

SOISSONS

In Soissons we were billeted in a former French cavalry installation which was not too bad. The barracks were clean and the barns, which were made of stone and covered with plaster, served as storage space and as our theater. The movies were shown as we sat on plain wooden benches. The officers must have had a separate area; at least I cannot remember a reserved section or any officers in our theater. Of course there was horseplay which went on before the movie to fill in the time because you had to get there early to get a seat. While waiting for the movie to start we played a game called "Ack-ack" which was played in this manner. Someone would blow up a condom, tie it and toss it into the air for others to throw lit cigarettes at. The object was to burst the condom and bring it down. If it floated down or near you, you bounced it up again to get it out of your vicinity. As time went on the "aircraft" became more sophisticated as different ingredients were put inside the condom, such as pepper, foot powder or tooth powder, so when hit the contents would rain down on those sitting under it.

While in Soissons I drew a very unusual guard duty assignment. I was posted outside of a whore house to be sure that only 517th men entered.

During December I was deep into chess and by combining my pieces with those of Jim Andersen, since we had both lost parts of our sets, we at least had one complete set.

I actually had a pass in my hand for a few days in Liege, Belgium but never did get a chance to use it. The Germans had started an offensive through Belgium and on December 21st, the day I was to go to Liege, all passes were canceled and orders were issued to move out to Belgium.

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

The Germans struck a quick, hard blow on December 16th, 1944 and broke through our lines in Belgium. On the twenty-second we were in trucks and headed for the "Bulge". We were assigned to the northern sector of the Bulge as part of the 82nd Airborne division while the 101st went to Bastogne in the southern flank. I later learned from Eisenhower's "Crusade In Europe" that the 82nd was scheduled to go to Bastogne, with us in tow, but the situation was critical on the northern flank near Werbomont so we were diverted to that area. As it was we had a difficult time, but the 101st was completely surrounded, and probably had an even rougher time.

A few days before we arrived in Belgium, December 17th to be exact, the German troops massacred about ninety American soldiers in the Belgium village of Malmendy. Word of this crime spread rapidly and the Americans in the area were out to avenge the deaths of these men. On our visit to Belgium in 1986 we visited the site, where there is now a monument - a wall with the names of the American soldiers on it, to pay our respects.

While we were in action in the Bulge I wrote very few letters home, in fact there were none between December 11th and December 31st. We were too busy to write, it was too cold, and to top it off, I never did know where I was or what was happening.

I do remember our first evening on the line in the Bulge. We were taking up a position on a snow covered hill when we came upon a machine-gun position which had been overrun by the Germans. Bodies of several dead Americans, with the 186th Infantry division patch on their shoulders, were partially covered with snow and their gun was still in position.

The snow was about a foot deep and the temperature was low, probably close to zero, and there was a strong wind which seemed to increase during the night. It was easier than usual to see at night because of the fresh snow but, while on guard on an outpost, your eyes played tricks on you and it was easy to visualize figures in German uniforms moving about. When morning came no trace of any activity could be found, not even footprints.

We did get fresh socks every day to keep our feet dry and guard against trench foot. And the Stars And Stripes, the official army newspaper, found its way to the front lines and gave us a little information on the battle. Unless an action took place within a hundred yards of where I was I never knew about it. Often I have thought that the worse part of the bulge was not knowing how long it would last. The cold was bitter, the fact that the Germans had regained so much territory was depressing, but not knowing how long I would have to continue fighting in the cold really got to me.

From the beginning of the battle until until the day after Christmas the sky was heavily overcast and our planes could not support the ground troops. The German high command had picked that time because of the weather predictions and to render the Allied aircraft ineffective. But on December 26th the sky cleared and in the clear, blue sky we could see the vapor trails of hundreds of bombers. We only saw bombers on their way to bomb their targets since they returned via a different route and beyond our vision.

Christmas of 1944 was not a very joyous day. We were cold and hungry and missed out on our traditional Christmas Day turkey dinner, instead we had only emergency D-rations. D-rations were four ounce chocolate bars and often as hard as rock. We did get a real turkey dinner on New Year's Day which we ate outside and in the cold. It was cold enough that by

time we got through the chow line and sat down to eat it the meal was cold, but it was much better than the D-rations we had on Christmas.

As the year closed I was not thinking of celebrating the new year, instead Andersen and I were trying to find comfort in a barn. I had found a cubby hole near some cows - it would not have been so bad if the cows would stand still and in a straight line in their stalls. But no, they were continually moving around and both Andersen and myself had to push them around to keep them away from us. It was evident that the cows did not want to share their stalls with American G.I.s. We did have a few handy men around who got up early in the morning and milked the cows before the farmer got around to the chore.

There were chickens to contend with too. Often they would perch on a rafter - a very rude one did so and did a very accurate job of bombing me. The next morning I had to wash my bedroll cover. We did not find any eggs but several chickens disappeared and some of our men proved themselves to be good cooks.

With clear skies after the 26th of December air activity increases. We had a front row seat one day when two P-47s chased and shot down a Me-109. The 109 tried to turn to his left to shake the P-47s off his tail. As he did so the lead P-47 riddled him with his .50 cal. guns but could not turn tight enough to follow through and finish the Me-109 off. The trailing P-47, being further back, could keep the 109 in his sights so, when the first P-47 stopped firing the second one opened up and finished the Me-109 off. The German pilot bailed out but his parachute did not open and the pilot landed about a hundred yards from me. By the time I got to where he had hit his boots had already been removed.

There was another incident involving a Me-109 but this time the pilot was much more fortunate. I was on an outpost in an open field with a .50 caliber machine-gun on a ground mount when a Me-109 came in at about fifty feet above the ground and off to my left about one hundred yards. The plane was flying a course parallel to my machine-gun, from front to back, and in broad daylight, but because of the ground mount I could not swing the gun ninety degrees to fire at him.

