rear of the bus and sat next to the gentleman. The driver immediately began gesturing wildly to me—strange behavior beyond my comprehension. Finally he calmed down enough to signal that I was to come forward and it was explained that Whites could sit only in the front of the vehicle and Blacks in the back. It filled me with regret later that I hadn't defied the "law," but at the time I felt rather stunned, dazed, and bewildered. I had grown up in an area where there were very few Blacks and had never had one single Black acquaintance or friend. Darn! I could have been like Rosa Parks! How I admire her! By George, she was sitting where they didn't allow it and challenged them to try to do something about it!

On other maneuvers at Camp Howze, our platoon came upon a fenced-in area far removed from all else. Inside the fence, running an obstacle course, were African-American enlisted men supervised by White officers. Our eyes bulged out to see how athletic, fast, vigorous, and strong they were. "Wow!" some of us exclaimed. I'm glad they're on our side!" How sad, I felt, that "we" had not been whole-heartedly on "their" side. How could this be? All Americans should have been—and ought to be now—like D'Artagnan and the Three Musketeers: "One for all and all for one."

After taps and "Lights out!" I would kneel at the side of my bunk and silently pray—repeated in the morning before daylight and reveille. Live buglers back then. No recordings. Only "boogie woogie *bugelers* of Company B," as in the popular song. One night as I prayed, the soldier in the next bunk staggered in blind drunk, stumbled over me and let loose a stream of base invectives not in harmony with the tenor of my prayer. After that, I knelt on the opposite side

Before we shipped out for the ETO (European theater of Operations), we had a few days of furlough. Arriving at 526 27th Street, Ogden, Utah, I opened the door and heard my dearly beloved mother say, "Don't you step on my clean floor!" She was in the kitchen mopping and thought that my dad or Delbert had come home. On realizing it was her favorite son, she immediately stepped on her clean floor in a rush to take me in her arms and smother me with hugs and kisses. Favorite son? Of course! Don't you understand? It's the one in whom we've had to invest the most time and effort to get them on the straight and narrow. Now kindly don't inquire in which of my angelic favorite daughters* I've had to make an investment like that! John, *the beloved*... another reason why we gave him that name.... is absolutely, without question, our favorite son!

I think it was at that time I first met my niece Sherlene, Tracy and Ida Rose's firstborn and probably less than one year old at the time. She was so utterly darling and adorable I fell in love with her and resolved to have at least one daughter myself. Well, after John, we had nothing but daughters. We didn't even bother to select boys' names any more. And, oh, miracle, look how unbelievably sensitive, refined and cultured I am today thanks to them and Merrill!

On September 15, 1944, our basic training at an end, we entrained for Camp Shanks, New Jersey, and soon boarded the Santa Maria. Bunk beds stacked five high, with barely enough room between to roll over in your sleep. Part of a long troop ship convoy. After about eight days we saw some white stucco houses far off to the right. "Casablanca," some of us knowledgeable ones exclaimed. "Oh, no! We're headed for Italy," where we knew some of the fiercest most difficult battles of the war were being fought. However, troops from Italy had already landed in southern France and taken Marseille and that's where we disembarked. Little I was among those assigned to unload all the heavy duffel bags and equipment. I've never felt such a flow of adrenaline in my life. About to enter combat! I ran up and down—up to five flights of stairs each time—carrying that stuff up and then down again for more. Up and down, up and down till early morning, and I hardly felt fatigued. Finally we were able to rejoin our squads where they had set up tents in an outlying area.

The next morning, as I recall, was Sunday, and with the assistance of a Protestant chaplain, as group leader of the L.D.S. servicemen of the 103rd Infantry Division, I organized a testimony meeting. The last one until after war's end in Innsbruck, Austria, when we survivors were able to meet again. What joy.... and what sorrow for those not there!

We had one day of leave in Marseille and then we were on our way, trucking up the spectacularly beautiful Rhône River valley. One of us was always posted at the right-front corner of each truck, head and torso poked out above the canvas tarp to spot enemy planes or any other kind of hostile activity. When it was my turn, the wind slapping me in the face—cold, overcast weather—I sang my heart out with beloved hymns and songs: "Give me some men who are stout-hearted men," "Thanks be to God for Love Divine, for hopes that 'round my heart entwine," "Jesus, the very thought of thee with rapture fills my breast," "Abide with me," and many others, so beautiful, consoling, and fiber-firming. Firming up every fiber of one's soul. To a lesser extent, the fibers of one's body under extreme stress. As the Apostle James put it, "We can control a horse with a bit and a ship with a rudder, but can't control our tongues..." or as I soon discovered in combat, certain aspects of "biology."

Our first day of combat.... Near Epinal. The regiment was approaching the front. Had to be. Where else would we be going? The sky was still overcast. Rather cold weather. We were bundled up. "Hey, listen to that thunder," somebody said. "Looks like we're in for rain." That's how totally green and untrained the troops were. Rain? You bet. We got rained on good! That wasn't thunder. It was artillery fire, and all kinds of shells would be raining down on us troops in no time at all, to be joined shortly by bullets and land mines.

I'll never forget, as they became casualties, the laugh, the jest on my buddies' lips. Bill Schor, killed almost immediately. Blown to bits. Moments before, he was declaiming comically, professorially, "Our artillery shoots one long, one short, and then one.... the theory is.... right on target. The Germans triangulate you. One at the apex, one at each corner and then one right on center. Blooey! You're gone!"

We were only a few feet apart. Bill was taken, I was spared. I resolved then that I

would try to live a larger life, no matter how long it might turn out to be. Large enough to fill—at least a tiny bit—the void left by the loss of such special comrades, fated to be unsung and largely unremembered, perhaps, but not by me. Gifted comrades, capable in the future, if they had survived, of achieving great little things and great big things. To keep them in remembrance I've kept Old Glory in my office and flying from a staff outside our house. It's been my custom to remember them as I salute it every morning and evening and whenever I pass by. And oh, if I could only make my life more useful, of greater service, fighting on for what so many gave their lives, in my own unit and in other outfits and theaters of operations, including many boyhood friends. I feel that I'm always failing in this but continue to kick myself in the behind to get with it.

We had reached a wooded area on a hillside. Nothing in sight. It never occurred to us, and it was never pointed out in training that the enemy would have binoculars. Bill Schor was the first casualty and then Corporal Hardy stepped on a land mine. Horribly mutilated, in terrible pain, he got out the words with a strangled laugh, "Hey, don't cry for me, boys, I'm going home." The rest of us were paralyzed. Afraid to move, to take one step—even to take better cover. That's when my admiration for the medics became unbounded. Here they quickly came, summoned by a field radio, bearing a stretcher, unarmed, their arm bands with a red cross on a white field their only—laughably theoretical—protection. Where others feared to tread, risking the loss of legs or their lives, the medics moved swiftly, placing Hardy on the stretcher, hurrying him off to an Army ambulance and then to a field hospital back behind the front line. Poor Bill Schor's shattered corpse was left for later removal after the platoon moved forward.

Total casualties for the 103rd Infantry Division were listed as 9,369—a turnover of 66.5%. Non-combat casualties, presumably primarily from illness, are included in the figure. When the fighting was over, an exhausted Private First Class Wendell H. Hall, Serial number 19153139, was sadly jubilant to be among the 33.5%.

Though over fifty-five years have passed, my remembrances are clouded with anger. How could the American High Command be so utterly incompetent! They are

honored now. One was elected president. General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, was considered a genius. Didn't a single one of the geniuses have even a casual, passing glance at the potential battlefields to check out obstacles and dangers and determine what weapons, equipment, and tactics might be required to cope with them so the troops could be properly armed, equipped and trained? The nature of the terrain.... Couldn't even one of them take a dogface's look at it? *Dogfaces*, that's what we were. There were several *impolite* cognomens, too. Tens of thousands of dogfaces, loaded into landing craft, often having to wade or swim to the beaches, loaded down with equipment and supplies, half-drowned or drowning, many dying under intense enemy fire. Surviving only to meet the hedgerows of Normandy. Banks of earth over six feet high topped with trees and bushes. Allied advances against them were measured in yards. Not one single officer involved in planning the assault had taken them into account. All their marvelous maps had absolutely no **earthly** value. What could have been a mad dash for Paris turned into a near disaster resulting in the unnecessary death and disablement of many thousands because no one in charge had the brains of a Sergeant Coulter. Why all the parading and **Tench hut!**? (Attention!) The troops could have learned a lot more about combat from reading a Spanish Civil War novel than from all the months of so-called basic training. Basic? They scarcely touched one base!

