MY BROTHER, EUGENE, AND ME

him immobile. I drug the Lieutenant into the woods with the other two wounded men to follow. I gave the two men morphine shots to ease their pain, dressed their wounds, all the while keeping an eye on Lieutenant Hafey. The soldier with the arm wound was mobile and I put a white pad on his rifle and told him to keep in the woods and go back in the direction that would take him to the medics. I told him to tell them where we were and to send help.

Night was coming and every time I left the cover of the woods, someone would shoot at me. After a few times, I stayed in the woods keeping the Lieutenant alive and the soldier with the foot wound quiet. I didn't know it, but the Germans had been pushed across the river that evening. I continued

What a Life

C I T A T I O N

FOR

BRONZE STAR MEDAL

FRANCIS G CONNELLY, 33 597 093, PRIVATE FIRST CLASS, PARACHUTE INFANTRY

"For heroic conduct in action on 4 January 1945 about two miles from ****, Belgium, Private First Class Connelly, a company aid man, was administering first aid on casualties caused by intense enemy fire during an attack when an urgent call for medical assistance was received from a forward artillery observation post. Private First Class Connelly unhesitatingly advanced to this exposed position which was being subjected to an intense artillery barrage. Quickly diagnosing the condition of a badly wounded officer, Private First Class Connelly remained at the side of the wounded officer for approximately five hours while holding his thumb against a severed artery until evacuation means were available. Private First Class Connelly's great devotion to duty and unselfish courage typified the highest standards of the Medical Corps."

I RECEIVED A PURPLE HEART FOR BEING WOUNDED IN ACTION

GO 132
Hq 82 Airborne Div
3 Mar 45

to stay the night all alone with the wounded. At daylight, a Jeep with medics showed up on the road and I yelled like hell for them. My wounded foot soldier, who couldn't walk, got up and ran like a deer for the jeep—so much for the power of morphine.

The Lieutenant was taken to an aid station and Doc Satterfield said he had a piece of shrapnel in the brain and his recovery was doubtful. While I was having a cup of hot coffee, my Lieutenant showed up and asked if I was all right. He said, "Let's go, we've got to get back to the front." Away we went, but not before I got a new supply of morphine. For my efforts, I was awarded a Bronze Star with a "V."

Chapter 22: We Meet Our Waterloo

Through all of the actions in the Bulge, our casualties from wounds were very light. Frostbite had more victims than wounds. The support of tanks helped keep our casualties down. Now that the Germans were contained, the next push was to push them back into Germany. Our unit was to be a "prong" in this attack as the other unit was placed in reserve. We were told that our objective was a town called Rochelinnal. We had taken Trois Point and now the big town was next. We gathered in the woods along a creek bed and we would attack at 6:00 a.m. Everything would be uphill and across open farmland. Our platoon was going up a cow path between two farms when the star flare went off to signal the attack. All I heard was a German call out,

"Hans, Augie," and another name I can't remember as the machine guns opened fire on us and I hit the deck. When the German yelled, the men above me were unlucky as there were ten dead and one man wounded in the belly. Our flanks silenced the machine guns but all hell had broken loose, artillery shells burst in the tree tops, mortar rounds all around us and our men kept advancing under heavy rifle fire. Our men were slaughtered. The wounded were all over the fields and roads. Two hours later we took the town and the German dead were all around the streets and in the fields.

Our unit was devastated. The 809 went into battle on January 3rd to January 7th, 1945. At nightfall only 93 were left standing: 76 men and 13 officers. The two doctors and the dentist were among those left only because they were in the rear running the aid station. The wounded outnumbered the dead and many of them had been hit by tracer bullets. Tracer bullets light up and show the gunner where the trajectory is traveling. When wounded by these, you were also burned by the hot bullet.

ME WITH OUR RADIO MAN

Our job was done and at nightfall the remnants of the 551 were relieved and sent to the town of Theux Julinsville, Belgium. We got a hot shower and an issue of new clothes. The Army had set up this hot shower and clothes depot in a school. It ran 24 hours a day as men came back from the front. Soldiers got cleaned up, new clothes, a hot meal, and then sent back to "dooms land." Because our unit was decimated, we spent two nights there living in people's houses. They fed us hot meals from our rations. We slept in their upstairs and they brought us hot bricks to keep our feet warm. Our host's son-in-law was an engineer on a U.S. steam locomotive and as he went through the town, a bag of coal came out for the family so we welcomed the hot bricks.

Day three found us ready to go back up to the front as replacements for the 504th Parachute Infantry. It was at this time that the oldest woman in the house gave me a medal from Lourdes. I carried this medal all during the war and I still relish devotions to it to this day.

