

Action in Northern Europe

June, 1944 – September, 1945

A more global view of events in northern Europe can be found in the *History of the Thirtieth Division Artillery* by Captain Norman F. Fay and First Lieutenant Charles M. Kincaid of the Division Artillery Headquarters or *Work Horse of the Western Front, the story of the 30th Infantry Division* by Robert L. Hewitt. The things reported here are my personal recollections.

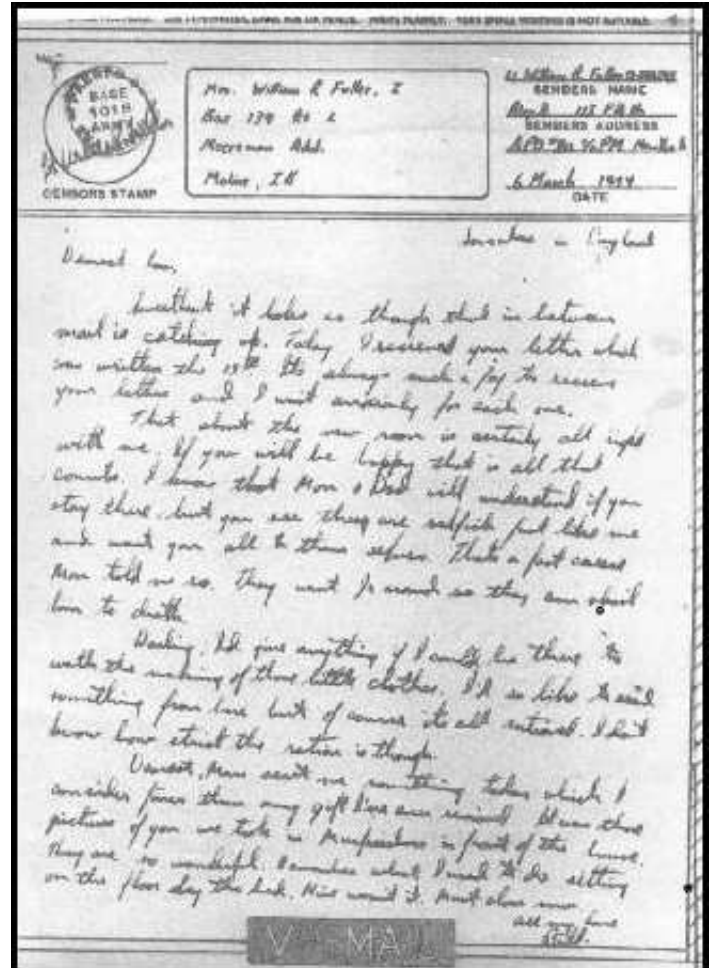
Many specific dates and events were recalled by re-reading 150 letters I wrote to my wife, Lou, between 3 February, 1944, and 15 September, 1945. These and dates from the above two books helped me to maintain correct chronology for events which, while remembered themselves, were not always correctly ordered in my mind. In fixing dates, I have also been aided by receiving from Major Mike Willard, of the current 113th Artillery Regiment, an annotated collection of photos which my comrade Van K. Heely left behind.

In June, 1943, I had been assigned to the 30th Infantry Division and was a member of Battery A, 113th Field Artillery Battalion. We were a part of the 30th Infantry Division. Our guns, technically howitzers, were of 155 mm caliber. That is, the bore was a little over 6 inches in diameter. Such guns are called “medium” artillery. A medium artillery battalion provides general support for the whole division. Each of the three Infantry Regiments in the division has its own “light” artillery battalion. These guns are of 105 mm caliber.

We arrived in England in February, 1944, and engaged in training and practice firing throughout the ensuing months. Throughout May of 1944 we were ready to go to an invasion of France. Our vehicles’ ignition systems were water-proofed. We had extensions, which ran up above the roofs, affixed to the exhaust pipes so they would not be under water should we need to drive in water from the boats that would carry us across the Channel. The dragging days ended when the morning hours of June 6 were filled with the sound of hundreds of planes flying overhead – southbound.

A few days later we moved to a marshaling yard near the Channel. On the afternoon of June 14 (D+8) we loaded on the transports, LSTs, etc., and set out for France from Portland Harbor, Dorset, England. The next morning, as we were underway for Omaha Beach, one of the ships left the main route to read the marking on a buoy. As a result it hit a mine and sustained heavy damage, including loss of life, among members of our “C” Battery. (A report of this incident, filed by Capt F.E. Richards, CO of LST #133, was obtained

from Frank Towers of the 30th Infantry Division Association. It shows 30 army personnel killed, wounded or missing after the incident. The official report does not include a reference to veering from the main channel. That may have been scuttlebutt.)



Some of our mail was sent using the V-mail system. Our letters were photographed and the film flown to the U.S. and printed for delivery. The above is actual size.

We came to the coast of France at Omaha Beach in the evening of June 15 (D+9) and actually came ashore after dark. This sector had been designated OMAHA RED. It was an eerie sight. Search lights were probing the sky. Planes were flying overhead. I didn't know whose planes they were. When I asked if there had been any bombing or strafing that night, a helpful MP assured us that there had been. Nightly bombings by German planes dropping anti-personnel bombs characterized the early part of the invasion. Fox-holes were adequate protection, except for a direct hit.

Night bombings were disturbing. My philosophy was: “German cannoners knew what they

were shooting at and might miss; night pilots had no idea what they were aiming at and might hit." While no one in Battery "A" was hurt by these bombings, they kept us jittery.

That may account for the "nerves" that led to a "gas attack." It seems that someone heard three shots fired in succession; the signal for such an event. We all rushed frantically for our gas masks which had not been unpacked since the landing. They were waterproofed, so they didn't work until we removed that. By that time it had been determined that it was a false alarm. Later we heard that this event was the result of one soldier shouting to another about gas for a vehicle.

Months later, in a 27 December letter to Lou, I related another effect of our newness to combat.

"... one night shortly after we landed in France and were all pretty "trigger happy" we were running a pretty stiff guard to watch for infiltrating snipers. It was time to change guards and one of the boys was pretty worried about going down to relieve one of the guards, so he was kinda' slipping down the hedgerow. He approached the guard very quietly and when the guard halted him he apparently didn't hear him 'cause anyway he didn't halt. About this time the guard opened with his Carbine. And off went the strap of his relief's helmet. Of course the guy was pretty scared about it as he thought it was a Jerry shooting at him, but looking back it's pretty funny." (*"Jerry" is the nickname given to German soldiers.*)

This part of France is called Normandy. Its farms are mostly small with many fields divided by hedgerows. Life was like a perpetual bivouac. But now the enemy was real; the ammunition was real; we weren't in Tennessee anymore!

The hedgerows made long range visibility difficult unless one was on higher ground. We moved inland as directed and set up our guns in front of a hedgerow. We dug our foxholes behind the hedgerow. That way the incoming shells would hit the hedgerow first. We were apparently unaware that the shrapnel from a tree burst could be deadly. The local farmers were very helpful in supplying us with batches of thatch which we could put over our foxholes for further protection. These wouldn't have helped in case of a direct hit, but would have helped to stop shrapnel.

I was a "forward observer" at this time. Together with a driver and a sergeant we went out with a Jeep equipped with a radio to search for the enemy targets. My sergeant was Preston ("Pres") C. Clark. He was a veteran in the sense that

he had several years service with National Guard before the war. However, we were a compatible team. We were assigned to some high ground northwest of St. Lo. There we kept our eyes peeled for German action. There actually wasn't much. Down below us farmers worked their fields and drove their cows to pasture and home. We often wondered if they were Germans in disguise.