While on guard duty at night we could see the German U-1 "Buzz bombs" fly overhead on their way to Leige or England. They could also be identified by their distinct sound. The U-1s could be seen during the daylight hours too, but they were not nearly as spectacular as those at night when you could see the flames shooting out of the exhaust. Whenever one came near we held our breath until it had passed over - if the engine stopped just before it got to us the bomb might come down in our area, therefore nobody shot at them. We were lucky that none came close enough to be a threat to us.

On January 23rd we were relieved and fell back to Stavalot, Belgium for a rest. At Stavalot we were billeted in houses which was a treat because it was still winter and fairly cold.

Running through Stavalot was the Ambleve River and near our billets was a bridge, so some of our men decided to go fishing. From the bridge they tossed a hand-grenade into the river, the grenade exploded and the dead fish floated to the surface. Unfortunately, the fishermen had not formulated a plan as to how they would retrieve the fish, so all of the fish floated down the river. The fish were not the only sign of death at the site of the bridge. At one end there was a dead German soldier and a dog which had been eating the soldier's flesh.

Credit must be given to the Red Cross which came around every so often, even while we were on the line, to pass out donuts and coffee. The Red Cross used 2 1/2 ton trucks, each equipped with a donut making machine which could turn out 1600 donuts a day. The trucks also had an electric phonograph, with a loudspeaker, all built in. They passed out two

donuts, a cup of coffee, a roll of lifesavers, a couple of cigarettes and a stick of gum to each G.I. These treats were free at the front but there was a five cent charge per item back in the rest areas. The feeling was that if the Red Cross came to the front so would the German shells. This was not a truism but it did indicate that the Red Cross did not avoid dangerous areas.

It was at Stavalot that many of the men got Mohawk haircuts. This did not meet with the pleasure of Cpt. Vogel, who was still our battery commander, and I heard at our 1993 reunion that one sergeant lost his chance to get a battlefield commission because he was one of those who got a haircut. I have not heard from that person, Rogers, since then so I cannot confirm the story. For some reason I was not one of the gang that got the Mohawk, probably because it was so cold at that time, but in the back of my mind I wish that I had. But this was written in 1993, not 1945.

It was one day in Stavalot that our captain assembled us in a field and warned that the local women had been crying "Rape" for little or no reason. It was reported that even communication men, while running wires in the line of duty, had been accused. A few days later the captain himself was accused of rape, charged, court martialled and transferred. We spent about ten days in Stavalot and when the battery left two or three of us were left behind to clean up the area. The first thing we did was to chase down a chicken in a farmer's hayloft and boil it for dinner. The chicken was hard to catch - the hayloft did not have a solid floor but instead the hay was piled on tree branches spread about a foot apart in the upper part of the barn. To catch the chicken I had only a two prong pitchfork, but in the end we had chicken for dinner. The chicken didn't taste too bad.

In a day or two we caught up with the battalion which was already in Germany. There was a change in orders and the 517th Combat Team headed for the Huertgen forest. I wondered if even the Black Forest could be darker than the Huertgen. In the Huertgen we were up against the the German Sixth Parachute Division, an experienced, first class fighting unit. These troops put up an excellent fight.

On February 9th we were moved back to Aachen by truck. We stopped at the railroad station and I was able to pick up a metal custom stamp with the eagle, swastika and name of the town was on it. I still have the stamp. By 40 G & 8s we moved back to Joigny, France where, on February 15th, we were attached to the 13th Airborne Division. At Joigny the 517th Parachute Combat Team was dissolved and the 468th Parachute Field Artillery became part of the 13th Airborne Division Artillery.

On February 17th I was on K.P. again. This time I found myself peeling potatoes but Don and I found a way to make the time pass a little faster - we carved the potatoes into different objects such as horseshoes, houses, dice or anything else we could think of, even a buzz-bomb. However, the mess sergeant did not think our efforts were all that great. Oh well, what does a sergeant know about art? We, Don and myself, may have eaten too much that day - we were both sick that night. Such is the life of a K.P.

What happens to a guy who comes in late and is too drunk to get himself in bed? His friends help him, they stuff him into his sleeping bag head first.

On February 21st we were still in Joigny and still training. While there I tried my hand at assembling an HO gauge model railroad kit which I had received from home. It was a box car and a fiasco! I did not have the proper tools, some of the parts were lost, I could not paint the model and, to top it off, even if I had finished the model there is no way that I could have carried it around without damaging it.

On the first of March I was doing M.P. (not K.P. for once) and trying to keep our own men out of trouble. One battery figured that they had come out on the short end of the

reorganization deal, which put us into the 13th Airborne Division, so they threatened to march on the town of Joigny and throw a drunk. Well, they infiltrated instead, but they did stick to their promise to get tanked up. During the course of the evening our detail hauled three truck loads of drunk paratroopers back to the barracks and dumped them off to sober up.

About an hour before I went on duty a report came in that four Germans, in uniform, had been seen driving around in a car. The most suspicious person that I saw was a civilian wearing a black cape who ducked into a dark doorway when our jeep approached.

After we had pulled back from the Bulge I received a letter from my mother which puzzled me at first. In it she said that she had seen a movie news reel taken during the fighting in the Bulge that had pictured some soldiers in snow suits and she hoped that I had one of these warm suits. What she was referring to was white camouflage suits worn by the infantry. The suits were made of a light material and offered very little protection from the elements since they were designed to make the wearer blend into the terrain, not keep him warm.

By this time we had a new battery commander, Cpt. Weller. I did write in a letter to home that I thought he was like dad; how we always addressed you by your rank and name and remembered everything about you except the mistakes you had made. He had a joke for every occasion, passed out compliments freely and when you met him in the street it was just like running into an old friend.

There was a fellow in our battery who decided to identify his canteen cup by marking it in the bottom. To do this he took a hammer and a large nail and proceeded to punch his initials and the last four digits of his serial number in the bottom of the cup. It was positive identification, done in the same manner in which we identified our clothing. Maybe it was a little too positive - it turned out to be the only cup that leaked in the chow line.