Well, generals are looking at the big picture, the grand strategy. They play their games. Well, in the future, let them get down to earth, literally, and check things out with the dogfaces! And in the future, make on-the-spot battlefield promotions of sergeants like Sandy, if not to the rank of general then as a general's aide-de-camp with authority and instructions to speak up.

Yes, war is hell.... er... uh.... *heck,* as I jocularly claim to have discovered when I noticed that there were no provisions for plumbing. I have never cursed since my beloved mother Florence washed my mouth out with soap after I spoke a word I'd picked up somewhere in our enviable Utah environment.

The story is told of Mark Twain that, distressed by Twain's habitual cursing, his

sweet, dainty wife Olivia decided to cure him of it by letting him hear how he sounded. She knew the words, having heard them more than enough, so when the right occasion presented itself, she let out what she thought was a horrible stream of frightful obscenities. Twain just shook his head and said, "Honey, them's the words, but that ain't the music!"

Well, in one of their most frequent bouts of cursing in combat, the dogfaces didn't use the words but they very definitely used the music. On any occasion, in any situation at all, someone would bitterly mimic F.D.R.'s infamous words: "Ah hates wah. Eleanah hates wah." (Wife Eleanor, too!) President Roosevelt had promised the mothers of America that their sons would never go to war. Music to Hitler's ears. The U.S. would not resist him. The sons of American mothers would not go to war. A typical liberal. Saying what sounds good. What gets votes. Not thinking or caring what the import or consequences of the words might be. It's a leader's job to lead. Churchill understood immediately the deep danger in allowing Hitler to march into the Rhineland, unimpeded, barely scolded, to retake it contrary to the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. If the Nazis had been stopped then (and they easily could have been), there would have been no World War II, no Holocaust.

Our country's next war—in which my brother Delbert was involved—came about when Dean Acheson, Harry S. Truman's secretary of state, informed the world that North Korea was not within the U.S.'s sphere of interest. So encouraged, the NKs invaded the south, and we're still embroiled in the consequences of that.

Those first few days of combat were a blur. The next thing I remember—vividly—is entering upon utter chaos in a shelled-out town still under shellfire. Suddenly a lieutenant I'd never seen before shouted at me, "You, soldier! I need a driver." Apparently his had become a casualty. So I jumped in the Jeep and since I'd never really driven before, I just clashed gears, accidently went into reverse instead of forward, and in a few seconds was out of a great new assignment as the looey disgustedly kicked me out and took over. Surges of adrenaline sometimes make possible the impossible, but they only made my impossibly inept driving worse. I was almost vomiting adrenaline.

Our introduction to shellfire was non-stop. ("Hey, hold it! We've already been introduced!") Know why I still get up at 5:45 in the morning? Because the German 88s, the world's most accurate, most feared artillery, began our precision morning wake-up call at 6:00 a.m. Well, not always. Often enough to establish a routine. I wanted to get behind a tree and get my daily duty done before I had an accident, if you know what I mean. The thing I dreaded most was ending up a sad lifeless corpse with its bare butt showing. With luck I could finish by 5:59 before my *Arsch* (German for *arse*) froze off, having to let down two pairs of pants, the bottom half of my long johns, and then button up again. No zippers or velcro in those days. Coldest winter of the century up till then, we learned later. Try fumbling with buttons in sub-zero temperatures. All those months—rain, mud, sleet, snow, ice and not even an outhouse.

What an embarrassment! Oh, what shame to mention it! I *did* have an accident. When at Lewis Jr. High School in Ogden, Utah, one of my best friends, Don Smalley, let me read his great collection of *Tarzan* and *Lucky Aces* magazines. *Lucky Aces* had great stories about World War I aces, Spads, Fokkers, the Red Baron, and all that. A certain episode snared my fancy. German artillery barrages caught some aces too close to the front and one of them dove into a pig sty in a desperate move to survive. Hilarious.

A day or a week or two later.... We didn't know it.... Who'd ever heard of the Vozgheez Mountains?... But, as we later read about it after the war, we were advancing through the Vosges [Vohzh] Mountains, headed for the Maginot Line, the Siegfried Line and the Rhine River.... An icy rain was falling. Under fire, as usual, scrambling to get behind even a little cover, what **I** dove into was.... chicken S-word. I crashed through the partly demolished wire of a chicken run, lost my balance and fell right into.... it. Of course there were no chickens. They apparently had "retreated" right along with the German troops and the DPs. Burocratese for refugees. DP.... Displaced Person. I survived that but just before nightfall I found myself in a stable. Weird to us Amis (Americans). The animals were stabled below and the people lived on the second floor of the peasant houses.

In that part of France, having the biggest pile of manure seemed to be a matter of

prestige. Well, I'll skip.... (How at the edge of one, peasants would hitch down or up their clothes and....) I was in the stable.... It appears that the DPs had left so suddenly they had to leave their manure behind. Hey, they had and have my total sympathy. I'm not making a joke of this. On their fertilizer-starved fields it was a precious commodity. All commercial nitrate was going into the production of gunpowder, shells, bombs, land mines, booby traps, explosive charges for the demolition of bridges, etc.

Valuable stuff. They even pumped it in liquid form into wagons like barrels on wheels and sprayed it on the fields. *Barnyard schnaps,* we learned to call it. Ho! Once we arrived at a deserted barnyard and innocent Corporal -ylie (name partly suppressed to protect the innocent), seeing a pump and knowing no better, took out his canteen cup, grabbed hold of the handle—while the rest of us stared in astonishment and anticipation—and started pumping vigorously away. When a brown yellow stream came out, he jumped back, let out a stream of brown yellow cuss words, and about threw up.

So I was in the stable when the shelling started up again. What happened then was not synesthetic—a term unknown to me back then. When the shelling stopped momentarily—no doubt to reposition the guns in order to evade U.S. return fire—all I could do was prop my M1 rifle and just-issued "grease gun" against a railing, take off my belt with canteen, a couple of grenades, a holstered Colt 45, trench knife, assorted ammunition, and hang it next to them.... undrape my big olive drab overcoat, hang it beside the belt.... stoop above the manure.... my combat jacket short enough to be no problem.... let down my two pairs of pants.... retrieve my so-called trench knife.... twist around.... Biology coming up.... and like an amateur contortionist doing a never before practiced act, I jaggedly cut out the rear end from the bottom of my long handles. The best I could. Not good at all. Lucky no eyes there, not even a rat's, to witness this and further mortify the "spit" out of me. Residual "spit." If any.

Taking my boots off, undressing, standing in my stocking feet in S-word to remove everything soiled was not an option. The thought of ending up a naked corpse on a filthy stable floor, my congealed blood curdled with manure, was beyond unbearable.

I pulled the mutilated long johns and double pair of pants back up again, rushing it, with shellfire, mortar fire, hellfire, potentially coming my way again at any moment. I felt forlorn, dishonored, disgraced. Dirty. *A sad sack,* as the G.I.s expressed it. A sad sad sack of S-word.

Months later I was able to take two showers. The first time.... near the front, in the snow, out in the open at the edge of a forest.... the portable equipment broke down. I had just lathered up when the gasoline-operated pump failed. All I could do was wipe the soap off with snow and get dressed again. No change of clothes, of course, till the war was over. At least I don't remember seeing my duffel bag again till then. Some of my stuff was damp and pages of the few books I was able to pack had been damaged by moisture.

Moving gingerly away from the mess in the stable, my *derrière* a bit moist and a little drafty, I climbed upstairs to explore the living quarters of the partially destroyed house, found an intact bed, and on it.... a wonderful, incredible *Federbett* (feather bed). The lap of luxury in those or any circumstances. I didn't know where my buddies were and hoped they wouldn't try to find me, now that total darkness was descending. I knelt and said my prayers and climbed into the glorious Federbett "muddy" boots and all. I didn't take my turn at guard duty that night and, totally exhausted, slept like a little child. Ah, sleep, blessèd sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of self-esteem and honor. I didn't wake up until you know when.

When I rejoined my squad, everybody was bitching about how the lousy K-rations had given them the trots. Nothing could be more obvious. Everybody knew it: The K-rations were to blame. "Yeah. K-rations laced with shellfire," I thought. Any other explanation was inadmissable, even though everybody knew that everybody else was scared "spitless" too. Not a one of us was fearless (Show us an honest man who'd deny it), but we managed to control our fear and keep going.