Occasionally we became convinced that a certain haystack hid a German activity of some kind. On one occasion I called for fire on the haystack. Things had been dull and I think the cannoneers appreciated the action. In spite of my previous success as a shooter, I never actually hit the haystack. Of course, cannons don't usually have to hit a target center. The shells just land close and shrapnel does the job. Maybe some of the shrapnel from my shells penetrated that hay stack.

Actually, it was pretty dull up there on that small rise. In fact combat is mostly pretty dull; punctuated with moments of terror. Anyway, "Pres" and I got a little complacent and showed too much of ourselves. Our reward was a salvo of incoming 88s. (The Germans had an 88mm gun that was extremely accurate. It also had a flat trajectory, so there was not much of a whistle to give an advanced warning of an incoming shell.) We had only dug one foxhole, so we both dived into it. I was on top; shaking like a leaf. After it was over and we found we had not been hit, I apologized for my trembling. "Pres" assured me that he thought it was he who was shaking.

After a few days on that hill, we were recalled to the battery. I found it quite relaxing to be able to sleep in a foxhole behind our guns. The following morning I commented that I was glad they had had a quiet night for our first night back. I was told that they had fired all night. Such was my fatigue that I slept through it.

On July 3, 1944, I was called to Battalion Headquarters. There I was informed that the Red Cross had sent forward word that William Richard Fuller, Jr. had been born on June 23. Colonel Griffin said, "Well, Billy Dick, now you really have something to fight for." Lou was already enough! (I don't remember exactly when I became "Billy Dick" for my comrades. Such two part nicknames are common in the southern U.S.A. where mosey of my comrades were from, so it probably seemed natural to them.)

Medium artillery observers do not usually travel with the Infantry Battalions. On one occasion, my team and I traveled with them to be on call should supporting artillery fire be required. On the 10th of July the commander of the unit I

was with called for me. They had received word of an impending counterattack by German infantry accompanied by tanks. With my team, I went to a spot along a road where the attack was expected. I contacted my battery by radio only to learn that they were on the move and the guns were not in a position to be fired. However, they quickly dropped trails. I was not sure where they were, but they knew my approximate coordinates. As soon as they were ready they told me so. I called for a round beyond my position. It was impossible to see where the shells were falling because of the hedgerows. The sound of a shell going overhead gave me a idea of where it was falling. The shells fired in this adjustment were smoke shells, that is, a column of smoke rose from the impact point so we could tell where it fell. At first even this smoke could not be seen.

As I continued to adjust fire, a German scout on a motorcycle came out from behind some trees a few hundred yards beyond our “front lines” and rode down the road toward us. A rifle beside me was raised and the scout spun off into the ditch across the road – dead. Finally, a shell fell where I could see the smoke. With another small adjustment the next round fell in the desired area. A German tank came from behind a hedgerow several hundred yards down the road. I called for “fire for effect.” Beside me a bazooka was raised and sent its missile toward the tank.

I omitted sound impressions from these two events because I have no memory of the sounds around me at that time although, in addition to these armaments, there must have been shouting, etc.

The artillery fire was said to have been helpful in repulsing the attack. We didn’t usually get a chance to return to the scene of any action to review our efforts. My team and I received Bronze Star Medals for this action. (*See Pages 183-187 and 254*)

The Division Artillery History relates: “The next day, the 10th, the Div. made gains to the south and repulsed one small counterattack.” Perhaps this attack was the adventure I referred to above. The cannon of a tank pointing in your direction while you’re waiting for your shells to fall where they can be seen prevents one from considering any attack as “small.”

I learned and carried out my last “practical” joke on the basis of my traveling with the infantry. It was one I saw played by an infantryman. A soldier would unscrew the head of a grenade and dump out the powder, replace the head, pull the pin and casually drop the grenade in a group of

other soldiers. There being no explosive in the grenade, it just popped open. When I tried it, I apparently wasn’t careful to see that all the powder came out. When I didn’t run, the men around me apparently realized it was meant as a joke. Then there was a small explosion. No one was hurt, but the explosion was more than I anticipated. I didn’t pull any more “practical jokes” after that. Some of the men thought that action as a forward observer had deranged me.

In late July (24th?) my team and I were assigned to observe from high ground on the north and east side of the Vire River. At that point the Vire flows westerly from St. Lo before turning back to the north toward the Channel. We established ourselves in an old farm house. From the second floor we had a good view across the valley and the line held by our troops. Actually, since St. Lo had been captured (liberated), we were south, i.e., ahead of our 30th Division troops. A major attack and, hopefully an allied breakthrough, was scheduled for that day. The attack was to be accompanied by thousands of bombers and massive artillery support. Artillery fired red smoke shells to mark the front lines for the aerial bombardment. After the first wave of bombers, it was obvious from our position that the dust raised by the exploding bombs was drifting back over the smoke and making the front line appear to be much farther north. This led to great inaccuracies from the second and succeeding waves of bombers. The result was much loss of Allied life, including that of General McNair, and forced the attack to be postponed.

This also gave me another good reason to shake. Some of the planes not only dropped their bombs short, but also wide of the target area. Some of them fell around us giving our old farm house a real shaking.

The attack was re-instituted the next day – July 25 – and was successful. I don’t remember what I did that day. This operation was called *COBRA*.

The next several days saw our attack being successful as we drove steadily south. In a letter on July 31, I summarized all this to Lou by writing: “...as you know from the papers big things have been happening in France and I’ve just been too busy or too tired to write.”

About August 6, we relieved the 1st Division in positions near Mortain, France. This was supposed to be a respite; the 1st reported little activity. We were to have a little rest while others attempted to close the “Falaise Gap” near the town by that name, and capture a large portion of the

German Army.

However, the Germans had been secretly amassing men and armaments for a counterattack in our area. Advanced units of the allied forces were pressing to cut off a large portion of the German army by closing a gap near the town of Falaise. The planned counterattack was aimed to cut through our lines of supply and thus thwart the closing of the “Falaise Gap.”

Caught by surprise, the attack was narrowly repulsed by much close fighting including some of our light artillery battalions essentially serving as infantry. Our 155s were always somewhat farther from the front, so, except for the possibility of a German success, we were little impacted by this. Of course, we did a lot of firing during the effort to break up the counter attack. Part of this was to prevent the Germans from bringing more troops to bear on a surrounded 30th Battalion, by denying them the use of roads. Several units of an Infantry Regiment had been assigned to project an important hill - “Hill 314.” They had become surrounded by the Germans and threatened with annihilation. Efforts to supply them by air-drops had proved unfruitful. We were enlisted in the efforts to bring medical supplies to this group by firing them in hollowed out 155 mm projectiles.

Several books have been written about this battle.

I’m not sure of my memory, but I think that it was at this time that one of our batteries was mistakenly attacked by P 47 fighter-bombers. The combination of machine guns and rockets made their fire power most impressive.

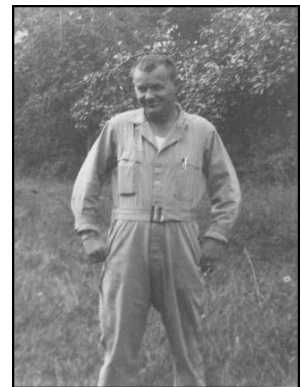


Mortain, France, after the battle August, 1944

To fill out positions of personnel lost in other units, Ralph Bradley and others had been transferred out and I wrote to Lou on August 5 that only Abbott Weatherly and I were left of the original battery officers. A few days later, Lt. Arthur Fagowski joined us. Being from Buffalo, NY, he quickly was given the nickname “Buffalo” or, usu-

ally, just “Buff.” Buff and I were together until the Division was broken up during the summer of 1945. “Pres” Clark later received a “battlefield” promotion to Second Lieutenant and became our battery’s forward observer. He was killed later that year while performing these F.O. duties. I didn’t record the exact date when I was promoted to 1st Lieutenant, but was in that rank by the time the Battle of Mortain ended. I was now the Executive Officer of the battery.