In another written on the 11th of March, I mentioned going to Mass in a civilian church. Usually I went to the military one because it was nearby and I was too lazy to walk to town. I also mentioned that our chaplain, Father Guenette, had been ordained "somewhere in the outskirts of Paris" so he was right at home.

On the 31st of March which was the day before Easter in 1945, three of us, Bud, Jim Mohr and myself went to a small French town, which I could not name because of censorship and I have since forgotten the name, but did not have much fun. We spent two hours riding the bumper cars and had some ice cream. The "ice cream" was a frozen gelatin with no color and pretty high priced. It cost five to ten cents for about two teaspoons, no bargain.

Edee had mailed a book to me on October the 13th for a Christmas present which arrived on April first - it took only five and a half months to get to me.

Junie Kawamura, one of the men wounded when caught in a minefield, returned to the outfit when we were in Joigny.

Jim Andersen also returned from his stay in an English hospital. He had an aunt in London and had a chance to visit her. As far as Jim was concerned London was great - lots of cars, a good subway and more television sets than "Carter has little live pills". But, we could not agree with him 100% after listening to some of the British radio programs. On their home news they had an item about a football game (probably soccer) where they named the teams and the number of spectators but omitted the score of the game.

Again I praised Cpt. Weller in a letter home, this time for an act of kindness which he displayed toward me. There were to be no passes issued on that particular day but I thought that I had lost a fountain pen in a 40 & 8 that we had been working in earlier that day so I

asked him for a pass in order to look for the pen. Cpt Weller issued the pass and did everything he could, save going with me to look for the pen. I did not find the pen but it was no fault of the captain. As it turned out another person had found the pen and returned it.

Later in April we moved to an airfield in northern France to prepare for a mission; we were to be part of an airborne landing south of Stuttgart under the command of the 13th Airborne Division. We listened to the briefings and studied the sand-table in preparation for a jump but the armored units overran our objective before we had a chance to jump. Some men went on flights in C-47s to resupply the advance troops with gasoline by parachute. This was a break in the boredom which resulted from just sitting around. Other proposed missions included a jump on a concentration camp, but the name of the camp was never revealed, and jumps in Norway and Denmark, neither of which materialized.

The war came to an end in Europe on May 8th 1945. The day became known as V-E Day (Victory in Europe) since the war was still going on in the Pacific Theater. The 468th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion was scheduled to go to the Pacific but, by a lucky twist of fate, I was given the choice of staying in Europe or going to the far east. The choice came by the fact that, on an individual basis, all who had fought in Italy were given a choice. Being the brave soldier that I was I chose to stay - I had had enough of the war, of the fighting and all that goes with it. Also, I wanted to see as much of Europe as possible. At that time I could not foresee another opportunity to return - travel to Europe was not an everyday affair back in 1945. And, there was no guarantee that the 517th would go to the Pacific Theater via of the United States. I could visualize a trip through the Suez Canal and sailing to Australia or the Philippines. I was wrong, in August the 517th including the 468th, sailed out of Le Harve and when half way across the Atlantic, Japan surrendered and the war ended. When the combat team landed in New York the men were discharged, The colors were deactivated at Fort Bragg on February 25th, 1946. I was happy with my choice even though most of the men were discharged nearly three months before I was.

Since I had chosen to stay in Europe I was transferred to a unit which would also stay there, the 376th Parachute Field Artillery of the 82nd Airborne Division. On the thirteenth of July I joined the 376th in Epinal, France. I went to Headquarters Battery as the assistant mail orderly.

Censorship of our mail was lifted on May 15th, 1945 so, from then on we could name towns, places and dates in our letters home. I took advantage of this new freedom by sitting down and writing all the dates and places that I could remember since arriving in Europe, then sent them home to be used as a reference at a future date.

Every day that I spent in the 82nd I liked it better. On July 14th, which was Bastille Day, Bud and I went to Epinal to watch the French celebrate. The people were doing it up right but when the street dance started at 2330 we realized that we could not stay because we had to be off the streets by midnight. The local population danced until 0800 the following morning.

While in town I ran into Sgt. Schneider, now Lt. Schneider and we had a neat little talk. After his clash with Cpt. Vogel, Schneider was transferred to the 466th P.F.A. where he had a little trouble with the battery commander and Schneider was almost tried for mutiny. He was busted and sent to the 17th Airborne Division and placed in an infantry recon platoon. He shipped overseas as a corporal, made sergeant and in the Bulge, where the 17th saw their first action, he received a field commission. He had been on over sixty patrols behind enemy lines, fought in Germany and was, at one time, the mayor of German town during the occupation. He told me the story of a patrol he was leading one night in Germany - they had advanced far enough to pass into a German position when they were heard by a German

soldier. The German could not see that it was an American, nor did he suspect that there were any Americans in the immediate area; so he asked the time. Schneider, answering in German, gave him the time. "Ach", said the German, "It's too early, I think I'll get some more sleep". With that Schneider quickly withdrew his men and led them back to the American lines.

One more short but unconfirmed story about the Bulge. I had heard that some of the engineers of the 596th Parachute Engineers found a safe in a house in Belgium and decided to blow it open to get the valuables. They placed the explosives on the safe, took cover outside and set off the explosives. There was a loud explosion - the house was destroyed but the safe was unharmed.

ENGLAND

A lucky break came my way while I was in Epinal. The army had set up a college in England was looking for men who wanted to attend. I put my name on the list and the next thing I knew I was headed for "Jolly Old England". The college was staffed by American professors from the States and any qualified army personnel they could scrape up and most of the courses that I took earned credits at the University of Minnesota after the war.