All we had was K-rations. (Can't remember having the more substantial, nutritious C-rations, but must have had them two or three times.) In the little K-ration box about the same size and rectangular shape of a margarine container: a chunk of

cheese, some crackers, a hunk of chocolate, a little sealed envelope of soup mix (dehydrated onion, a few spices), plus about four cigarettes. Amazingly, my four best buddies in our squad of ten didn't smoke! Practically everyone else was always after our cigs. They could be very injurious to a soldier's health. The glow of a lighted cigarette in the dusk or dark could attract bullets. The smell of the smoke could reveal your presence and location.

Bless that soup mix! Once when we were holed up in an abandoned house, I found a potato or two in the cellar which I immediately liberated, carefully peeled and cut up, placed in my canteen cup, added the soup mix, and had the most delicious soup of my life. Don't recall how I heated it, but matches came with the cigarettes. To this day, potato soup remains my favorite.

I've never been a hunter. An incident while still in the Vosges Mountains cured me of any inclination to be one. We had several Jeeps in our company with machine guns mounted on them. You know, of course, what a hart is. A European red deer. Two guys in one of the Jeeps ran a little hart to ground and riddled it with rounds from the machine gun. A beautiful little stag. What a relief from our steady diet of K-rations! Did I join in the feast. You bet! To use just once more the Americanism you can bet I deplore (when it punctuates every other word): You bet I did. But since then I've just had no stomach for shooting such splendid wild creatures.

That night, still at the house with the cellar, Marvin "Finkel" Feldstein was outside on guard when a screaming meemie came corkscrewing in. Scariest sound known to mankind. Psychological warfare at its most horrendous. The idea was to scare the enemy to death. They sounded like a series of huge gates screeching open on rusty hinges with varying wavering pitches. The gates of hell.... The eruption when they exploded seemed by contrast like just an afterthought, tremendous though it was. Everyone was immediately awake, of course, and a few seconds later Finkel came rushing in screaming, "Sc sc sc sc screa sc screa sc sc sc sc sc screa sc sc scream sc sc sc ream r r r rea r r r r ream r r reamy sc sc screaming m m m mee m m mee m m m m mee m m m meem m m m m mee m m m m MEEMIES!" As if the rest of us didn't already have some small intimation of the fact! Thanks to him, our uncontainable laughter momentarily relieved our fear.

Yes, Martin was a stutterer, though those sc sc sc sc screa sc screaming m m meemies were enough to make anyone stutter. To my mind, the most difficult work expected of us on earth is learning to love our neighbors as ourselves, lending assistance wherever/whenever possible. One must be very unobtrusive and careful, of course, in every circumstance. It is so human of all of us to be so touchy. A show of being overly concerned, overly caring, the slightest bit preoccupied, could be counterproductive. But be a real friend, is what I wanted to be. Accept others as they are—even though they *are* what they are! Accept that I was in need of improvements myself. Show appreciation for Martin's great qualities, not the least of which was the indomitable way in which he handled his difficulty. He didn't let it stop him one bit. If he had something to say, anything he wanted to say at all, he said it. Let the stutters fall where they may! I admired him for this very sincerely. He was humorous, insightful, and just a great guy to be around. He was from L.A. and was always saying something about Hollywood and Vine.

One day when we had overrun enemy positions—in Alsace now—Harold John Howell, my best buddy, my "foxhole" buddy, and I came across a foxhole almost hidden in the snow. We were approaching the Maginot Line, where the Germans had set up no MLD (main line of defense). The French had constructed it with all guns facing east—a useless line when outflanked by Hitler's treacherous Blitzkrieg through Belgium. I was Harold's best man in Gainesville, where Harold was married not long before we boarded trains for Camp Shanks, New Jersey, and embarked for Europe. Though a Quaker (a member of the Society of Friends), Harold had not asked for deferment as a pacifist. He wanted to do his part. Quakers are such wonderful people. But they occasionally can lose their tempers and patience. Have you seen *The Friendly Persuasion*, based on Jessamyn West's novel, starring Gary Cooper? Remember how the wife and mother (Dorothy McGuire) cheerfully fed the Confederate troops and fully lived up to her principles until a Reb started after her pet goose with roast goose in his eyes? That cooked *his* goose! She took after him with a broom.

After the war was over and children came along, the Howell's first child was given the name John Wendell Howell. The Hall's first child was named John Wendell

Hall. Would Harold have risked his life to save mine? Yup. Would I have done the same for him? Yup. Yet, after some 60 years, I'm still shouldering the guilt of something that happened way back in basic training.

We were engaged in some kind of hand-to-hand going at each other as a company and Colonel Donovan P. Yuell, our regimental commander, as was not uncommon, was there with his riding crop dutifully flicking his highly shined boots as he observed and critiqued our performance. Harold was my immediate opponent. At one point I instinctively shot my knee up, a totally reflex action to ward off hurt to me (my complex conscience instantly assured me) and caught him in the groin. Yikes! My best friend! I still flinch remembering the look and the rebuke he gave me. I've since reflected that in true friendship we must not only be prepared to lay down our life for another but be strong, restrained, and stoic enough to overcome our natural instincts and impulses for another's good.

The hole in the ground was the best foxhole seen by soldier eyes. It was deep, had shelves dug into the dirt inside, was commodious by any foxhole standard and covered with logs and dirt on top. How it was dug still mystifies me. Of course fear of booby traps made us very cautious, but finding nothing suspicious, we liberated it. All the talk you hear about foxholes.... Try digging one in frozen ground with a little folding shovel. Dynamite would work if you could get some. That morning the German 88 wake-up serenade had already started up and I had to complete my matinal ritual in a *santiamén!* (a holy amen). You couldn't have set your watch by German punctuality *that* morning! No doubt the trains were no longer running on time in Germany with *Nationalsozialistische* (Nazi) precision and everything was going to pot.

Harold and I darted for the foxhole. Blocking the entrance in a wild effort to scramble into it was a shrieking second lieutenant from another outfit whom we'd never seen before. He had been hit by shrapnel. As shells whistled overhead, some exploding nearby, Harold and I turned him over flat on the trampled snow and checked out the back of his heavy fur-lined jacket. It had a jagged hole in it, alright. Harold took out his trench knife and started slashing away. An emergency. No time to waste. A beautiful jacket. A shame. Harold cut through three or four layers. Just

before encountering flesh, he discovered a jagged chunk of shrapnel about the size of a large kernel of half-popped popcorn. No blood. The lieutenant hadn't even been scratched. Ah, man.... War *is* hell! Harold and I had only one night in the luxurious hole before moving.... back! The first and only time we retreated.

A *glorious* retreat. Hard to estimate how far we back-pedalled, but we stopped at a little French town (Civilization!) where we spent the night. Ah, that was so wonderful. We each accommodated ourselves the best we could in whatever shelter we could find. I myself curled up on the floor of a saloon (a *bistro*?) and had the most comfortable, comforting sleep in a long time. Ah, sleep, gentle sleep, that knits up the raveled sleeve of once-intact pride after an unheroic retreat.... Surviving, however, to fight onward, ever onward, the following day.... and days. Hold on there! You must pardon my phraseology! That was a brilliant strategic withdrawal, not a retreat.

The Little Battle of the Bulge (a salient projecting out dangerously far) had just begun. The first evidence of it: A Sherman tank that had passed us only moments before suddenly came roaring back in full retreat. With no preamble or explanation—obeying radioed orders—Corporal Wyborny all at once shouted out, "Let's get out of here!" We got out of there at full speed to avoid being cut off by a pincer movement. As it turned out, this was a German feint to the south to deceive troops engaged soon afterward in the vicinity of Bastogne, Belgium in the big or real Battle of the Bulge, where defiant General Anthony W. McAuliffe uttered his famous response to a demand to surrender: "Nuts!"

A few weeks later, our platoon and other troops were loaded up and trucked to Strasbourg, the newly liberated capital of Alsace. We had no idea what was going on. As usual. Troops not at the front (nine out of every ten men) received *The Stars and Stripes*, in which a certain amount of news and Bill Mauldin's famous "Up Front" cartoons were available to non-combatants—not depicted by Bill. Dogfaces up front knew nothing. With scant supplies of toilet paper sometimes running out, we'd have been glad to have a copy of *The Stars and Stripes* to wipe our behinds with. Of course for that—most of the time—we had snow. The troops were arranged in order and

marched up to a platform to present arms as Anthony W. McAuliffe took over as the new commanding general of the 103rd Infantry Division. Only much later, on learning of the other Battle of the Bulge, did we realize what a great honor this was for us.... and for McAuliffe. See? All that parading around in basic training served a purpose after all. I wish I had a photo of that. To any drill sergeant's eye, Infantry or Marine, the troops would have looked way beyond bedraggled. Hey, it was great. We were worn out but alive and away from the front!