Capt. Abbott Weatherly Of Abbott I wrote: “. . . there’s Abbott, a great guy. I really miss him. That’s a really typical pose too. Sheepish grin and all.”



My letter of August 24 revealed that Abbott had been promoted to Major and transferred to another battalion. I became Battery Commander (CO). A battery is composed of about 100 men, four howitzers and various vehicles. (See Page 181-182) In my own words:

“When Abbott left the Colonel asked him who he would like to have in command of “A” Battery and he told the Colonel he’d like to have me. The Colonel hasn’t definitely made up his mind yet I don’t think but he told me to take command until he did. I’ve had it for about a week now, but there are so many officers in the Battalion that outrank me that I’m afraid to hope too highly.”

I continued:

“It certainly is a wonderful feeling to have your men behind you the way mine are behind me. They’re in one accord in wanting me to remain their CO and many of them have spoken to the Colonel.”

We were not allowed to liberate Paris. That was reserved for General Charles DeGaulle and the Free French Army. We drove by so close that the Eiffel tower was visible to us. This was about 27-28 August. I got a leave to visit Paris later and enjoyed the sights of the city including what seemed very naughty to my midwestern experience – The Follies Bergere. I didn’t understand a word, but that was a small drawback. The action and costumes, or lack thereof, spoke loudly.

I continued in command of the battery as the Division sped across France and Belgium up to the German border in what I understand was called the fastest opposed march in the history of war-

fare. (I didn't say it; someone else did.) This drive covered about 400 miles in about one month. The thing that made it most memorable to me was that I had diarrhea. I lost more than twenty pounds during this drive.

In one small town where we set up our guns, the leader of the French Underground sent for me. We went in great secrecy at night to his headquarters. He wanted my assurance that the Germans would not come back. I, 1st Lieutenant William R. Fuller, not yet 24 years old, gave him that assurance! I was right; they didn't.

I wrote to Lou about one such incident in a letter dated 1 September, 1944.

"I know you have heard of the FFI – the French Force of the Interior – the "underground." Well I had a rather interesting experience with them the other night. I was standing on a corner in this little French town about 100 yards from my battery command post. (we were in position right on the edge of town) when a group of these FFI people marched by. A few minutes later one of the men came running out to me and said I'd better come in quick as somebody was liable to get hurt. When I got in my interpreter told me that the man who owned the house we were in was a collaborator who had been in very close cahoots with the Germans – we found out how close later and believe me he was really in it. The death sentence hung over his head and he deserves it. I took the leader of this small group back to our Counter Intelligence Corps and later they took me to their headquarters. The Underground kinda runs the liberated French towns and this is no more than right since they've fought the longest for French independence and the ones who were in authority usually were in pretty thick with the Germans.

"Absolutely no one could get into the council room without a member of the underground getting you there. We had to wait outside several doors while our friends made the arrangements. They were all business these French underground, believe me. When we got in they were going over the evidence against the worst collaborators. There were many smiles since the liberation of their town and the majority of France but you could sense their grim determination to rid themselves of the enemy within.

"The aide to the leader could speak fair English and he told me a lot of what had gone on in France during these years. The stories

we've all heard about the Germans are not merely propaganda – they're true.

"The leader came out to the battery to talk with the people who were still there and when he left he gave me a hearty handshake and said "Good luck." "See you in Berlin" – which is what we're planning to do as quickly as possible."

Our headlong race across France continued and on 6 September, 1944 I wrote Lou from "Somewhere in Belgium." We had arrived there three days earlier, but I hadn't had time to write.

I put in this little note about food here mainly because time-wise this is where it came up in one of my letters to Lou.

"Your lunch at Deane's certainly does sound good – but we got a little laugh out of your question about our food. (I read that part to a couple of the boys.) I don't mean that it isn't nourishing but it isn't always extremely appetizing. During these fast moving situations we eat a lot of the famous Army K-Ration which among other things has Processed American Cheese for Dinner – every day! You've no idea how monotonous cheese can get after a few days. Occasionally for breakfast there is even Cheese and Bacon which is better but is still cheese. However when things slow down we do measurably better. Today we had hamburgers and you know that suited me fine."

Elsewhere I described how I made English Style Stew palatable. If you have ever tasted English Style Stew (it came in large cans) you have an idea of what "poor food" can mean. The only way I found to make this edible was to "liberate" a supply of onions and mix them 50/50 with the stew. K-Rations were life sustaining, but that was about all one could say for those meals.

On 11 September, I wrote:

"The Belgians are really nice to us though. They make you right at home in their houses. Actually Lou, they're even insulted if you want to use your own towel. I've had some very good meals at some of their homes."

One such place is Wonck, Belgium, a small town where we stayed a few days. French was the language. Less than seven miles away across a small hill was Fall-et-Mehr. There they spoke Flemish. Both languages are still prevalent; so much so that signs around Brussels are in both. Both these towns are near Liege. They are too small to appear on most maps. That was the Europe I knew; small towns that don't appear on most maps!. I met people and spent some time

with them in both of these towns.

In Wonck, as often happened, just as we got comfortable, the command to move on came. As I walked back to my battery to tell the men, I uttered about the only French words I knew: “C’est la guerre.” I didn’t even know how to spell that then. A Belgian lady heard me and, thinking I could speak French, let go a five minute tirade on some subject; probably the war.

Another of those humorous events that punctuate combat occurred in this time frame. Two or three of us were in the Town Square of a small town when the Germans started shelling it. I dove for cover under a military trailer parked there. The bombardment didn’t last long, but upon emerging from my place of refuge, I found that my shelter was filled with ammunition!

The tendency to drop to the ground at the sound of incoming shells or explosions lasted a long time. Later, when I was back managing the Dispatch Department at the Indianapolis News again, there was a loud thunder clap. Instinctively, I dropped to the composing room floor. It was graphic illustration to my co-workers of the lasting effect of combat experience.

In Wonck I met Raymond (Ray) Moray, who had been a member of the Belgian underground. He wanted to go with us to fight the Germans. His ability to speak French and English was useful, so I let him go along for a while – another crazy act. I finally had to send him home before we entered Germany. Had he been captured, as a civilian in a U.S. uniform, he might have been in grave trouble.

Later I spent a leave there in Wonck and stayed with Ray in his mother’s home. I remember lying upstairs in Ray’s home’s attic under a huge “feather blanket” listening to “Buzz Bombs” (V1s) passing over on their way to nearby Liege. By then German “Buzz” bombs were daily occurrences.

These flying bombs had ram jet engines. They had crude guidance systems. Range was determined by the amount of fuel on board. When the missile ran out of fuel, it hit the ground within six seconds. They carried a lot of explosive so they made rather large holes. I saw one near Liege that could have held a house. They were, I think, more psychological than strategic.

When Lou and Jim and I were in Europe in 1984 we tried to visit Ray. Alas, he had died six years earlier. We did visit his wife. He hadn’t been married in 1944. She was living in the house that Ray and his mother had occupied in 1944. She served us Coke!



Moray Family, Wonck, Belgium



My driver, Cpl Rice, Ray’s parents, and me with Ray’s siblings outside their home.

The march continued. At one point, in late August or early September, due to a storm on the channel, we had no gas. (That’s what I remember; subsequent reading suggests it may have been that our supply lines had become too long due to the speed of our progress across Northern Europe.) We sat in a muddy field near Brussels until fuel arrived. I had time to go into Brussels for a haircut and to see a few sights, including the famous “pissing boy” statue.

On the 18th of September I wrote Lou from “Somewhere in Holland.”