Napoleon had his worst day at Waterloo and we "GOYAS" had ours there also. "GOYAS" was the term Colonel Joerg used for us. His expression was, "Get Off Your Asses." The 551st was disbanded on that day in 1945. Sadly, Colonel Joerg was killed that day by shrapnel to the head from an enemy burst in the woods. The Army lost a real man and we lost a great leader: "God Bless him and his men."

Chapter 23: Meet Your New Buddies

Into the trucks we went and we were on our way back to the front line, into the woods and snow. It was an eerie feeling going to meet men you never knew nor fought with. I was sent to 2 Platoon Easy Company and my foxhole buddy was the wire man. He ran phone lines to the outpost. My job was to keep him and his phone company man, Pop Delait, safe. Pop Delait was from Portland, Maine and had been doing this since the African campaign. When the first shells came whizzing by, I hit the hole and he said, "You'll get to know ours and you'll get to know theirs." He was very calm and I found him to be reassuring. Night came and we were tested by Gerry patrols in white uniforms. We beat them back and slowly moved forward. We now held the high ground.

After three days of this, Colonel Tucker said in the morning we would be allowed a hot breakfast. We moved back to a clearing on a hillside and the cooks brought up pancakes, bacon and sausage in big containers. Everything was ice cold, even the coffee. The men started throwing the food at the cooks and calling them names. The Colonel showed up, found out the food was ice cold, and said, "Tonight you get hot chow in your fox hole." True to his word, the first thing was to get new cooks from the walking wounded. Cooks were usually rear echelon (out of the fighting line). He replaced the cooks with the walking wounded and sent the former cooks up front to man the outpost. Our grateful new cooks brought hot chow to each man that evening and the next morning they came back with hot cereal and coffee.

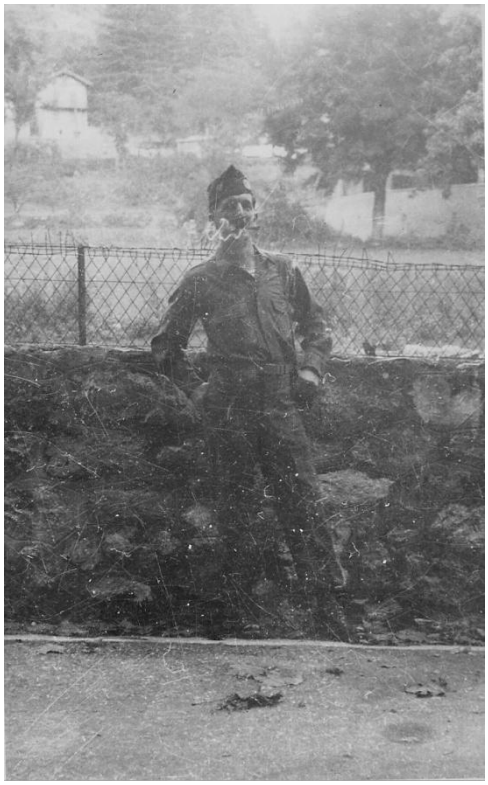
We were pushing the Gerrys back into Germany and we walked the fire-breaks in the forest routing out the enemy and protecting our tanks. The fire-breaks were laid out like city blocks and every corner was a challenge. We walked parallel with the road until a town showed up. During this time we had marched fifteen miles back through St. Vith and Malmadey where the frozen bodies of American G.I.'s littered the ground. These men were casualties of the Battle of the Bulge, the day the Germans took the U.S. forces by surprise.

MY DELUXE "FOXHOLE"

We kept pushing forward, taking back the ground

we had lost in the beginning of the Bulge. Evening was coming and a town was in front of us. Colonel Tucker said, "You want to be warm, you should take the town." Our shelter was a barn with our tank outside. The town was taken without a casualty and the men took turns manning the outpost that night.

When daybreak came, we were in the barn and got a rude awakening. Up on the barn window was a booby-trap with a "Potato Mash" (hand grenade) attached. Our men defused it and we made coffee using the warm tank motor. The quiet was soon broken by the sounds of shells from the enemy. Then, we heard the word "Medic" from an outpost. Two of us took off towards the injured man. A small shell had exploded in the foxhole severing his leg. We gave him two shots of morphine and put a tourniquet on the leg. This seemed to calm the soldier down and we went about the task of moving him to safety. We had to cut a piece of his flesh to get him out. My bandage scissors were used for that task. The man lost a leg but survived. For years I had those scissors and when a man came to lay rugs in my home he needed scissors to do the cutting.