It was Sunday morning, July 22, 1945, when a jeep and driver came to pick me up and I started off on my journey to England. The name of the driver was Jack and the pair of us took off for Nancy, which was about a forty-five mile drive from Epinal. We arrived there sometime between 1000 and 1100 hours only to find that I would not be able to get a train to Paris until the following morning. The thought of having to spend almost a whole day in Nancy was crushing but I planned to make the most of it. After a chicken dinner Jack and I cruised the streets of Nancy until it was time for him to return to Epinal. Then I was on my own. I walked and did as much sightseeing as my feet could stand then went to a movie. Yes, alone and saw "Without Love". After the movie I went to the Red Cross where I ate donuts, drank cokes, watched a ping-pong tournament and listened to some music. By 2000 hours I was in bed, but not for long because I had to get up at 0400 to catch the train. At 0500 the train pulled out and I tried to get a little more sleep on one of the straight-back seats on a third-class French train. It just could not be done.

At one point we stopped to wait for a train to come through a tunnel from the opposite direction on the single track. An hour later the train emerged. We went through the tunnel and as we came out I saw another train waiting for us to get clear. I arrived in Paris at noon, was forced to go through the chow line, picked up my orders and had until 2145 hours before I could board the train for Le Havre. To the French, Monday afternoon was like Saturday afternoon in pre-war America - most of the stores were closed. The time was not wasted though, I found an air show at the base of the Eiffel Tower and I spent several interesting hours there.

I had a great time on the subway and discovered just how easy it was to find your way around. To make the experience even more enjoyable G.I.s did not have to pay for the rides.

At 2145 I was back on the train and on my way, still headed for England. This train was a better one than the first; the cars were British style with the aisle along one side of the car and with compartments along the other side with much more comfortable seats. The seats were as soft as any I had ever experienced in Europe. I fell asleep and only woke up once an hour, but that was not the complete story - after awaking it took me fifty-nine minutes to fall asleep again. Really, it was a comfortable ride and I caught upon some sleep.

I arrived at Le Havre in the morning and got off the train only to get back on the same train and continue on to Camp Pall Mall with others headed for England. I went by truck to a chateau outside of Epinal where we were to be billeted. The chateau was beautiful, old and so quiet and peaceful. I admired the grounds as the truck rolled along the winding, tree lined driveway and into the back yard where they let us off in front of rows of tents. The tents were for the enlisted men, the chateau was for "Officers only" and off limits to us. The tents had wooden floors but looked bare with only bunks for furnishings.

I took a ribbing that night because I was, not only the only artilleryman in the tent, but also the only paratrooper. The other men, who were from line outfits, tried on my E.T.O. jacket and my jump boots, admired my wings and asked numerous questions.

At 0400 the following morning we had breakfast, drew a new set of clothes and exchanged our money for English pounds. Then we loaded back on to the trucks and and rode to Le Havre where we boarded a small boat for England.

On the boat I met a poor sailer who did not have much love for airborne men. I could understand his point of view after he told me about the 101st man that he gave a roast beef sandwich and a half of quart of cognac, then the 101st man said that he would like to repay the sailor for the favor. He offered to get him a Jerry 17-jewel wrist watch for a mere three English pounds (\$12.12). He explained that a friend of his had the watch but, he himself did not have any money, so the sailor would have to pay in advance. The sailor paid and the trooper left to get the watch. A short time later the trooper returned with the watch. He proceeded to explain that it was a waterproof, self-winding model and should be opened only by a jeweler. About two hours later the sailor noticed that the watch still read the same time as it did when the deal was made so he took it to a jeweler. The jeweler opened the watch and found that the case was filled with sand.

The Channel crossing was smooth and after nine hours someone spotted land. There was so much excitement that one would think the guys had been at sea for a full two years.

In a letter written on July 25th I stated that I was looking for a camera. My best bet was to buy one from a G. I. who desperate for a little extra cash. To buy one from the P.K. was almost impossible, it seems as though the officers get them, not the enlisted men. I felt that a good German camera, especially a 35mm one, would last me a lifetime. Little did I realize how much cameras would change and improve between 1945 and 1990.

I reached the college at about 2200 hours and by 1100 the next morning I was on pass in Shrivingham. It was like being in the States when I saw the stores and read the names on them - even to the Woolworth 3p & 6p, instead of our 5 & 10. The people were great too. Three of us were walking down the street when an elderly couple started talking to us and, after a few minutes of conversation, they invited us to their home anytime we had some free time.

In the evening we went to a carnival in Swindon where I met Dian, a pretty blond who modeled for an art class at our college. We spent the evening together at the carnival and, during the course of the evening, I met a British paratrooper who was with an English girl. The evening came to an end and I made arrangements to meet Dian again at the carnival on the following evening. Well, she did not show up and, as I wandered around I noticed the girl who had spent the previous evening with the British "Para". For some reason he had failed to meet her so Eileen and I spent the evening together. She lived with her family about five miles outside of Swindon on a four hundred year old farm. The family had 85 to 90 milking cows and some chickens which was a wonderful combination in the eyes of a G.I. It meant fresh eggs and milk and the end of powdered milk for a while. Eileen's dad was a squadron leader in the R.A.F. and had been a pilot for Imperial Airways before the war. The family moved out of London after their house had been hit twice by bombs and a third time by a U-1 bomb. About the first of September they plan to move back to the Purley Surrey district of London.

The school, known as the Shrivingham American University (SAU) was located in Shrivingham, just eight miles from Swindon. Swindon was about seventy miles due west of London. The school furnished a free inter-campus bus and free bus service to Swindon. In addition to these services there was a special train to London and back every weekend which was free. Before the army set up the college, and this was the first term, the facilities had been used by the British as an anti-aircraft officers training school.

Our barracks were beautiful - red brick buildings with hot water and bathrooms. Ten of us were assigned to the room I was in and the room had a fireplace and even a doormat built into a shallow depression just inside of the door. The bed had two sheets and a pillow, complete with a pillowcase, but we combat veterans did not fall for the bait. Obviously it was a booby trap, so we rolled out our bedrolls and slept on the floor. Do you believe that?