Maastricht was the first major town in Holland to be liberated. There is a 30th Infantry Division Square there I am told.

At this time there was another change in status. As I wrote on 23 September:

“... my reign as Battery Commander ended after a month and three days. The reason was not any failure on my part for the Colonel told me he thought I was one of the best. But one of our old Captains – Captain Binnicker came back from the hospital and the

Colonel had no place for him on his staff so he had to send him down here. I don't feel too disappointed over it for I did get some valuable experience and I can say that I led "A Battery from just out of Mortain across France, Belgium and up to the German border. The Colonel was going to let me take the battery into Germany but I thought it would be better for the new CO to come down and get acquainted before we start the race to Berlin.

I'm Executive again although I think I'd rather be an observer. Execs never have any fun – observers have it all! But I suppose you'll like it better this way."

I hadn't played the role of forward observer since mid July.

We continued on through such Dutch towns as Heerlen and Kerkrade and arrived at the German border about the end of September or early October. Again there was a respite in moving forward while supplies caught up with us.

The assault of the Siegfried Line was in progress when I wrote to Lou from "Somewhere in Germany" on 12 October, 1944.

"There's quite a noticeable difference between being a liberating army and being a conquering army. No more are the townspeople waiting with cheers, smiles, wine, coffee and sandwiches as they were in France, Belgium and Holland. There are only a few around and not a smile in a carload."

By comparison, I recalled for her scenes from liberated France.

"One morning about two O'clock I passed through a small town in France that had just been liberated by our swift advance. Here the people were, at two O'clock on a cold rainy morning out dancing and singing around a huge fire built of German documents, books, orders, etc."

Several of my letters referred to these celebrations. Naturally, they didn't take place now that we were in Germany.

Toward the end of October or early November we had a bit of respite. I wrote to Lou on 3 November:

"I really had a good time the other day. Went back to Belgium for a little vacation and visited some of the people we met while on our victorious march to Germany. Went up to Fort Eben Emael and had my picture taken. And food, they just kept pushing it at you. And they felt insulted if you didn't eat.

"The Buzz Bombs beat a regular route over the house headed one place or another."

(Note: Liege was a popular target and Wonck and Fall-et-Mehr are on the route.)

During this same respite several of us were allowed to go to a field hospital for baths and some rest and good warm food. The latter was welcome as the days were now getting colder. At a party they served grapefruit juice, laced, as it turned out, with medicinal alcohol. After a canteen cup of that, I was very lucky to make it to my bed.

The days of rapid progress were over. I suppose that it was due to German resistance to our entering the Fatherland. By mid-November we were ready to start the drive to the Roer River about 15 miles from the German border. So the progress had been more like that in Normandy.



Mariadorf, Germany, November, 1944



Most houses had roofs made of tiles laid on stringers. When the house was hit by a shell, the explosion lifted these tile off and left the house roofless.

An attack on Mariadorf, in the run-up to the Roer crossing, was called a "perfect infantry attack." That is, the artillery fires move gradually forward and the infantry follows as close as possible. Actually, some casualties result from a round occasionally falling short, but, in general, it is safer for the infantry this way. Except, of course for those who are the victims of the "shorts."

About scenes like Mariadorf, I wrote: "There is considerable destruction, as there was in Normandy, but here no one regrets it." In fact many

of these little German towns were reduced to rubble by the intense bombardments which preceded every attack. Most of them were so small that they do not appear on most maps.

Written on 23 November, 1944

“This is of course Thanksgiving day and the Army has done everything possible to make it a success. To start off the day, at breakfast the cooks said to each man as he came by “How do you want your egg?” These were the first fresh eggs issued since we landed in France on June 15. Then came dinner and it was delicious. It wasn’t Turkey “with all the trimmings”, but it was Turkey and there were part of the trimmings. There was only dehydrated potatoes and Turkey gravy. But the gravy was delicious. Thick, rich and so tasty. There was also some hard candy. You really get to appreciate the little things you never thought much of at home,”

I went on to describe the weather as rainy, the roads as quagmires.

On December 9 I wrote of another visit to Wonck and Fall-et-Mehr including a visit to Liege which, in spite of the Buzz Bombs, seemed relatively untouched by the war. I also went into Brussels and although it was technically “off-limits” managed to elude the MPs and stay long enough to buy some souvenirs and get a haircut and shave. I described that as being an “experience,” but I no longer remember why I thought so.

In mid-December, 1944, the drive to the Roer River was completed. The troops involved in an action don’t always know the effect of their role, but published accounts stated that the 30th was part of the XIX Corps of the Ninth Army which had spearheaded the drive.

We now had another brief respite. We were camped (actually, we lived in commandeered German homes) near Aachen, Germany. Things had been quiet. Then we received orders to be prepared to move quickly. The Germans had launched a desperation attack which became known as the Battle of the Bulge. The official starting day was December 16, but it didn’t effect me for two or three days. Also Captain Dick Binnicker had been operated on for appendicitis and I was again Battery Commander.

I had just received a phonograph record from Lou with her voice and Dick’s sounds on it. I borrowed a phonograph and listened. It was hard not to give way to tears. I remember that night well. Planes were overhead; anti-aircraft guns were firing – it seemed right over our heads – and Lou was telling me, via the phonograph, that she was look-

ing forward to my home-coming while Dick, not yet six months old, babbled in the background. It was a very emotional moment.

My letter describing this event was dated 18 December.

The next day I was with a forward scouting team to seek places for our guns near St. Vith, Belgium. That was a day! We were the only ones moving southeast. All other traffic was that of those withdrawing from the front. Finally, we passed two 90mm antiaircraft guns set up as tank defenses. Then we seemed to be alone. I guess there was infantry in front of us, who knew?. We found positions and set up our guns, or “dropped trails” as artillerymen like to say, near St. Vith.

Naturally, we were not allowed to tell our loved ones where we were, but my letter of 21 December gave them a clue when I headed it: “Somewhere in Belgium” instead of “Somewhere in Germany.”

The so-called “Battle of the Bulge” was a tense time. At first we didn’t know where the front lines were. Possible success of the German thrust was a factor to be reckoned with. We were directed to reconnoiter “back road” escape routes should we need suddenly to withdraw. Throughout most of that episode, I carried not only my 45 caliber automatic pistol, but a carbine I had acquired somewhere, pockets full of ammunition and at least two hand grenades clipped to a shoulder harness. None of these proved necessary, but I was ready!

Being winter, the ground was frozen. To keep the guns in position, holes had to be blasted in the frozen earth. Then the trails, responding to the recoil of the guns, pushed huge slabs of frozen earth out behind them. The Bulge weather gave us the worst conditions of the war. From reading accounts of how it was for infantrymen, I know we had it relatively easy. We commandeered houses to sleep in and for our command post. We only had to be in the weather when actually firing the guns.



A 155 in full recoil during the Battle of the Bulge

At this time we were issued a new fuse for our shells. It was called a Pozit fuse and reacted to the proximity of large masses. That is, when the shell fell back to within about 30 feet of the ground, the fuse set off the explosive in the shell producing an "air burst." Earlier air bursts were achieved with "time" fuses; fuses that could be set to explode after a predetermined number of seconds. Obviously, because of meteorological conditions, these did not always achieve their purpose. An air burst is the most destructive type of burst against personnel. We fired several hundred of these in halting the German push. One account I read said the Germans claimed these were "unfair."

There was very strict accounting for these fuses because of the secrecy surrounding them. However, when we were supposed to have fired them all, two were left. Apparently some cannoner had loaded the wrong fuse a couple of times or the count of fuses sent us was off. I solved this accounting problem by taking the unwanted fuses out into a field where I detonated them with an incendiary grenade.

We celebrated Christmas as best we could. I wrote, "We had halfway expected K-Rations but at the last minute in came Turkey, Cranberry Sauce and other trimmings."