Alsace-Lorraine.... that unfortunate area bordering the Rhine which has passed back and forth so many times between Germany and France that the inhabitants must feel like pawns in the grip of forces beyond their control on chess squares coveted for their strategic importance and the immense value accrued from the inhabitants' talents and labor. They are bilingual in German and French and have great traditions and customs. During a momentary break in the fighting, our squad found itself in a small Alsatian village. Reconnoitering through the rubble-jumbled streets, we encountered a friendly looking blacksmith standing before his smithy.

Lou Lifson, from Minneapolis—one of the four best buddies—was fluent in several languages, including Yiddish (from German *Jüddisch*—Jewish). In German, /j/ is pronounced like English /y/. It is basically German, with additions from Hebrew and other languages and usually written in Hebrew characters—right to left. Lou struck up a conversation with the blacksmith and found that his son, a soldier in the *Wehrmacht,* had just passed by in full retreat a few hours earlier. The uncertain course of war—in this instance, the fortunes of war—brought us back to the village a few days later. We eagerly looked up our friend. By the blacksmith's side was a nervous young guy just our age who could have been one of *us*. In civilian clothes. Our orders were to turn all German deserters in for confinement in prisoner of war camps. No way could we do that!

One more of the many follow-up wishes that have nagged me long afterward. The wish to know what happened eventually to the young man. Did he find happiness? A wife, a home, children? Amidst so much destruction (his father's smithy escaped it), how did the people manage to rebuild? No doubt about one thing. Though they cherished Germanic aspects of their culture—very high culture indeed, in many fields—

they undoubtedly were overjoyed to escape from Nazi Germany and become part of France again.

At Christmas time in Alsace, we found ourselves in a small deserted town atop a bluff overlooking a wide valley. Freezing cold. Somebody found a sled and we took turns warming up a little as we swished down the only street on it and then carried it back up the slope again. Thanks, little girl or boy whose sled it was, for giving us that rejuvenating respite from the rigors of adults' war! We juvenile semi-adults, most of us just barely or not yet old enough to vote (eligible at age 21 back then), left it in good shape.

It was there that we saw Captain Sunbake right up front at the front for the first time. Colonel Donovan P. Yuell (with a name like that, he should have been the commanding general) wanted to inspect the front at our position so the captain had to come too. Yuell came right where our squad was and entered an abandoned house where I happened to be at that moment. I was right at Yuell's side as he looked out over the wide valley toward the distant enemy. A right guy, I concluded. Smelled of the sweat of a man—even in that cold. The man was an active man, always in motion. At the front without his riding crop.... I missed that.

It miffed me that Colonel Yuell failed to hand along his binoculars to me for a look-see so I could also survey the situation and co-cogitate with him our next move against the *boches* (a French term derived from *tête de caboche,* cabbage or kraut head—an etymology which I could only speculate about at the time since I'd had only high school Spanish back then and you could ask for a better clue from a brother... er sister... Romance Language to *boche* than Spanish *repollo* or *col,* as in coleslaw).

Somewhere out there beyond the range of my government issue wire-framed eyeglasses the *boches* no doubt were preparing to shell the hel- out of the two of us if they had been aware of our whereabouts and what one of us, at least, or perhaps both of us was or were cogitating. "What was I doing there?" you might very well ask. Well, first of all, I got to that house first... the unforeseeable consequences of war, hard at work as usual, seeing to it in this instance that I would have the sense to combat frostbite by coming upon and entering into that house. How was I to know

that the colonel would come driving up (that is driven up by his fearless driver) right up to the very front of the front?

Colonel Donovan P. Yuell was a courageous son of a whatever aspersion the troops were casting on their own sex back then. You never saw any other colonel or even a general right up there. And that's a fact. Inasmuch as it was cold as bloody blue blazes, if I'd known the colonel was coming, I would have had a fire burning to give him a warm reception—except that at the first sign of smoke the *boche* 88s, the most accurate and feared artillery of the war (I keep repeating that), would have given him a really warm one, blowing the house and us to bits of thither and yon.

The second time we saw the captain, we were heading up to the not at all distant front when we were suddenly strafed by Messerschmidts. We dove for the lowest ground around at the edge of the dirt road. Suddenly, the roar of a jeep..... The captain, heading the wrong way. "Got to report this to the colonel.... Got to report...." with a wailing sound produced in part, one could charitably suggest, by the doppler effect at that speed. One of the guys by me rose up enough to holler in his loudest voice. "**USE YOUR RADIO!**" A racing jeep would be a far more inviting target than lumps at the roadside. Ever try outrunning a Messerschmidt? Don't. Just drop to the ground alive or else you'll drop dead. Comforting thought: You might be dead before you hit the ground in either case.

The captain of Cannon Company, it was reported about the same time, had taken refuge in the cellar of a shelled-out house with only the floor above partially intact and wouldn't come out. Poor shell-shocked guy! He was passing his excrement up in a helmet, afraid to climb out and expose his bare buttocks to merciless shell-fire. A sad fact of life: Some things, there's no way out of doing them ourselves. Not even an emperor can have someone else "go potty" for him.... A comforting fact to the downtrodden and oppressed. Here's another fact of life, its certainty bolstered by a crude, frequently snorted out G.I. expression: Top dogs like emperors and certain officers think their S-word doesn't stink.

But there was Abby. First Lieutenant "Abby" Abendroth. A high school teacher before the war. Solid as a rock.... Rough hewn, smooth-limned granite. A real man's

man. Strong. Virtuous. A word he wouldn't flinch from. He embodied it. Everybody could see it. He didn't parade it. Didn't have to. A man of few words. A few words did it with a man like that.

Our platoon's second lieutenant, nicknamed "School Boy," got fairly good grades from us. At least he had the continuing good sense to inquire of Sgt. Coulter, "What-'ll we do now, Sandy?"

A horrendous turn of events in one sense for us—but a sure sign that the war was ending—was when corpses of soldiers too young to shave were found among the dead. Hitler was sending young boys and old fathers to die. Another horrible spectacle was horses' corpses. The German war machine was literally running out of gas. No motor transport.

When I zigzagged through a fortification in the Siegfried Line—knees and adrenaline pumping all-out, bullets zinging past—my buddies and I arrived on the other side to be shocked by an incredibly ghastly sight. Dead horses, smashed wagons, wreckage everywhere. The enemy totally dispersed. Corporal Ashburn, from Tennessee, an irrepressible joker, caught and mounted one of the surviving horses and rode it down to a castle on the not too distant Rhine. A fabled castle on the Rhine.... From which some of the troops looted random treasures. I might have remonstrated but.... already *un fait accompli*. Ashburn came out with a knight's helmet and a lance. He mounted the horse and went whooping around like a 10-year-old. We all felt equally exhilarated, having come so far alive. Finally tiring of his once-in-a-lifetime game, Ashburn just threw the priceless relics to the ground. I won't pretend to be holier than they. I strive to be a worthy Christian but fall short. We will be judged according to our lights and I had received great light. As Mark Twain said—I will quote it again—"Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example." The truth of this hurts, but should never deter anyone from doing what's right. I wouldn't have been able to put up with myself had I followed their example. I was excited to look at, not carry off, some invaluable artifacts. Twain meant this half ironically, of course. Good examples aren't sissies, little goody two shoes. Targets so often of derision, they have to be strong and struggle hard. They have to put up with a lot.

B-17 Flying Fortresses had bombed the Siegfried Line immediately before the infantry assault. Shortly before that, our platoon was as close to ground as we could

get as a self-propelled 155mm howitzer mounted on a modified Sherman tank blasted away at a seemingly impregnable bunker. "Oh, no!" we groaned to ourselves. We knew what would happen next. It did. After firing a predetermined number of rounds, the howitzer clanked away at full speed. Who was still there to take the return fire? A sixty-four dollar question. You get three guesses.

When, a few minutes later, the Flying Fortresses appeared.... What an awesome sight!.... My buddies and I could have stood up and cheered. An unsafe procedure. We cheered wildly in our hearts. Without the U.S. Army Air Corps, I felt we would never have made it past those fortifications.