On July 27th we registered in the afternoon and were immediately off to London where the army made sure we had a place to sleep at the Red Cross. Rooms had been reserved for two nights and meals were available. The rooms were comfortable and the meals reasonable. Our first stop in London was at the Red Cross to check in, then we had to sweat out a chow line but by 1930 we were out on the streets and ready to do some serious sightseeing. We went to Piccadilly Circus and there I suffered my first disappointment. The fountain had a concrete shield around it plus a layer of sandbags to protect it from bombs. In 1984 I returned to Piccadilly only to find that the fountain had been shipped to Scotland for restoration. Finally, on my third visit in 1986, I did see the fountain.

From Piccadilly we wandered to beautiful St. James' Park where we met a couple of girls. In a short time they left because the one I was with got mad when I would not kiss her. Within a half hour we met two others and became engaged in friendly conversation. Maud and I made a date for Sunday evening but there was a catch, she did not get off from work until 1600 hours and on alternate weeks she had to be back to work at 1930 until 2100 - it was all very complicated. Her schedule often made it a little late to go anywhere and do anything, but it also made it easy on the billfold. Both Maud and her sister worked and stayed at the Royal Automobile Club and had to be in by 0015 because at that time the doors were locked.

On Saturday morning I started out bright and early with another fellow to see London. However, it was not early enough to join the 0945 tour but this proved to be to our advantage because the 0945 one was a walking tour so we were forced to take the 1030 bus tour. Heaven only knows where we went; I was totally lost, but we saw the main tourist attractions. We saw the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Big Ben, London Bridge, Buckingham Palace, Dickenson's Old Curiosity Shop, the Tower Bridge and the Tower of London. In the afternoon we revisited some of the same places and took a few pictures, pictures which we were unable to take in the morning because the tour bus was moving too fast or we were sitting on the wrong side.

That evening we went out - well I did. The other fellow, Thorne, was stood up so Maud and I went on our own little tour to see the sights. We walked to Buckingham Palace, to the Houses of Parliament with Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, the Tower Bridge, and then back to St. James' Park. Somehow I did not mind seeing these places three times in one day but the third trip, with Maud, was the most fun.

Sunday morning I set out for Mass which was to be celebrated at a different Red Cross, one located on Caldron Street. Forty-five minutes later, after finding Caldron Square, Caldron Gate, Caldron Lane and Caldron Place I found Caldron Street and attended Mass. I was able to walk back to my Red Cross in four or five minutes after I had learned my way around. It is not hard to get lost in London because the streets are in a random pattern (there just do not know what a square block is), and the name of any given street may change every two or three blocks. After Mass I ate and went to Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum. I really enjoyed the museum, perhaps better than anything else in London except Maud.

One of the most interesting displays was the "Sleeping Beauty", it even looked like she was breathing. Then there were ushers, also of wax, to guide you through the museum

and bobbies too, again of wax standing around. I was amused by their hats. Every figure on display looked so lifelike!

There were many good theaters in London where you could see first run movies. The movie theaters used a different price structure from those in the States, they charged according to the location of your seat was, the balcony being the cheapest. At home I usually sat in the balcony so the prices in English theaters suited me just fine - I got both the seat and price I preferred.

Back to Maud. I liked her. She was an Irish girl with freckles on her nose, long sandy colored hair that hung down to her waist in the back and a very nice personality. She and her sister came from Ireland and both worked at the Royal Automobile Club in London. She did show me a picture of her home back in Ireland; it was a two-story, thatched roof house which she referred to as a cottage. She could not quite grasp the American definition of a cottage.

The weather was not too good during August of 1945 and I made no secret of it in letters I sent home. I complained that it was never sunny in the morning, it rained often and the sun only came out for a few hours about two days a week and then only in the afternoon. I had signed up for a tennis class at school but the cards were stacked against me - one factor was the rotten weather and the other was that there were only three outdoor courts on campus. With these two strikes against me I was able to get out only three times so I never became a great tennis player. I did get out on Thursday, the seventeenth of August but that session only served to prove that I could still hit the ball. Eileen said that she liked to play tennis too, but we never did get a chance to play. I also had planned to take fencing but must not have been able to get into the class. I don't remember ever taking such a class and that is something I most certainly not forget.

It is difficult to recall the other classes I took but I do remember a U.S. History class and one in Educational Psychology. These probably stick in my mind because I received credit for them at the University of Minnesota later on.

I tried to stay for a second term and S.A.U. but my request was turned down. I did not know it at the time but there was to be only one more term at the university then the school would be closed. The war had suddenly ended in Japan on August 15th 1945 and the troops would start to be sent home on points and discharged, therefore the school closed and reverted back to the British. On a visit to Shrewsbury and the school in 1986 I found it still to be in operation but it is now the Royal Military School of Science.

I must admit that I liked London and went there whenever I got a chance. On August 17, 18 and 19th I was in London again and had a chance to see the king and queen and their daughters Ann and Margaret. On the first occasion the royal family was in the royal coach but later the King and queen appeared on a balcony at Buckingham Palace. To me Buckingham Palace was fascinating and I watched the changing of the guard several times. The changing of the guard was not as colorful in 1945 as it is in peacetime because the guards wore regulation army uniforms rather than the colorful red and black dress uniforms.

The subway, or Underground, was fun to ride and easy to use. The thing that I did not like about it was that the English charged the American G.I.s to ride both the Underground and the regular busses. There was a way to beat the system though - back in 1945 there were ticket machines in each underground station where you put change in to buy a ticket to your destination. It was a zone system, the greater the distance the higher the price. Our system was to get off one station before our final destination on our first trip and buy several tickets from there to the station closest to our Red Cross. These tickets were saved for use

on future trips when we returned from a more distant station on the same line. We would then use the prepurchased ticket just as if we had bought it at the station near to our Red Cross when we got off the train and present the "short line" ticket to the ticket taker. In this manner we could ride from the farthest station to our base for the lowest possible fare.

The English people, especially those in London, seemed to go for models in a big way and there were models in many store windows and showrooms. This was especially true of steamship lines where there were models of their prize ships and also models of the cabins on those ships. Airplane models were frequently on display and seemed to be on more popular there than in the States. I did see a beautiful model of a British army tank in an automobile showroom which I spent some time admiring. It may be that the automobile company had switched to building tanks during the war. The war may have made the civilian goods so scarce that models were used to remind the people of the real thing.