On New Year's Day, 1945, the Germans used the last of their gasoline by sending out their remaining aircraft en masse. I was Battery Commander at this time and, it being the first of the month, I had gone into Battalion Headquarters (in Spa, Belgium), to pick up the payroll. Returning from Spa, I saw machine gun tracers crossing the road ahead of us. Their target was an ME (Messerschmidt) 109. It passed my command car about three feet above the ground and just to the right of the road giving me a great view of the plane and pilot. My driver and I were uninjured. It is interesting that this little Belgian town has given its name to an entire industry!

As the German pilots tried to return to their home bases and were flying close to the ground to avoid our planes, they flew through the valley where our guns were set up. They became easy targets for our 50 caliber machine guns. Several German aircraft were shot down by our gunners.

Upon returning to my room, in the farmhouse where I had set up battery headquarters, I found a spent 50 caliber bullet on my bed; a souvenir of that day! It had enough force to break the window glass. When the "bullet with my name on it came, I wasn't at home!"

Incidentally, we had several opportunities to enjoy one of the pleasures of this famous resort

town, the mineral baths. In my 2 February letter: "The bath is taken in a tub – a large deep copper tub – and filled with mineral water. The heat is about 100 degrees or so and come clear up to your neck. It gives the most relaxed feeling – just real solid comfort." I didn't write that, for us, the water was not replaced after each bather. We were adjured not to relieve ourselves while in the bath. We showered off afterwards.

On 13 January, 1945, I explained a gap in my letters by writing, "I'm sure you can realize that here in the Malmedy-Stavelot area, where I believe I told you we were, is sometimes a little busy."

It turns out that this was already known at home because of a news release. On January 4th, 1945, our families got more information than we had been allowed to send them. A United Press item by John McDermott was carried in the Indianapolis Times on that day.

"U.S. ARMY HEADQUARTERS, Western Front, Jan. 4 –

"The 1st Army paid high tribute today to the fighting 30th division.

"Lifting its security ban, 1st army headquarters permitted disclosure of the role played by the 30th and nine other Yank divisions in stemming the Wehrmacht's bid for a breakthrough in the Ardennes last month.

"The 30th, in the thick of fighting at Stavelot and La Gleize, knocked out 92 German tanks and 360 vehicles.

"It captured 337 prisoners and buried 117 enemy dead while serving as the forward wall of the 1st army on the northern flank.

"In the Stavelot area alone, the division's supporting artillery claimed to have killed 2000 Germans and destroyed 200 vehicles.

"The 30th, commanded by Gen. Leland S. Hobbs, Washington, D.C., won grudging praise from the Germans themselves.

"They dubbed the outfit "Roosevelt's shock troops.""

I continued to use this excuse on 20 January, and it was valid. I mentioned how weary I often got from the constant demands of mind and body.

I always got along well with the men in my command. That paid off for me one night. I was exhausted. The Bulge battle, reconnoitering for positions, and general tension had taken a toll. One night a call came through from Battalion Headquarters about some action to take place the next day. I was called from sleep to talk. Then I went back to sleep. My sergeant realized that I had not actually been aware of the call or its message and, discretely, called his counterpart to

retrieve the message, which he gave to me later when I was really awake.

The Ardennes was a beautiful region and I often spoke of this in my letters to Lou. On 27 January, the action was winding down and I wrote of going on a picture taking hike and deer hunt with the only other Hoosier in the outfit, a young man named Norman Ellsworth from Summitville, Indiana. I got the pictures; he got the deer. I got pictures; he didn't get a deer.



In one of those SNAFUs so typical of war, misinformation as to where the front actually was caused the Air Corps to daily bomb targets in Malmedy although the town never actually fell to the counterattack.

The battle of the Bulge ended for us about January 28 or 29.

We then withdrew from the Ardennes to prepare for the next phase. We were moving north through Belgian territory at night. Naturally, there were no lights. At one crucial intersection either our lead vehicle (mine) missed an MP's guidance or he was off relieving himself. In any case, I finally became aware that we were not on the right road. In the dark I had no idea where we were or how long we had followed the wrong road.

Fortunately one of our men was of French descent and could speak the language very well. In fact, he had often been helpful for this reason. This night we approached a farmhouse, and must have terrified the occupants, to gain direction on how to reach our intended destination. With their help we did arrive at our rendezvous point, but several hours late. Other members of the Battalion, who had wondered where we were, observed, "Well, Billy Dick, we're glad you decided to continue the war with us."

The next event was to be the crossing of the Roer River. Before the attack actually started, I wrote on 14 February from "Somewhere in Germany" that I had had three days in Paris. Among other sights, I went to a performance at the Folies Bergere. On a bus ride with a comrade we commented to each other about an attractive young woman. We asked ourselves what she would think if she knew what we were saying. She turned to us and said, in that wonderful French accent, "The Americans think that I am a pretty girl." With

that she left the bus and us.

The attack on the Roer came at the end of February. The presence of the 30th Division in an area was considered a signal that some important action would take place there. Therefore, all of our shoulder patches had been removed and vehicle markings painted over to disguise the fact that the 30th was in the area.

Prior to the attack there was little artillery fire, again to prevent knowledge of a build-up. When the attack was launched, there was a major artillery barrage. I recalled it to Lou in a letter on 1 March, "You probably read about the 2000 gun barrage but you should have heard it. It was terrific!"

The Roer battle was quite short and the Division drove on toward the Rhine. On 27 March, I wrote "I'm now permitted to tell you that we are across the Rhine and ten miles inland. That should clear up the writing situation." I was referring to the lack of recent letters.



Our gun position for the Roer Barrage. It was here that we first were attacked by German jet propelled aircraft. The bombs fell, then we heard the sound of the departing planes. Also, we were only a few kilometers from Mariadorf which I photographed in November.

On 6 April, during an again largely unopposed drive we went through Hameln, Germany, and I wrote:

"One unforgettable scene confronted me at Hameln on the Weser River a few miles southwest of Hannover. Here there was an SS Officer Training School. These young men fought, I was told, with great tenacity. The fighting was over when we pulled in, but the bodies remained. One was of a young blond man. He had been hit a glancing blow to the head, probably by a large caliber weapon. His skull broke and all the contents of the head were carried away by the force. The inside of his skull was still bright red."

Shortly before the Rhine crossing, Captain Dick Binnicker was killed, apparently by a sniper. For the third time I was battery commander. Fol-

lowing the Rhine crossing, the push toward Berlin continued, essentially unresisted. During the last phase Captain Howard Krall was the CO.

Late in this final drive, I was recommended for a Silver Star. The date on the recommendation was April 20, 1945. The event was described as taking place near Angen, Germany. (I think Angern was meant.) The occasion was the reluctance of the Battery to move out from the shelter of some buildings because there had been some German artillery rounds fall nearby. I didn't believe this fire was directed at us and walked ahead down the road beckoning the battery to follow. They did and the event ended without our receiving hostile fire. (See Pages 189, 190)

Captain Howard Krall, our fourth CO (Counting my three times as one) wrote the recommendation for this award after VE Day, May 8. I didn't get the medal. I think it just got lost in the general confusion of getting ready for the next phase – the Pacific. It didn't seem that great an event to me.

Sometime after the July 10 event, Preston (“Pres”) Clark was given a battle field promotion to 2nd Lieutenant. He then led his own forward observer team as I was then either Battery Executive Officer or CO (I held both these positions on occasions as we raced across Northern Europe). Unfortunately, “Pres” and his party were caught by enemy artillery fire in an exposed area. “Pres” was killed.