In retrospect, I deeply regret that in the euphoria of another battle won, our squad took no advantage of the opportunity to clamber up to the top of the Siegfried bunker and raise the flag. Every squad, naturally, despite the inconvenience, carried around a large American flag to heroically raise just in case a great photo op (opportunity) presented itself. Oh, well, we were only infantrymen. Let's hear it for the five Marines and the Navy medic who raised the flag at Iwo Jima! A courageously, bloodily won symbolic opportunity. Just our dogface platoon's luck, though! It would have availed us nothing. Not a single fearless photographer ever tagged along to click shots of us in action. Sometimes some were right up front though, no doubt.

There was no separate Air Force then. There was an Army Air Corps, so the pilots and crews could ironically sing along with the rest of the troops, "Oh, the Army made a man out of me, a man out of me, a man out of me. Oh, the Army made a man out of me, A MAN OUT OF ME!" The infantry troops likewise liked to sing, "Oh, it's whisky, whisky, whisky that makes us feel so frisky, in the corps, in the corps! Oh, it's whisky, whisky, whisky that makes us feel so frisky IN THE UNITED STATES AIR CORPS! My eyes are dim, I cannot see, I have not got my specs with me, I HAVE NOT GOT MY SPECS WITH ME!

It was B-17 bombs that had cruelly destroyed the faithful, innocent horses.

In World War II, movie stars and other celebrities volunteered to entertain the troops in all theaters of operation. Bob Hope's appearances are well known and applauded. The dogfaces at the front were not entertained. The entertainers were kept

well out of danger (though Marlene Dietrich got close enough to the front, I later learned, to come under shellfire). I didn't know about these fine supportive gestures until I received my history of the 103rd "Cactus" Division after the war. On page 112 is a photo of Marlene, her skirt hitched up enough to show a shapely leg and a garter with the Cactus patch on it. The shoulder patch of the division is a circular emblem with a three-armed gray-green cactus on a 3/4 gold background at top, a 1/4 blue one at the base.

Mention is made that Marlene always sang *Lili Marleen* (obligatorily) as part of her act. This German song, so popular with both Axis and Allied troops, didn't always make its way to the front—at least to "Rugged" and his buddies. It was only in my first German class after the war that I learned to love it. I didn't know exactly what a "*Kaserne*" was like until arriving in Vienna to study at the University of Vienna on a Fulbright scholarship. The large quadrangular multiple-story building constructed of stone and enclosing a training area/parade ground, with other urban structures tight up against it, was a novelty to me. Such a contrast with the rows of wooden barracks in the U.S. I walked past the *Kaserne* frequently and found myself spontaneously humming or singing *Lili Marleen* :

Vor der Kaserne,	There by the barracks
Vor dem großen Tor	By the massive door,
Stand eine Laterne	Stood a tall street lantern
Und steht sie noch davor.	And it stands there still.
So woll'n wir uns da wiederseh'n	That's where we wanted to meet again,
Bei der Laterne wollen wir steh'n	By the lantern we two would stand
Wie einst Lili Marleen,	As once, Lili Marleen,
Wie einst Lili Marleen.	As once, Lili Marleen.
Unsere beiden Schatten	Together our two shadows
Sah'n wie einer aus	Looked like one alone,
Daß wir so lieb uns hatten	That we were so in love,
Das sah man gleich daraus	All could see at once.
Und alle Leute soll'n es seh'n	And all would see us once again
Wenn wir bei der Laterne steh'n	Standing under the lantern there
Wie einst Lili Marleen.	As once, Lili Marleen,
Wie einst Lili Marleen.	As once, Lili Marleen.

Schon rief der Posten,	Then shouted the sentry,
Sie blasen Zapfenstreich	That is call to quarters;
Das kann drei Tage kosten	Could cost you three days' leave.
Kam'rad, ich komm' sogleich	Comrade, I'm on my way.
Da sagten wir auf Wiedersehen	That's when we had to say goodbye,
Wie gerne wollt ich mit dir geh'n	How I did long to go with you,
Mit dir Lili Marleen,	With you, Lili Marleen,
Mit dir Lili Marleen,	With you, Lili Marleen.
Deine Schritte kennt sie,	The lantern knows your footstep,
Deinen zieren Gang	Your lovely, graceful walk,
Alle Abend brennt sie,	Lights up ev'ry evening,
Doch mich vergaß sie lang	Forgot me long ago.
Und sollte mir ein Leid gescheh'n	And should misfortune me befall,
Wer wird bei der Laterne stehen	Who'll stand there with you as before,
Mit dir Lili Marleen?	With you, Lili Marleen,
Mit dir Lili Marleen?	With you, Lili Marleen,
Aus dem stillen Raume,	From the heavens above us,
Aus der Erde Grund	From the depths of earth,
Hebt mich wie im Traume	Your lips, as if I dream,
Dein verliebte Mund.	Rise up searching mine.
Wenn sich die späten Nebel drehn	Enveloped by the evening mists,
Werd' ich bei der Laterne steh'n	I'll stand by the lantern again
Wie einst Lili Marleen,	As once, Lili Marleen,
Wie einst Lili Marleen.	As once, Lili Marleen.

Words: Hans Leip, 1915. Music: Norbert Schultze, 1938. —Translation: W. H. Hall

From the castle on the Rhine we immediately advanced northward toward Ludwigshafen to a point where the Army Engineers had spanned the river with a pontoon bridge. We hurried across it to Mannheim, where, oh joy!, we had our second shower. Though Mannheim was rather heavily bombed out, there was a more or less intact factory with showers for the workers—one large, high-ceilinged room that could easily accommodate our whole platoon—some 45 men. Pipes descended everywhere from the ceiling with faucet handles and shower heads at the end. Warm

water! Heavenly! The only word to describe it. Outside, winter was not yet dead. It was deadly cold inside, too, except in the showers. Fully clothed women circulated among us with soap and towels. Yes. No big deal, apparently, to them. As nearly as I could determine (I didn't want to look their way), they didn't bother to avert their gaze. I would have turned my back but then my front would have faced others.

Next to the shower room was a toilet with squattie potties. Nothing more than holes in the concrete connected to sewer pipes. The only time in all my days of combat that I didn't "go to the bathroom" outside in the great outdoors. Various Europeans have assured me that that is the only way to "go." It facilitates elimination. Could be. I don't know diddelly squat about that. Isn't that the dumbest expression? I mean, even pet dogs "go to the bathroom" in American English!

Oops! On second thought, I remember using an outhouse side-by-side with an empty pigpen back at the abandoned peasant farm where Corporal -ylie started to fill his canteen cup with barnyard Schnaps. How could I have momentarily forgotten a luxury like that?

In Mannheim the troops were given the job of flushing out *Wehrmacht* deserters. The biggest joke of my life. Our platoon was assigned to a large apartment complex, unscathed somehow by bombs and artillery fire. We were supposed to go door to door and git 'em. Have you ever seen a Germanic door? In Vienna, where we roomed with Frau Telisman (on Breitegasse, right off the Ring near Mariahilferstrasse and Parlament), the thick, heavy door had one large lock, a solid dead-bolt, a chain, a clasp, a sliding bolt, and a rod from the bottom of the door into the floor. Obviously it was that way in Mannheim. I knocked on door after door. With metal knockers. There were no door bells. Dozens and dozens of doors. No response. Dead silence. In my mind's eye I could see movie heroes smashing in doors with one kick or one crash of a shoulder.... Photogenic heroes smashing open locks with one pistol shot. Someone behind the door could get hurt or killed, and having survived that far, I wasn't about to do the same to myself with a ricocheting bullet. In any case, I could see it would be useless. Let the poor deserters go, I thought. Why tie up men to guard them? They were out of it. It was over for them. Not a single deserter, not a single soul, was seen

by our platoon in that complex.

If the high command had bothered to research the terrain, including German doors, they could have forewarned and forearmed the combat troops, providing the wherewithal to not botch up the vital task of blowing up or smashing in every remaining intact door, carrying forward and onward the work of total terrible destruction. And it would have given the troops more to do. We could earn our dollar a day.

When forewarned and forearmed, chances are that a necessary job might get done. Not.... not.