Some of the other exhibits I saw in London, in model form, was an R.A.F. exhibit, a post-war home exhibit, one depicting how the medics evacuated and cared for the wounded, one on "Children Of Europe", London during the Blitz, a plan for rebuilding London and U-1 and U-2 exhibit. To me this was interesting and exciting so I went from exhibit to exhibit to study them.

There were numerous chess sets on display in store windows which caught my eye. Most were hand crafted and of individual designs which would be difficult to play with.

I was interested in the cars I saw in England. It was there that I first saw a Mercedes-Benz 540-K, and noticed that the American Plymouth bore a Chrysler monogram. I fell in love with the London taxi, and to this day still like them, even the more modern ones.

I received a letter from Bud, written on August 15th, announcing that he and the 376th P.F.A. battalion, was already in Berlin. I noted that that was just one year after our jump into France.

A trip to London for a weekend, which began on Friday at 1400 hours and lasted until about 2345 Sunday, was rather inexpensive. As an example: I spent the third weekend of August there for a total of \$5.28. The train ride should have cost \$2.48 each way but that was paid for by the school - they chartered the trains. I paid for two nights at the Red Cross, paid for all my meals, Maud and I went to a movie, had tea and went to some free events.

It was necessary to watch my spending because I was on partial pay and only got \$16.14 per month. To help offset this condition I wrote to Jim Andersen and asked him to loan me some money. Jim sent some money, but though no fault of his, the cash created an unusual problem. I received the money on a Friday morning, the day is important to the story, and I had planned to leave for London that afternoon but first it was necessary to convert the occupation marks into English pounds before I left the campus. I took the marks to the paymaster's office to make the exchange. There was a non-commissioned officer at the pay window who looked at the money, then divided it into two piles. One pile he converted into pounds, the other he returned to me with instructions to return next Monday when an officer would be on duty. He explained that he thought that the money might be counterfeit and he did not want to take the responsibility of exchanging it. After spending the weekend in London I took the remaining suspicious money back to the paymaster. I explained my problem to the officer on duty who inspected the marks and immediately exchanged them. He said that the money was legal but the questionable notes had been printed by the Russians. He pointed out the poor registration of the different colors and compared the job with that is sometimes seen in the comics in the Sunday paper.

In London there are escalators in the subways but not in the department stores, not even in the large ones. Eileen would not believe that we had them in stores, especially if the store already had a "lift" in it, or that busses had their motors in the rear or that trains had reclining seats until I stopped another G. I. and had him verify the facts.

While in London I had to do as the English do, have a spot of tea. I found that I enjoyed these these little formalities. The English magazines did not have colored (or should I say coloured) pictures in them, at least during the war, so the English greatly enjoyed the American magazines. For this reason I had magazines mailed to me and I passed them on to my English friends.

V-J was a big day at school but I would rather have been in London for the celebration. Even in Shrivvingham there was music and dancing in the streets. Some of the fellows went into a house and moved a piano from the second floor out into the street, enjoyed the music and dancing then left and went back to school. The last I saw of the piano it was still standing out in the middle of the street.

For the weekend of August 24th to August 26th I was back in London where, on the 25th I went through the Houses of Parliament. When I visited the House of Commons it was in poor condition. It had suffered a direct hit by a German bomb. Tradition is an important part of British life and in the House of Lords each meeting is started with a prayer. If a member was there for a prayer he is then entitled to reserve a seat for himself by writing his name on a small white card to reserve a seat. About a week before I toured the building a group of G.I.s went through and thought that the cards would make good souvenirs, especially since they had already been autographed, so they helped themselves to the prizes. This did not go over too well with the British government and we were warned to leave the cards in place. While in London I was able to buy about twenty pair of paratrooper wings for only \$.38 apiece. I knew that many of the men would like to have an extra pair so I mailed fifteen of them back to the outfit in Berlin. The wings never made it to the 376th, they were probably stolen.

By the first of September I had accumulated 70 to 75 points toward my discharge. For a discharge a G.I. needed 85 points. The points were earned for by various ways such as, one point for each month in the service, one for each month spent over seas, points if married, points for each child, for a wound etc. The Stars and Stripes stated that all with seventy or more points, as of August 1st, could expect to be on their way home, or already home, by Christmas of 1945.

On September 1 I weighed in at 12 stone and 12.

On September the second Eileen and her family moved back to Purley, Surry, a suburb of London to a house at 8. Northwood Avenue.

On the second weekend of September I discovered Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park and I was highly amused by the characters and their audiences. The speakers used anything available for a speaker's stand, it could be a box, a chair, maybe a step ladder or even a portable stand just so they were up higher than the rest of the people. The subject matter could be anything but politics and religion seemed to be the most popular ones. While I was watching, one speaker got a little too excited, leaned too far forward and fell off his stand. Hecklers add to the fun, they get on a speaker and try to grind him into the ground but most speakers are able to hold their own.

In the same letter I again praised the underground all the way from the entrances to the stations, to the escalators, to the size of the stations and even down to their clever ticket dispensing machines.

Meanwhile, back at school there was a water problem and we could not drink the water from the fountains from Sunday until Tuesday.

On Monday I not only had to contend with the water problem but also with my iron.

The iron probably came with the room, I am not sure, but I didn't buy it and it is not logical that I would carry that much weight around before coming to England. What is more, I had no intention of using it after leaving school. For some reason the iron went cold on me so I sent it in for repairs at the school. It was returned without being repaired and they said it needed a new "filament" or heating element. Rather than wait until they got around to it I took the iron into town and bought a replacement which the store installed. Back to school I went, happy until I plugged it in and blew a fuse. Back to the store I went and had the correct element installed. From then on the iron worked well and I had a pressed uniform.

The Stars and Stripes announced that a state representative from Ohio had introduced a bill to stop "jumping troopers in Europe for European dignitaries. Naturally I was all for him and his proposed bill!