A humorous, in retrospect, event occurred during the later phase of combat. The battery First Sergeant, apparently thinking that the war was over, failed to set a guard at night. I was awakened in the morning to find my shoulder being shaken by a German officer. He offered me his pistol and motioned outside. There were about 50 German soldiers lined up hoping to surrender to us. They were mostly older men and eager to get out of the war. It could have been a dangerous situation and the sergeant responsible was subjected to a Courts Martial. I don't recall the punishment.



Battery “A”, 113 Field Artillery Battalion, ended its combat days in a field outside of Magdeburg on the Elbe River. We were 75 miles from Berlin with no resistance in front of us. But a political decision had been made to allow the Rus-

sians to capture Berlin in partial recompense for their enormous losses on their front. Germans wanted badly to surrender to the Americans. Machine guns were set on bridges crossing the Elbe to prevent this. I believe a few important politicians and some scientists were allowed to surrender to the Americans.

On May 8, 1945, Victory in Europe Day (VE day), two Stuka dive bombers flew over at a very low altitude. At an earlier time they would have sent us looking for cover. This time I assumed they were trying an airport on our side in order to surrender to Americans. It was relief not to be subjected to their dive-bombing attack.

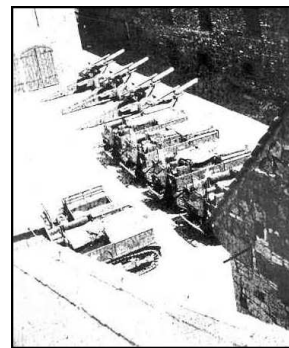
The residents of the area knew of the political decision and implored us to keep their area in the U.S. zone. Of course, we could do nothing about that.

Finally, on 14 May, 1945, for the first time in 15 months, I was able to write Lou and tell her exactly where I was. This letter was headed: 11 Breite Strasse, Königsau, Germany.

All of this doesn't describe combat, even in an artillery unit miles from the front (Our 155 mm howitzers had a range of 16 miles.). We had seen so many bodies strewn along roads that the image of such was common place. Cold, mud, fatigue, poor food, etc., can't really be described.

After VE Day, we were temporarily assigned to Military Government and Army of Occupation duties. We were in various towns in Thuringia and northern Bavaria. I again experienced that feeling of “end” that I had had in Lawton months earlier. Those guns had fired their last round! All I knew at that time was field artillery technique. There probably wasn't going to be much demand for that in my future activities.

First we were quartered in a really large farm house, almost a castle, at Königsau. This is

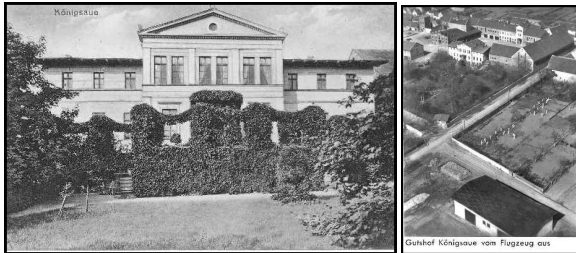


Idle guns at Königsau

the place mentioned in my 14 May letter. If I knew anything about the owners, I didn't write it down. As a large and elegant place, it probably belonged to a family in the “landed gentry.” I don't remember where the owners took lodging during our stay there. The displaced housekeeper came around to urge us to clean the floors with gasoline, not water.

Königsau had a population of about 1,300

mostly farmers who farmed the surrounding fields, a practice that started in the middle ages. The town was located about 25 miles south of Magdeburg. My letter contained many details about the decor which, being predominately blue, I thought would interest Lou. While at Königsau I received the official Bronze Star Citation.



Gutshof Königsau

From the air



At this farm we had the little four-wheel steering German car. I don't remember where we got it. Called a "Standard Light Car", it was a personnel carrier. It was made by BMW as model 325 and by Stoewer as Pkw R 200. Some models were made by Hamomag.

One of my duties was welcoming home returning German soldiers. I reminded them that the war was over. We would not trouble them, but we would be watching them. In these days I went to the Burgermeister's office more or less like a regular job. In the course of this I became fairly proficient in conversational German. This was emphasized to me one morning as I was riding to the office and found myself thinking, in German, of things that would face me that day. What those things were, I have no recollection.

Some of my help in learning German came from a lady who claimed to be a Baroness (a name like Von Minegarode) who had organized youth exchanges with England before the war. Several local citizens came to the office seeking help in determining the whereabouts of men captured on the eastern front. Some of these had had no word

of their loved one for years. We had no established channels for such information that soon after the conflict ended. I was very sorry not to be able to help them.

The Germans had brought many Polish people to these areas to work on the farms. They were essentially slave laborers. Among other things, for some unknown reason, the Germans had not allowed them to marry. However, men and women being what they are, "marriages" took place. Now that they were liberated they wanted the sanctity of the church and a celebration. For the latter they wanted whiskey. The local alcohol was made from beets or potatoes. I understood that it was not potable. The Poles insisted that by boiling it with potatoes for a long enough time it became potable. I gave them vouchers to obtain what they wanted from the local farmers. They also wanted an extra ration of meat. They got that, too! And, of course, I gave them permission to marry! In return, they taught me that lard and sugar spread on bread can be a pleasant late night snack. Since these people were essentially prisoners of the Germans, I did not consider such socialization to be in violation of General Eisenhower's "No Fraternization" policy.



*Taking a break in the courtyard at Königsau
Lt. Jimmy Grist and Me*

People also came to me hoping that I could get information about family members missing on the Russian Front. I could no more help them than I could those Magdeburgers. Both were somewhat heartrending.

By 25 May, I was writing from Oppurg, Germany, about ninety miles south of Magdeburg near

Pössneck. Here we were quartered in a real castle – Schloss Oppurg.

Schloss Oppurg was the home of a royal family named Hoenho... something. It was built in 1700-1704. Many architectural features were related to the calendar. It had 365 windows, 52 rooms, 12 chimneys, 7 toilets and 4 outside entrances. All rooms had stoves. They were similar to the “Warm Mornings” of my youth, but very ornate; with painted porcelain inlays. Since it was summer we didn’t use them for heat, so I don’t really know what they used for fuel. At this castle there was a large ball room. At that time it was stacked full of fine furniture being stored (protected) for friends of the owners who lived in Berlin or other target areas.



Schloss Oppurg – Near Pössneck



My Quarters at Oppurg

I suppose it was in response to the old adage “Idle minds are the Devil’s workshop” that various training programs were set to prepare soldiers for return to civilian life. Several Battalion officers were given assignments in this program. I was appointed “Literacy Officer.” In view of my past academic record, I considered this somewhat humorous. I have no recollection of what were any of the actions resulting from these assignments. (See Page 188)

At Oppurg the 30th Division was broken up

by removing the high point men. The rest of the division was slated for the Pacific. It turns out that they went to England, loaded on the Queen Mary and were ready to go home when the Japanese surrendered. Since they were loaded, the Army sent them on home, so the lower point guys actually got home sooner. It was really hard to say goodbye to the men that I had been so closely associated with for over two years (starting at Camp Forest in Tennessee).

The press of working, studying and family life when I got back to the States prevented my maintaining contact with them. Later an on-going organization of 30th veterans was formed. I didn’t attend a reunion until 1999. The only former comrade at that meeting was Van Heely, the Battalion Intelligence Officer.

According to my letter of 29 June, 1945, I, together with the other “high-point” officers of the 30th Infantry Division, was transferred to the 76th Infantry Division located in Gera, Germany. The earlier towns are in Saxony while Gera is in Thuringia. I wrote that I knew, but couldn’t relate, when I was likely to come home, but said it probably wouldn’t be as soon as I had thought. However, it did mean that the war was over for we high-pointers. I recently found, on a 30th Division web site, A Morning Report reference to this transfer. See Page 191

By July 1, the 76th had moved to Unter-Steinach, another town too small to be on the map. This town is in the northern part of Bavaria about 15-20 miles north of Beyreuth. This letter also revealed that having Dick accounted for 12 of my 89 points. 5 were for the Bronze Star.