Oh, we had great training for combat. I recall exactly two days of target practice with M1 rifles (I was rated *Expert*) and one day with pistols: Colt 45s. Rating: Totally *In*expert. Nobody could hit the silhouette at a distance of 20 paces. Everybody said that in combat they wouldn't shoot the thing at the enemy—they'd throw it! Before the war was over, however, we were pretty good shots with them. With Lugers, too. A number of these were liberated by our platoon—especially near Landsberg, in Bavaria, west of Munich. The cadet school there was deserted when we climbed up to it—after lobbing a few anti-personnel shells at it, far up on the mountainside—so guys helped themselves to weapons and stuff. Eisenhower had declared "No Looting!" "No Fraternization with the Germans!" Do you think Private First Class Hall took even one of those terrific German officer caps? (Hmmm. It's been claimed that I did. Well, if so, where the heck is it?) No, and not a Luger, either. I still had a subserviency streak in me almost equal to that of servile little me back in that music class. I preserved a fairly clear conscience, though, which I figure is worth something, even at today's excessively discounted rates. Whenever we were behind the lines for even a very short interval, we would plug away with Colts and Lugers at bottles, empty K-ration boxes, a tiny knot on the trunk of a tree, or any possible target.

Just prior to that, at Landsberg itself, three forever memorable things happened. First, a Hungarian regiment surrendered to the 411th Infantry Regiment, having endured enough misery, suffering, and death in Hitler's war after he maneuvered them into an alliance with the Axis (Berlin-Rome-Tokyo). I remember well standing at attention with my company as the Hungarians marched past and formally laid down

their arms at the feet of Colonel Donovan P. Yuell.

Second: Just by chance—I don't recall exactly how it came about—I and a number of others with knowledge of it had time to rush over to see it before our units moved on: the prison cell where Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle). Just a plain unadorned downstairs cell, with a commemorative plaque, a cot, a wash stand with a water jar and a porcelain wash basin on it. A fairly large framed photo of *der Führer* on one wall. A small table with a potted plant on it. One chair. All very plain. And, of course, there was a first edition copy of *Mein Kampf* on another stand. Colonel Yuell seized Hitler's flag, on display there, and added it to the regiment's trophies.

Third: Hard to believe, but no one had the slightest inkling of the existence of concentration camps. Our 411th Infantry Regiment liberated the one just outside of Landsberg. Correction: Our company went right past only one of what turned out to be **six** concentration camps there, as we found out later reading our 103rd Division history. The Gestapo officers and men in charge had fled, but the regiment compelled the citizens who had remained in the area to "neatly" lay out the corpses until they could be identified, if possible, and given proper burial. Our company had to move on, but as we passed by, restrained tears burning in our eyes, our hearts filled with horror at the thought that such inhumanity was possible, we threw K-rations to the survivors. To our continuing horror, we realized that the poor living skin and bone corpses able to crawl or stand were too far gone to ingest solid or even liquid food and had to be fed intravenously by the medics. I sorely wanted to stop to investigate—to the extent possible—just what it was that we were seeing. At the same time, I was glad to make tracks away from the awful, unspeakable horror of it.

So most of what I know about this is found in the official wartime history of our division: *Report After Action, The Story of the 103rd Infantry Division.* Just looking at the photos of the concentration camp within its pages still makes me sick to the stomach—more than that.... about to throw up.... about to heave up even my bowels of mercy toward the perpetrators.... and that without the stench that pervaded the actual site. Nazi skinheads and others who claim that the Holocaust is just a fiction, a myth....! Those who were there and survived, those who liberated them, justly

seethe with uncontained disgust and disbelief that such perfidy can exist. But there is a God. There is judgment and justice.

Everyone in the civilized world should have a look at pages 132-133 of this division history. Throwing up will do us good.... Purify us. Of insouciance, of forgetting. It will fill us with a terrible determination that such things will never be permitted to happen again. Yes, you do not need to bring to my attention the fact that similar things are happening right now. But we must not despair. We must not give up the fight. We must non-violently fight our own politicians, if necessary.

The intensity of my feelings was far surpassed by that of Lou Lifson, Paul Yesenow (the remaining best friend among the four that have been mentioned) and Martin Feldstein. The realization had struck them in the face that these corpses and living corpses were Jewish. (Though Gypsies, religious dissidents and others were also there, according to the division history.)

Laws were on the books during World War II that would have allowed thousands of European Jews to obtain U.S. visas. Nevertheless, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Under Secretary of State Breckinridge Long, in his now infamous memo to U.S. consular officers, ordered his subordinates to "postpone, postpone, postpone" the applications of Jewish refugees. Even after the war, Jewish holocaust survivors and even Catholic applicants for visas were shunted aside in favor of more politically acceptable refugees. Roosevelt, ultimately, was responsible for this. In all the analyses of the century about to pass as the year 1999 came to an end, all the liberal pundits ponderously or gleefully announced the name of the greatest man of the Century: Franklin D. Roosevelt. Enough to make a certain ex-private first class puke!

All those who know actual history without the liberal spin on it, and especially those who actually lived through the Great Depression, know very well that F.D.R. did not take the country out of it. It was only the build-up for World War II that finally did it.

On the eighty-second day of his fourth term—April 12, 1945—while vacationing in Warm Springs, Georgia, with a lady not his wife, Roosevelt suddenly died. Not too many people seem to be aware of the detailed circumstances of his death. Wonderful

how the liberal media shield the masses from information we are too politically naïve to properly assess.

After Landsberg, we encountered little resistance. Fortunately, we were experienced enough to be alert and wary right up to the end. After the war, I learned that one of my most admired friends had died in combat just as American and Russian forces were about to link up and the war was considered over—except by an enemy combatant who still had a weapon and a bullet for Dan Bradshaw. How tragic! Please! In no way have I intended to infer that Dan was not alert.

Soon the Germans were deserting and surrendering in droves. There is a photo on page 137 of our division history which shows four young children, perhaps five to 10 years old—a little girl, three boys, hurrying forward out of the snow-covered foothills, lightly clothed, their hands up, to surrender. It tears your heart out. Another follow-up wish to know: What of their parents? Had their father died in combat? Had their mother been "mistreated"?

Have you grasped the not so veiled meaning of Eisenhower's "non-fraternization" order? Perhaps it has just dawned on you. In the presence of officers, when I was at Dachau (explained later), a scruffy loud-mouthed private bragged about "laying" a young German girl. Peals of crude laughter: Her elderly grandfather had hung himself. Ha ha hardy ha ha! He committed suicide from shame and guilt over his inability to save her. I almost hoped the oven of Dachau was still operational to stuff this guy into it, but my violently churning viscera finally yielded up only pity for someone so sick and I let the appealing thought perish. The officers laughed nervously and that was that. Possibly the loud-mouth just made this up. Unlikely. Overall, the conduct of U.S. troops, as reported by credible war historians, was exemplary in this respect. Better than that of the Germans and Russians.

Near Garmisch-Partenkirchen... Breath-taking scenery!... close to the Austrian border, a German battalion surrendered to our regiment. Some years later, reading some of my favorite novels, I discovered that Hans Hellmut Kirst was an artillery captain taken prisoner there. You have just got to read Kirst! Movies of his novels have been made, including *The Night of the Generals*. Get a view from the other side.

The German soldiers, strangely, were people too. Kirst is so good! An anti-Nazi all the way. His most touching—and most horrible book—is the novel in which a German officer's compassion for basket cases is vividly described. I hadn't known until then what "basket case" really meant. *Keine Ahunung.* Not the faintest idea. They were men who had lost both legs, one arm or both, and parts between and above their legs. Ah, so terrible, horrible. They literally were in baskets, to hold them up, hold them together. Kirst writes inimitably about true brotherhood in war—for all that Nazi officialdom could do.

You have got to read Wolfgang Borchert. Kirst and Borchert. Kirst on both the Russian and the western fronts; Borchert fighting the Russians and imprisoned by the Nazis. On opposite sides from us, but I feel such a kinship with them. With all the *Deutsche Soldaten*. I had no enmity in my heart for them. Ever. I knew they were just poor children of God forced into their situation. Oh, yes, it may have been exhilarating to them at first. Such easy victories. Vast conquests. Some would have been fanatic Nazis. I was compelled to resist them all, but without hatred.

As a student at the University of Vienna on a Fulbright scholarship (1952-53), I met Austrians who had been opposite our outfit in Alsace and elsewhere. There was no animosity between us. We yacked away telling our war stories as if we had been old comrades.

Just before the war ended, we found ourselves in the Austrian Alps just north of Innsbrück—right around May Day. Our division was tasked to head for the Brenner Pass and link up with Allied forces pushing north from Italy, but that honor went to the 410th Infantry Regiment. Perfect spring weather on that glorious day. All the people were out in their native costumes.... Men and boys in *Lederhosen.* The women and girls in *Dirndls.* A beautiful sight to see on the mountain meadow there! The war was over and we were alive! In such a spectacularly beautiful place!