I saw the movie "The Picture Of Dorian Gray" and liked it very much, it had such a surprising and unusual ending.

On September 17th I wrote my last letter from England. The stay there had been fun and I was thankful to have seen at least part of the country. In that letter I accused mother of bring me up without teaching me the social graces. I had made a grave error in England, that of pouring the tea into the cup before putting in the milk and sugar.

I also described Eileen's house at 8, Northwood Avenue in Purley, Surry, about thirteen miles from Victoria Station. It was a two story house with a garage on the ground floor and three bedrooms upstairs. The house was on a hill and the view from the dining room window overlooked a valley.

On my visits to Eileen's I was able to bring treats to her younger brother and sister, usually candy or chewing gum, or even an orange when possible. Many of the children in England had never seen an orange so it was a real treat. For the family there was another advantage in that I received ration coupons for food for the three days I was in London. I gave the coupons to Eileen's mother and Eileen and I usually ate out, so the family made out all right too.

One Saturday Eileen and I went to a football game, soccer to Americans, but what made it interesting was the half time entertainment - it was a polo game played on bicycles. The bikes had a direct drive, which meant that there was no coasting, and since the rider had to use one hand to hold the mallet, he had little or no braking power. To stop, or rather to try to stop, he attempted to pedal backward - this caused the rider to bounce up and down about three times before coming to a halt. It was a wild game! To start the game the referee tossed the ball on to the center of the field and two riders started from opposite ends of the field. By the time they got to the center of the field they were going full speed and looking at the ball, that was when the game got interesting.

The last Sunday I was in London Eileen and I made our final sightseeing trip. We saw the theater where Shakespeare put on some of his plays, then we took a boat ride down the Thames River from the Houses of Parliament to the Tower of London.

Along with having tea and crumpets at four I learned to eat fish and chips. The chips were french fries and usually served in a piece of newspaper rolled into a cone shape.

Life was pleasant in England and I can prove it by the weight I gained, something between a stone and a stone and a half.

The people were really nice, they would invite you into their home and Eileen's sister, Hazel, offered to do my laundry, pressing and mending.

I left behind the English taxi with its right hand drive and a space next to the driver for luggage. And I will always miss the red double deck busses which were s so much fun to ride, especially on the upper deck.

OCCUPATION DUTY IN BERLIN

I left England by boat, crossed the Channel and took a train to Paris. From there I flew to Berlin in a C-47 into Templehoff Airport. As we circled the airfield in preparation for landing I could not help but be impressed by the appearance of the facilities - it was laid out in a partial circle and the buildings looked like huge arms surrounding the loading area. I noted in my letter home on October fourth that the flight had taken only three hours. I also remember that the plane was equipped with litters so I climbed into one and slept most of the this time, this is probably the reason why I did not get airsick. In Berlin I rejoined the 376th P.F.A. for occupation duty and things started out on a good note - while policing-up I found a Parker pencil and a dollar bill. From then on I paid much more attention to that important task.

At Templehoff Airport, if I recall correctly, I found a Coke machine that held the bottles in a carousel and you reached them from the top, which after putting a nickel in, you could extract about a dozen bottles. Even at the P.M. in Berlin items were cheaper than at other camps so I could foresee a little extra cash left over from my pay. Also I would be back on regular pay, not to mention the back pay due me.

By the fourth of October all of the men of the 13th Airborne Division who had 88 or more points were already on their way home or discharged so my time was getting close. There was one nice thing about being in Berlin, that is that they served raisin bread in the mess hall. Not every day, of course, but often enough to make life interesting.

Our cigarettes, for which we paid \$.55 a carton, brought \$1.00 when sold to civilians. And I began to think in terms of a camera. One day I had a chance to trade a \$1.13 worth of cigarettes and candy bars for a twin lens reflex camera. It was a British made Foth Flex with a 3.5 lens and a focal plane shutter which used 120 size film. It compared favorably to a Kodak model which retailed for \$125.00. Also I started to plan to learn a little about photography, especially of developing film and printing pictures.

Guard duty was a little different in Berlin, we were on twenty-four hours, off twenty-four, on twenty-four etc. It sounds as if we had a lot of time to ourselves, but this was not the case. You were pretty well beat after a day on duty and you needed a day off to catch up on your lost sleep and bring your clothes and equipment up to the standards. While on post you wore white gloves, a white scarf made from the nylon of a parachute and white shoe laces made from shroud lines of a parachute. It was required that you carry our gun and you were always in contact to the command center by way of radio or telephone. Before we were in Berlin we found that it was very easy and cheap to send our laundry to a German woman and have her do it. The going rate was three or four cigarettes for about a week's laundry.

One of the guard posts to which I was assigned was the telephone exchange. The telephone system in Germany at that time was much more advanced than that of the United States. We were at the main exchange building in Berlin through which all long distance calls were routed using a direct dial system. The fact that Germany is so much smaller than the United States may account for the use of this system long before we had it.

Another post was at the Coco Cola bottling plant, a good post I might add because we were able to supply the entire guard shift with Cokes. On the outside of the building there

was a loading ramp from the second floor to the outside loading dock at ground level. This ramp consisted of rollers so the cases could be rolled down to the dock, but it was also possible to climb up the ramp, enter the building through an unlocked door which was about two feet square and send full cases of Coke down. On the premises there was what we called "Glass Mountain", a pile of broken Coke bottles as large any snow pile that I have ever seen in Minnesota. They must have collected broken bottles since the beginning of the war, probably to be melted down when fuel was more plentiful.

We also drew guard duty at a minor war criminal camp but that was a rather dull post. I did notice strict rules against any food or presents that were allowed to be brought into the prisoners. Food could only be brought in a given number of times per month to each prisoner but the guard at the front gate did not have a schedule so he would have to let the person take the food to the office where it would be passed on or returned. I felt sorry for the people bringing the food because the prisoners were probably getting more and better food than they were. Then there was the non-fraternizing policy in force whereby soldiers were forbidden to associate with civilians except for official reasons, this made it uncomfortable both for G.I.s and civilians.