On 12 July, I sent Lou a photo of the weapons we had captured between the Roer and the Elbe. The photo was taken at Dahlenwahrleben.



Weapons captured between the Roer and the Rhine

As the 76th was also to be split as the younger members were to redeploy to the Pacific, it was clear that we might soon lose contact with each other. To provide for future contact, a group decided to form a club. The Triple X Club was

formed in Hof, Germany. The first Constitution and By-Laws were dated August 20, 1945. I was a Charter Member, having paid dues of \$5.00 on 25 August, 1945. Membership in this Club was open to any officer who had participated in at least one campaign with the 30th. The present 30th Infantry Division Association open to all Old Hickory men was formed sometime after the 30th was deactivated at Fort Jackson, S.C., on November 25, 1945.

After the split-up of the 76th Division, we old 30th guys were transferred to the 99th Division and I came home with 370th FA Battalion.



This is me in August, 1945. The ribbon on the left is for the Bronze Star; on the right is the Europe-Africa-Middle East ribbon with a star (I think it is silver) representing the five European Campaigns I participated in.

There was a gap in my letters between 8 August and 2 September. These could have gotten lost in additional moves as several of us were transferred again, this time to the 370th Field Artillery Battalion of the 99th Infantry Division. There I found out that by playing on the Volley Ball team, at which I was pretty good, I could avoid most other duty. After all, we were just a bunch of over-the-hill GIs waiting for a boat to go home.

Somewhere in this time frame, I was able to visit Oscar Schaller & Co., Nachf., a Bavarian China factory in Schwarzenbach and a Crystal shop Crystallerie Saint Louis in Selb and bought

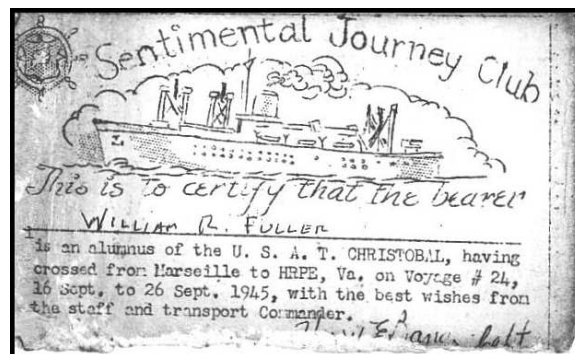
several sets to mail home. Included was a 12 place set of dinner china and several tea sets. The crystal included 12 each of six different glass sizes. In the 2 September letter, I asked Lou to wait to open them until I got home. Why I asked that, I don't know. The tea sets were distributed among relatives; the china and crystal are still used in our home.

On 15 September: "I've been waiting a long time to write this letter – the last letter from the ETO!"

Finally we started home. We boarded a train somewhere in northern Bavaria and rode west for a while and then down the Rhone valley to Marseilles. Our accommodations were the famous railroad cars known as "Quarante hommes ou huit chevaux" that is, "40 men or 8 horses." The time was passed in what seemed like perpetual poker games. I didn't play long; I soon lost what I had. It seemed the train stopped in every village along the route. In these towns, comrades sold excess clothing, blankets, etc., or bartered them for food or other items. The views down the Rhone valley were very interesting with many old castles on the hills above us.

On September 26, I sent Lou a telegram from Marseilles: "DARLING HOPE TO SEE YOU SOON LET YOU KNOW MORE WHEN CAN I LOVE YOU."

As an anti-climax to my trip to Europe in the Winter of 1944, I came home on a "banana boat," the U.S.A.T. Christobal. Comfortable, but no luxury. This was voyage #24 for the Christobal and was made between 16 September to 26 September, 1945 from Marseille to Hampton Roads P.E, Virginia.



We were issued these cards as mementos of our voyage. My has become "dog eared" by being carried in an active wallet for several years.

The 30th Infantry Division was characterized as a "work horse" division in this dispatch filed by Wes Gallagher of the Associated Press.

"On the Rhine with the 30th infantry

Division, March 24 –(AP)– The American Army’s work horse division, which the Germans nicknamed “Roosevelt’s SS,” more than made up for missing the Normandy landing by spearheading the Ninth Army’s drive across the Rhine. One of the finest divisions in the American Army, the 30th has taken more than its share of tough fighting on the Western Front. . .”

A table in Stephen E. Ambrose’s *Citizen Soldiers, the story of the U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the surrender of Germany*, provides the information that only three divisions, among 44 infantry divisions and 15 armored divisions, had more combat days in the European Theater of Operations than the 30th, the 1st(292), 4th(299) and 90th(308); the 30th had 282 combat days. The pay was high in lives. The 30th had 17,691 battle casualties. The highest four were: 4th (22,454), 29th (20,111), 9th (18,631) and the 90th (18,460). According to the History of the Thirtieth Division Artillery, the 113th Battalion fired almost 90,000 rounds. 20% of these were in the breakout in Normandy and 20% were fired in December of 1944 and January of 1945 in connection with the Battle of the Bulge.

As a member of the 30th Infantry Division, I participated in the following campaigns:

1. Normandy 6 June–24 July, 1944 (I was only there starting June 15)
2. Northern France 25 July–14 September
3. Rhineland 15 September, 1944–21 March, 1945
4. Ardennes-Alsace 16 December, 1944–15 January, 1945
5. Central Europe 22 March–11 May, 1945

The following letter was written to General Hobbs, commanding general of the 30th, on 16 March, 1946 by the Historian of the ETO. Based on this letter, the 30th Infantry Division Association (the post-war association of 30th division veterans) has tried, unsuccessfully to have the Division awarded a “Unit Citation.”

Dear General Hobbs:

Now that I am leaving the service, I thought it might be well to give you the following information for whatever satisfaction you might derive therefrom.

I was historian of the ETO. Toward the end of last fall, for the purpose of breaking the log-jam of paper concerning division presidential unit citations, General Eisenhower instructed me to draw up a rating sheet on the divisions. This entailed in the actual processing that we had to go over the total work of all

the more experienced divisions, infantry and armor, and report back to him which divisions we considered had made the most efficient and consistent battle services.

We so did, and we named certain infantry divisions in the first category and same with armor, and we placed others in a second category and yet others in a third. The 30th was among five divisions in the first category.

However, we picked the 30th Division No. 1 on the list of first category divisions. It was the combined judgment of the approximately 35 historical officers who had worked on the records and in the field that the 30th had merited this distinction. It was our finding that the 30th had been outstanding in three operations and that we could consistently recommend it for citation on any one of these three occasions. It was further found that it had in no single instance performed discreditably or weakly when considered against the averages of the Theater and that in no single operation had it carried less than its share of the burden or looked bad when compared with the forces on its flanks. We were especially impressed with the fact that it had consistently achieved results without undue wastage of its men.

I do not know whether further honors will come to the 30th. I hope they do. For we had to keep looking at the balance of things always and we felt that the 30th was the outstanding infantry division in the ETO.

/s/S.L.A. Marshall
Colonel S.L.A. Marshall, GSC

I often refer to these experiences as “The all expense paid tour of Europe that I won in 1944.” This is quite light hearted considering what the war cost in lives and money. The American Cemetery in Normandy, which Lou, Jim and I visited in 1985, brings tears to my eyes to think about it.

If you are disappointed not to read tales of hand-to-hand combat with bayonets, etc., I’m sorry, but not really. I actually faced the enemy only twice. Once was on that hill in Normandy when “Pres” Clark and I were the targets of German 88s; the other was that roadside where I faced the oncoming tanks. I am just as happy not to have had more such experiences to look back on. Had I such memories, I probably would mourn the loss of more comrades than I was forced to.