Harold Howell and I liberated two *Wehrmacht* motorcycles, scrounged around for some gasoline intended for our jeeps and other vehicles and took off cycling on mountain trails through the Alps. I've never felt more exhilarated in my life. A few days later orders came down that we were to desist. We desisted for two days. On

the second day Colonel Donovan P. Yuell went riding by in a liberated Mercedes staff car. "The heck!" we said. We borrowed a truck (an erstwhile weapons carrier, that is), stowed the motorcycles in back and drove far off where we could ride to our hearts' content without any officious interference. We turned the cycles in before moving on, of course. No looting allowed!

Elsewhere I have written:

> And that wasn't the last time [Hall] saw the indomitable colonel up close.... which was when he (the colonel) drove by in a liberated Mercedes-Benz staff car, or rather, was driven by by his fearless driver. That was near Innsbruck, Austria and they had come a long, long way. [Hall] failed to note whether Yuell was flicking his highly shined-up boots with his riding crop, his focus being entirely on how grand the colonel looked in that grandest of all *boche v*ehicles.

Our platoon had taken up quarters in the *Lehrer-Ferienheim Habichthof* (Teachers Vacation Home "Hawk House"). There were bunks for sleeping and plumbing as I recall. It was located in a fantastically beautiful Alpine valley. A onetime Art major, I found a sheet of stationery with the *Habichthof* letterhead on it, turned it over and sketched the scene below with a pencil. How I wish I had been able to do it on canvas with oils, but I captured the sublimity of our surroundings the best I could.

I'll use that term "best buddy" again, though readers might begin to believe that all of my comrades were. I hope that is close to the mark. The bonds that joined us were strong. I'm referring to best buddy Joe Podrebarac, official weapons carrier driver of our third platoon. A corporal or sergeant was always up front with him and as his official assistant I drove only once before war's end...

A short distance from the front in Alsace. We were encamped below a forested ravine with a steep road leading up out of it. In a weak moment, Joe said, "Here, Rugged, take these keys and practice driving the vehicle a little." So out I started, up the muddy road. I got about half-way up, didn't shift properly (you had to double-clutch the thing), and the vehicle stalled. What a predicament. Enemy shelling was

starting up—quite audibly not far away. The road led toward it, so I had no wish to proceed in that direction. There was nowhere to turn around, the road was so narrow—the drop-off on one side of the ravine and rocks and trees on the other. Believe me. I don't reserve prayer for crises. I try to pray always. But you can imagine the urgency of my prayer then. Well, with the clutch in, braking all the way down, struggling to keep away from the edge and not roll, slide or skid off it, I managed to back all the way down to the far away bottom.

Actually not a bad feat for a rank beginner, considering how little visibility there was from the rear view mirror through the opening in the tarp above a high tail gate, and with the big vehicle so high off the ground, it was impossible to see the road directly behind. Yes, I took quick looks into the side mirror too, though afraid to break my concentration by dividing it. Down below, at last, it took me a while to get the monster (to me) in gear—any gear that would move it forward without jerking would do—and I was finally able to drive back to Joe as if nothing had happened. "How'd it go, Rugged?" "Er... uh... Just great, Joe. Thanks for letting me drive it."

Hey, oh man, this was so great! The war over at last, some Russian prisoners of war in the Innsbruck area had to be transported to Vienna. And, hey, this time I got to sit up front with Joe. Joe's parents were Croatian immigrants and Joe had learned to speak Serbo-Croatian fluently. (One and the same language, actually, though Serbs—of the Russian Orthodox persuasion—write it in Cyrillic characters and the Croatians—traditionally Catholic—write it in Latin-derived letters.) A Slavic language, like Russian, Joe's Croatian enabled him to converse with them. They were so jubilant. Going home! All the way to Vienna they loudly sang and rejoiced through the night. Free, at last! Going home! I took it very personally and my grief was great on reading later that Stalin considered all prisoners of war to be traitors. They should have fought on to the death before allowing themselves to be taken alive. Our Russian friends no doubt were either executed or imprisoned in horrible Siberian Gulags.

The trip going was at night, but coming back we were able to see stretches of the Danube and some of Austria's incomparably beautiful Alpine scenery. Shortly after

that, traveling only in the daytime, we saw more of Austria plus Germany's fabulous Black Forest as we transported cargo to Strasbourg and returned with supplies. No convoy. Just us. We were happy as larks, singing and carrying on all the way there and back. Joe let me drive once. I got behind the wheel and was cruising contentedly along when we came to a very long steep hill leading down to one of the -gens. We passed through Tuttlingen, Schwennigen, Villigen, and other othergens too, it seems. My atlas doesn't show a river by any of them, so I can't pinpoint the location today. I allowed the weapons carrier to build up such speed and momentum that I think Joe's hair turned white as I curved around toward a bridge and the frightened pedestrians scattered and appeared ready to jump into the river. Joe was a tough, solidly built guy with lots of endurance. I offered to spell him off now and again after that but he claimed he wasn't one bit tired.

Back from our journey to Strasbourg, an announcement on the company bulletin board captured my full attention. All soldiers with relatives serving in the European Theater of Operations were invited to apply for permission to visit them, all travel arranged and paid for by the U.S. Army. I immediately applied, and oh, wonder of burocratic speed and efficiency, I was soon on my way by train, truck, ferry—whatever transportation was available—to visit my virtual twin brother Donald in England. Early on, as a little child, I was Nin, so he became Din. A cute little fellow, the diminutive form Dinny soon became attached to him. Darn! If I had been that cute, maybe I could have been called by a comparably tender and loving cognomen.

Arriving in London, at last, I asked directions to a center which supposedly could give me Din's current location. My first lessons in British English. A fast learner, even today you will occasionally hear me say, "Thrigh skwahrs stright awigh. You cawn't miss it." Well, I found the center and was sent on my way to Weston Super Mare. My Latin was deficient at the time and I was decidedly curious and excited to get a glimpse of the amazing animal this town apparently was named after. O.K., don't laugh! I'm sure you know without my telling you that it means Weston on the Sea. It was great traveling from the British Channel to the Irish Sea. And then back to London again, where I was directed to Camp Blandford, at Blandford, Dorsetshire, England. Donald was a sergeant with the 185th General Hospital. Casualties

from the 103rd Division had ended up at his hospital and it was always in his mind that I might turn up there too. Well, hey, I'm not one to ever disappoint a little brother! I quote from Donald's report of what transpired.

> We were there [at Blandford] only long enough to get settled in when the feelings of homesickness and loneliness settled in with me also. Sunday, June 10, was just another day for me, made especially more lonely because of the fact that just about everyone else was out doing things for the weekend, enjoying the victory, but I was on duty, as usual, because of the many things that had to be done on a daily basis. I went to lunch lamenting very much my assignment that kept me in camp practically all the time. I was eating with about 20 others in the mess hall because everyone else was gone.
>
> Sitting alone, I was feeling especially blue, probably at the lowest point in my life as far as morale was concerned. In that mostly deserted place, I noticed someone standing in the center of the mess hall looking around. I was conscious of his presence, but did not raise my eyes to look. At that moment I finished eating and collecting my tray and utensils to take to the dishwashing area, I turned in front of someone approaching. Still I didn't raise my eyes to pay any attention, but continued on my way in downcast dejection, not alert yet to anything special—even ignoring the presence of someone falling in at my side, until I felt a hand on my shoulder and a voice that said, "Well, aren't you even going to speak to me?"
>
> We had a lot of catching up to do as to what had happened to each of us. Wendell spent the next 4 days in camp with me until I was able to get a pass so that we could go places together. While in camp his letter came telling that he was coming to visit me. That indicated one of the reasons why none us knew anything about his whereabouts and what had been happening to him. Conditions were quite disorganized toward the end of the war. Troops were moving speedily and communications breaking down somewhat in the furor of the finish, with the result that he got to me in person before his letter did.....
>
> We went to London together, visited all the famous places—Hyde Park,

Tower Bridge, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, The Tower of London, Buckingham Palace—and had our picture taken by a street photographer in front of that famous landmark, Big Ben and the British Houses of Parliament.

Comment: How strange it was to hear myself called "Wendell" rather than by my true handle, "Rugged."

About the first thing we did at Blandford was to sit down and write our folks a letter. We hit on a brilliant idea. Days later, when Mom retrieved the mail, she announced to Dad, "We've got a letter from Donald." Then she stopped herself to say, "No, it's from Wendell!" Then, recognizing that the return address was in Donald's handwriting and the forwarding address was in mine, she shouted: "It must be from both of them!" What a wonderful surprise, eh ?