On October the 5th Bud and I went sightseeing. We went through the Reich Chancellery and visited the room where the Axis Pact had been signed. The chancellery had received a direct hit during a bombing raid and a bomb went through the exact center of the glass dome - it could not been a more accurate hit if the bombardier had stood on the roof and released the bomb. Then we explored the Fuehererbunker with torches made from rolled up newspaper because there was no electricity. This was not very successful so we made plans to return on another day with a flashlight and a few tools. A few days later we did return, I was looking for buttons for the collection of my aunts, Bertha and Ann, but I found an even more interesting souvenir - the door handle from Hitler's bathroom. I say handle because it looks more like a locker handle than a doorknob that we would have in our home. In 1976 I presented this handle to the 82nd Airborne Museum at Fort Bragg and it is now on display in the section that deals with the 82nd's occupation of Berlin.

There is an interesting story in connection with that display. In 1982 Pat and I stopped at the museum, it was her first visit, so we started at the beginning and worked our way through each and every exhibit which was displayed in chronicle order. The 82nd was an infantry division in World War I and became an airborne division in late 1942. The museum was quiet, almost too quiet, and the visitors were respectful. On the day we went through this was the case until we got to the Berlin display, and the door knob, where we heard some people laughing and Pat heard one fellow ask, "Who in hell would bring something like that back?" Pat tapped him on the shoulder, pointed to me and said, "You are looking at him".

Another Berlin location that we visited was the Hotel Aldon on Unter Den Linden where visiting diplomats and newsmen once stayed. All that was left after the bombings and shelling was a pile of rubble but we did find the name carved in a stone which looked like it was once over the main entrance.

Other places that we saw included the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church which was almost totally destroyed, the Brandenburg Gate, only slightly damaged and Gestapo Headquarters.

While on guard duty one day I was involved in an unfortunate incident. The post was at the dividing line between the Russian and American sectors of the city and it was our duty to warn the Americans that they would be entering into Russian territory and to make sure that there were two or more G.I.s, never just one. At that time it was all right to pass

from one sector into another and, for that purpose, we carried a pass written in four languages English, French, Russian and German.

While at this post we saw a n old German man and woman, about fifty yards away, trying to load a large tree stump on to a small, hand-drawn wagon. They probably planned to use the stump for firewood. We went over to help them and while we were doing so a German civilian on a bicycle stopped at our post. He lit his cigarette from our bonfire, which was not unusual, because there was a shortage of matches. At the same time he threw a .31 cal. rifle shell into the fire and left. A few minutes later we returned and, while standing near the fire the shell exploded. At first I thought nothing of it, then I began to feel blood flowing down my legs, I had been hit. I had been hit by four fragments, two in each leg, both above and below each knee. We called for help and I was taken to an army hospital in Berlin.

At the hospital they took X-rays and removed two of the four fragments. In a letter home on about October 12th I said that I felt well but could feel the the pieces of fragments under the skin. Four days later I wrote again to tell how I was enjoying life in the hospital - there were no more shots or pills. Up until that time a nurse would come in every four hours and jab me with a needle and feed me two large and three small pills. Now I was just loafing around and missing a lot of guard duty. On that day, the 16th of October, there was a big raid at the Tiergarten, a large park in Berlin where black market operations were carried out. The British M.P.s and German civilian police staged the raid and used four tanks and a fleet of armored cars. Over two thousand suspects were rounded up, including a Russian major-general and two truckloads of Russian soldiers. Strange, but no American or British were taken in. These raids were frequent and German civilians would be forced to destroy or throw away evidence, such as candy bars or cigarettes, before they were caught. Rather than throw the candy bars away so they would eat as many as possible - I can imagine a lot of stomach aches later that night.

By then, the 16th, I was up and around and spent time getting Cokes and other goodies for those who could not get out of bed. It seems as though there was an inexhaustible supplies of goodies at the hospital just for the asking. I was released on October 22, 1945 but left the hospital with sour feeling toward the hospital. Yes, I had been treated very well and actually enjoyed my stay there, but when it came time to leave they gave me my old pants back with the holes in the legs and both legs caked with dried blood.

While I was in the hospital they brought in a G.I. who had been beat up by some Russian soldiers. It was not a pretty sight.

In the hospital I began to worry about the mail back in the battery. I was the mail orderly in headquarters battery and it was almost a full time job because so many of the men were leaving to be discharged and new replacements were coming in every day. It was a pretty mixed up affair. I had written home and asked that no more magazines be sent, not because I didn't want the reading material, but because there were still magazines coming in for men who had left and we did not forward any mail except first class. I had more than enough reading material.

Upon my return to the battery the battery commander "thanked me for the way I had conducted myself" and relieved me from guard duty outside of the barracks. Such duties satisfied me fine - the 585th Parachute Infantry had just increased the number of men on their patrols from four to six men because of fire fights during the past two nights. Also the amount of time I spent on guard duty was cut to about a third of what the other men put in.

I had salvaged the rifle shell casing which had exploded n our fire and mailed it home. To this day I still have it in a display case in my basement.

A word about the Russians; theirs was a ragged army, almost no two uniforms matched and you never could tell the individual's rank. I did see one Russian soldier buy a camera from the black market, stand in one place and "take pictures" in eight directions, then open the camera, look at the film and throw the camera away because there were no pictures. I have seen Russians who would not believe that jeeps were an American product, they firmly believed that they were built in Russia. And, after the war, I read that Russian soldiers would take water faucets and light bulbs home with them to be used in their houses even though they did not have running water or electricity.

I had never seen so much destruction as that in Berlin, I do not remember seeing a house or building that had not suffered some damage, damage that ranged all the way from broken windows to total destruction. The damage was not only caused by bombings by the British and Americans but also by Russian artillery.

By the first of November I had accumulated enough points for a discharge and on December 1st, 1945 I sent a telegram to my family to notify them that I would be boarding ship the following day.