I don’t mean to downplay combat too much. There is always danger when one is part of an attacking force. We were subjected to anti-personnel bombs from aircraft, some of our batteries experienced counter-battery fire (Battery “A” didn’t),

we all had to be concerned about “booby traps”, some were attacked by our own fighter bombers during fluid situations. Dealing with high explosives has its own risks as the photo below of one of Battery “C”’s guns attests. A round exploded in the tube killing three men and wounding three others. In Battery “A”, a round exploded about 10 yards out of the muzzle on one occasion. There were no injuries from this mishap.



Alles Kaputt

The end of the Third Reich



Roadside German Graves



German POWs



Horse Drawn Artillery



385mm Mortar on Tiger Chassis

The Terrible Cost of War



The American Military Cemetery at Colleville-sur Mer

An aside on some of the personal aspects of life under combat conditions:



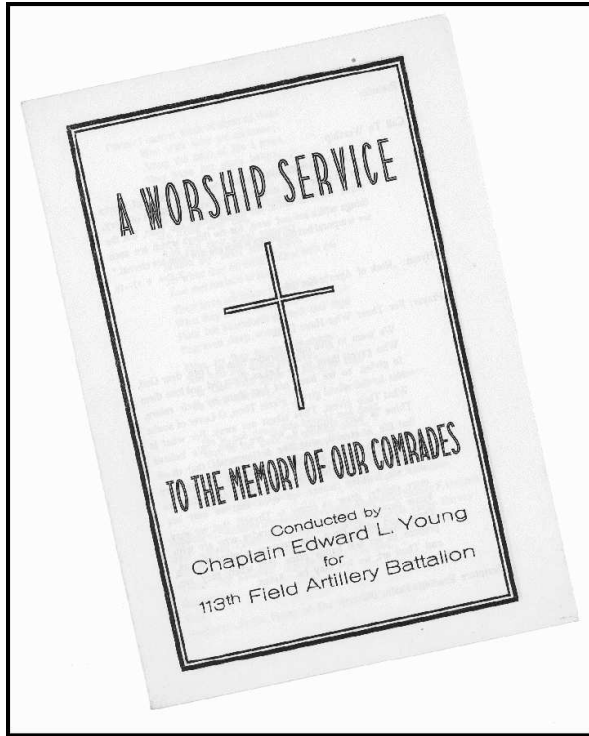
The packaging of the 155mm propellant gave us another useful item. The packages were wooden boxes shaped like a prism with an equilateral cross-section. By removing some of the side pieces and placing one edge down into a “slit trench”, they made excellent commodes.



Ralph Bradley and I (at left) take out time for a bath. Bathing wasn't all that different from Ravenswood.

An ironic footnote: During the eleven months of combat - from June 15, 1944, to May 8, 1945, I never had the occasion to fire my pistol, my carbine or any other “small arms” weapon.

Before breaking up the Division at Oppurg, a Memorial Service for fallen comrades was held



Sgt Alton G. Haskins
Tec 5 James E. Clark, Jr
Pvt Stanley F. Montuszeko
Pfc Michael F. White
Cpl Peter J. Yalch
Cpl George H. Tyner
Cpl John K. Brown
Pfc Thomas W. Farris
Pvt Herman G. T. Coggins
Pvt Paul W. Anderson
Cpl Harvey B. Schick, Jr
2d Lt Preston C. Clark
Sgt Clyde W. Beachen
Tec 5 Wiley C. Ratcliff
Pfc John F. Udovic
Pvt Albert P. Ramirez
S/Sgt James B. Collier
Tec 4 Joseph E. Barbour
Tec 4 John W. Martin
Cpl James S. Davis
Cpl Jacob C. Marshall
Cpl James A. Wilkins
Tec 5 Donald B. Edwards
Tec 5 William S. Srp
Pvt Steve W. Carroll
Sgt John E. Nelms Jr
Pvt John A. Hussli
Pvt Ottis G. Hall
Pvt Cecil E. McLendon
Pvt Outra NMI Schroader
Pvt J (IO) C (IO) Swanger
Capt Richard J Binnicker Jr
Tec 3 James J Archambeault



600 year old church in Possneck

Some of my Comrades
June, 1943 – September, 1945



*Gun Crew Number 1
Russell; Banks, H; Edwards; Stover
Koons, Sharp, Mulcahey
Benevento, Gaylord, England*



*Gun Crew Number 4
Banks, G; Olson; ?; McKelvey; Baldwin; Hendricks
Smith, Balthrope; ?; ?;
?, Stabile, Grant, ?*



*Gun Crew Number 2
Rerko, Zieser, Blatz, Sommerell
Briley, Adam, Harsin, Smith
Spain, Suckle, Goodwin*



*Machine Gun Section
Hurtebise, Carson, Ayres, Chouinard, Moray
Knapinski, Thorsen, Collins
Ennis, Bright, Vanhorne, Carver*



*Gun Crew Number 3
Costello, Prine, Lee, Raggiani, Cahoon
Knapinski, Phelps, Cook
Metz, Cox, Guliani*



*Wire Section
Trennepohl, Pike, Keohler
Olson, Valles, Pritchard
Thompson, Holloman, Saddig, Milhollen*



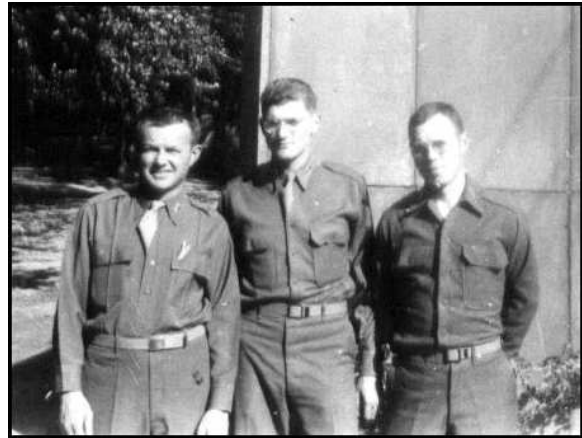
Mess Section
 Davis, Lindsay, Kress
 Davis, Spasaro, Cooper



Sgt. J.R. Mobley Capt. B.J. Levy Sgt. J.R. Tripp



Cpl. Van Horne, Sgt. (later Lt.) Clark
 "Pres" Clark was part of my F.O. Team in Normandy



Cpts. Abbott Weatherly, (Left), Howard Krall (Right)
 Abbott was my first C.O. and Howard my last



Capt. Richard Binnicker (sometimes CO)
 Lt. Arthur Fagowski
 Pvt. Norman Ellsworth



Officer Corps of the 113th Artillery Battalion
 I'm sixth from the right among those standing



Lt. Col. Edward F Griffin
 C. O. 113th Field Artillery Battalion

For twenty months we lived apart,
Me first on England's soil,
My letters home could not impart,
The truth of all our toil.

The bombs at night on London town,
In June we did exchange,
For German forces most renown,
Our lives within their range.

From our breakthrough near old St. Lo,
We moved with light'ning speed,
Our guns were often found in tow,
Our aim was to succeed.

There were some fights along the way,
Mortain, the Roer and Rhine,
The Reich had seen its finest day,
And now was in decline.

Of all the fights I've got to say,
The "Bulge" was one of note,
The Führer sought to have his way,
We cast the final vote.

The Elbe we attained in May,
Then did some MG chore,
In smallish towns along the way,
Before we left that shore.

From northern Bavaria,
They put us on a train,
We saw much scenic area,
Our fight had helped regain.

About the ride we could not boast,
For box cars did us tote,
To France's warm and famous coast,
Where waited our last boat.