At Hyde Park there was an exhibit of Nazi planes that had been captured or shot down and salvaged. One of them was a jet plane, one of the first ever manufactured. One of those had buzzed us over Germany, and we feared the Nazi's might still win the war, they seemed so far advanced technologically. I was surprised to see how small it was. Like a shooting star up there in the sky, it was hard to judge its size.

At last I had to return to my outfit. What I remember best is Normandy, after crossing the Channel on a ferry. Springtime in Normandy. A dream! But I had the worst bout of hay fever there that I'd experienced in my life. Still, though I was totally miserable, Normandy is Normandy. One of my favorite songs, which I unfailingly taught all my French students was:

Quand tout renaît a l'espérance	When all is reborn to hope
et que l'hiver fuit loin de nous,	And winter flees far from us
j'aime a revoir ma Normandie	I love to see my Normandy again
quand le soleil devient plus doux.	When the sunshine turns so mild.
Quand la nature est reverdie,	When nature is green once more,
quand l'hirondelle est de retour,	When the swallows have returned,
j'aime a revoir ma Normandie...	I love to see my Normandy again...
C'est le pays qui m'a donné le jour!	It's the land that gave me light and life!

I have made no attempt to capture the beautiful rhyme, rhythm and sound of the French. Impossible. My translation is quite literal except for *jour*. As you know, it means *day* (Like many other lovers of France, French and the French, you know how to say "bone zhoor, mone zhoor"), and it just would not come across very well, so I made it "light and life." Not bad, eh? If you don't know the lovely melody, come by some day. I frequently sing *Ma Normandie* in the shower.

My maxim was always, Ya gotta entertain the troops. I wasn't the greatest foreign language teacher but I did my best to keep students involved through songs, games, and any other activities I could dream up. Too bad I've been able to spend so relatively little time in France during my life (outside of combat, that is.) No doubt about it, French is the elite language of the world. Whenever I'm speaking or singing it, I feel like a superior human being.

So if that's so, what if the French do think they are superior? They can't help it! They try very hard to not let it show, you know.

Our kids grew up hearing a variety of French expressions. A couple of samples: "Ferme la porte." (Close the door.) "Ferme la bouche." (Shut the mouth.)

Of course later I taught more advanced courses, but just the same I did my best to make them interesting and entertaining. The Linguistics courses too! You bet! Hey, in a way, they're the best. Few people on earth know much about language except through boring traditional prescriptive grammar classes which are about the good manners of language usage, not about what language is like and how it works. It's great to shed a little light and enlightenment.

What a rude blow on arriving back at Innsbruck! Nobody there! Only a skeleton regimental office. The 103rd Infantry Division had disappeared from off my map. I was reassigned to the 45th "Thunderbird" Division and was soon on my way to Dachau (in the southeast corner of Germany where it adjoins Austria and Czechoslovakia. I sorely missed my buddies but had new friends, new experiences and did not miss out on seeing Dachau, one of the most infamous concentration camps of all. Yeah, try to tell **me** that the Holocaust is a myth!

I was no longer an assistant weapons carrier driver there. Imagine! I was a clerk-typist. That 45th Division, once General George S. Patton's, seemed to sort of have

some things together. About every day I had guard duty, shouldering my M1 rifle and parading around the high-walled precincts. I didn't get it. Somebody was going to try to escape? At that time, the Red Cross and medics had taken over, the poor surviving inmates were in hospitals, and the occupants of Dachau were now DPs—displaced persons from all over Europe. Though serious attempts had been made at cleaning up the awful place, I still recall saying to myself, If the stench is so bad now, how must it have been before?

At length the 45th was transported to Camp St. Louis, a huge tent city between Paris and Rheims. It was just a holding center, we surmised, until we could be shipped out of the ETO (European Theater of Operations) and head for the PTO (Pacific Theater) to help put a swift end to the war there. We thought that we had done our share already, but if that's where we were needed, that's where we would go. Another day, another dollar. Another day, another dollar. Another day, another dollar. Would it never end?

"How can you keep a boy down on the farm after he's seen Paree?" The lyrics of a popular song back then. I knew for sure that I would be back. I spent one day in Rheims and many in Paris. The great cathedral at Rheims alone was worth many a day, but Paris is Paris. Leave was available almost for the asking, though never of the overnight kind. I would leave early for Paris and spend the day seeing everything—by subway. Down one entrance and on to the next destination. Up to have a good look around, sometimes taking hours, then on to the next station for more of the same.

Somber, drab, Paris was not exactly *La Ville Lumière,* the City of Light, after so many years of war and occupation by the Germans. No, not drab! Never. Just that the people wore threadbare clothes and were not (quite) their usual flamboyant selves. The saddest sight in Paris was the poor women at the subway exits. I would not condemn them. Could not. Disheartened, sad, worn, they would just look mutely at the G.I.s as we exited the subway. Not at all lubriciously. No flaming red lipstick, no skirts above the knee. (Remember, this is 1945.) I would give them the francs I could spare and continue dejectedly, sorrowfully, on my way. The professionals, I presumed, didn't have to stand there.

I knew no French at the time. No German. Just a few utterances from the Army phrase books issued. *"Hülfe!,"* for example. Help! (I'm quite sure the phrase book gave that non-standard expression rather than normative *Hilfe*. The umlaut caught my eye.) *"Die Hände hoch!"* Get your hands up!

In Paris I had a terrible thirst. No drinking fountains anywhere. Of course! Water is for horses. I looked up the word for "water" in the phrase book. *"Eau."* I entered bars, restaurants. Uttered *"Eau."* More insistently, *"Eau! Eau!"* It must have come across as "Oh! Oh!" No one seemed to understand, or want to. Later I learned about the partitive. I should have said *"de l'eau,"* plus, more correctly and acceptably, a verb and a *"s'il vous plait."* (Please) Perhaps I *was* understood. In any event, no water.... Not a beverage! Finally, at a hotel, more used to foreign clientele, a waiter took pity on me and I got a glass of water. After that I would say "Oh! Oh!" or just plain "Water" at hotels. Just **plain** water? It sustains just about all life. Sure, even those incredible worms in the deep dark depths of the ocean that feed on sulphur depend on it. What is better, more satisfying than a cool glass of water? "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name.... verily.... he shall not lose his reward." Those kind hotel employees didn't offer water in Yeshua's name (the correct transliteration of the Savior's name to English) but nonetheless in a Messiah-like spirit.

The troops at Camp St. Louis did not go to Japan. One August day in 1945 (it must have been the sixth) in that vast tent city where thousands of troops were awaiting imminent deployment, a breath of a sound, a murmur, started up at an indeterminate point and soon sounded as though all the tents were flapping wildly in a stiff wind. "Atom bomb!" We had never heard of such a thing, but the significance of the THING soon became clear. We would not be going to Japan. The most terrible destructive power ever unleashed by man would make possible our rapid demobilization.

The recurring, doctored quote from *MacBeth* about "sleep, gentle sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care" suggests that I may have known some Shakespeare as a young soldier. I did, indeed, but it was about to be improved upon. From Camp St.

Louis we crossed the Channel to Southampton and boarded the *Acquitania,* one of the world's premiere steamships, outfitted to transport troops—a huge vessel, totally crowded with troops at elbow-to-elbow distance, it almost seemed. There was more breathing room in the ship's library than anywhere else. There I found the complete works of Shakespeare, which kept me occupied the entire voyage of about five or six days.

After a 30-day furlough at home, I reported once more to Ft. Douglas, Utah, and was released from the U.S. Army. It was November the 11th and I celebrated my personal armistice on the Armistice Day marking the end of World War I. Dates of discharge were arrived at by a system that awarded extra points for months of combat, so I was terminated relatively early.

*Re: our angelic daughters. These angels know that there were occasional squabbles. That's why I had the KKK (Kid Kontrol Korps). With my best imitation of wailing police sirens and blaring horns, the KKK would swiftly arrive on the scene and get them to laugh enough to calm down. Rule #1 in our family was Be calm.**

The law of unintended consequences: Now that our girls (Marjean, Wendy, Anna, Teresa, Carolyn) have read my words about the favorite child being the one on which the most time and effort has been expended to keep it on the straight and narrow.... not a one of them wants to be my favorite daughter any more. Sob!

**Alice, our last child, who died at three months of age, is an angel in heaven.

Wallsburg, Utah
January 30, 2003

Illustrated Appendix

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