Unfortunately for me, he took the scissors with him when he left. As of this writing, my wife Regina never knew the story of those scissors until now!

Chapter 24: The Siegfried Line

All we had seen since I was in the 504th was snow and more snow. We would march, dodge shells and bullets everyday, and were always feeling ice cold. We were also champions at eating "K rations." Soon, we got the news of our next big assault, "The Siegfried Line." This was to be an assault by the entire 82nd Division along a wide front.

E Unit had three pill boxes watching over them. If you left the cover of the woods and moved into the open draw, you were mince meat. One man going across the draw was hit and I crawled in two foot of snow across the draw into the woods where I patched him up. All he wanted to know was, "Did I make Sergeant?", so he could write home and tell his family. The Lieutenant said, "Yes, you did," and about that time Tim Crane, from Boston, put his rifle through the slot in the German pill box and it was ours.

When the men got to the back of the pill box, they found trenches leading from pill box to pill box, using this system to get to more boxes in the rear. Later on, we found out that the old land mines did not explode because of corrosion and age. We spent the night in the line and heard we would be

relieved in the morning. As we began to leave, the shells started coming in. I was flat against a wall. The next thing I knew, I heard a loud bang and was thrown into the air landing up against a tree. I was bleeding from my nose and temple, my helmet was covering my face. I wondered what had happened. I yelled "Medic" he came over, looked at me and said that I was not so bad and we should get the hell out of there. We did and went to the aid station.

I had found out that the shell had hit the top of the pill box and blew us around like bowling pins. Luckily, no one was killed. There were, however, lots of bruises, cuts and some black eyes. At the aid station, I was patched up and got the good news we were going back to base in Laon.

At the railhead the girls from the Red Cross had the typical doughnuts and coffee for us and we boarded those 40& 8's—even sleeping on the straw filled floor of the boxcar. The floor of that boxcar was better than the cold snowy ground. Two nights on the train and we were in Laon.

Laon had been my old outfit's headquarters. We found the Quarter Masters Corp boarding duffle bags onto trucks for the registration of the graves. They were sorting out the personal items to send home to the parents. Luckily, some of us found our bags and retrieved them. I had a French radio in mine that I had bought it in Nice.

Human Suffering Never to be Forgotten

Chapter 25: At Laon, What's Next?

New clothes, showers, hot food, a mess hall with dishes and you didn't have to clean up afterwards. I now met the Medical Unit and worked in the dispensary while being treated for my injuries. My afternoons were free and I could go into town and buy bread, stop in church, or visit the air base. We were always welcomed at the church and school, and of course the kids looked for treats.

Our rest was cut short after five days. It was back on the train again and we passed through Masstricht and Achen. At one stop in a rail yard, the car on the other track had canned fruit cases showing through the bars. Our boys made a raid on the car and we had canned fruit for a treat. Polly Brouse, from Kentucky, was determined he was going to make "moonshine" for us. He said he could make it out of any fruit, fresh or canned.

We boarded trucks for a trip to the new front in Germany passing camouflaged aircraft (ours) and artillery spotting planes which were called Stensons. These planes looked a little like a Piper Cub as they seemed to float like balloons in the sky. Our truck drivers were American Negros who were known as the "Red Ball Express," a name that Patton had given them. As we approached the drop-off point, the shells started to fall and the driver said to

the Lieutenant, "You ever drive a truck?" The Lieutenant said, "Hell no, just keep driving." We went down into a glen, hopped out of the truck and the assistant truck driver got into the cab and said, "Man, do something with this truck even if it's wrong. Just get us out of here." A quick turn or two and they were off with the shells chasing them down the road.

February 14, 1945 I still remember a 2nd Lieutenant who got hit with shrapnel that day. He told me, "First day in combat and I got hit." He got a ride out in a Jeep. Then from out of nowhere came five P-38's, our fighter planes. They bombed and strafed the other side of the river. The shelling stopped, the engineers bridge got built and we crossed the river and held the town of Rouen until we were relieved by reinforcements. Another train ride and then back to Laon.

Chapter 26: Laon – Cologne – Ludwiglust

At Laon, rumors of a jump were a hot item and we had some ideas of the area around Cologne, Germany from the maps we were shown. The engineers on the base had made more than one boat crossing and bridge buildings in the last months. We then got an alert back on the train to the front somewhere outside of Cologne and we saw the results of our first concentration camp. We didn't linger, but marched on into the outskirts of Cologne and that night we entered the darkened town searching block-by-block. The apartment

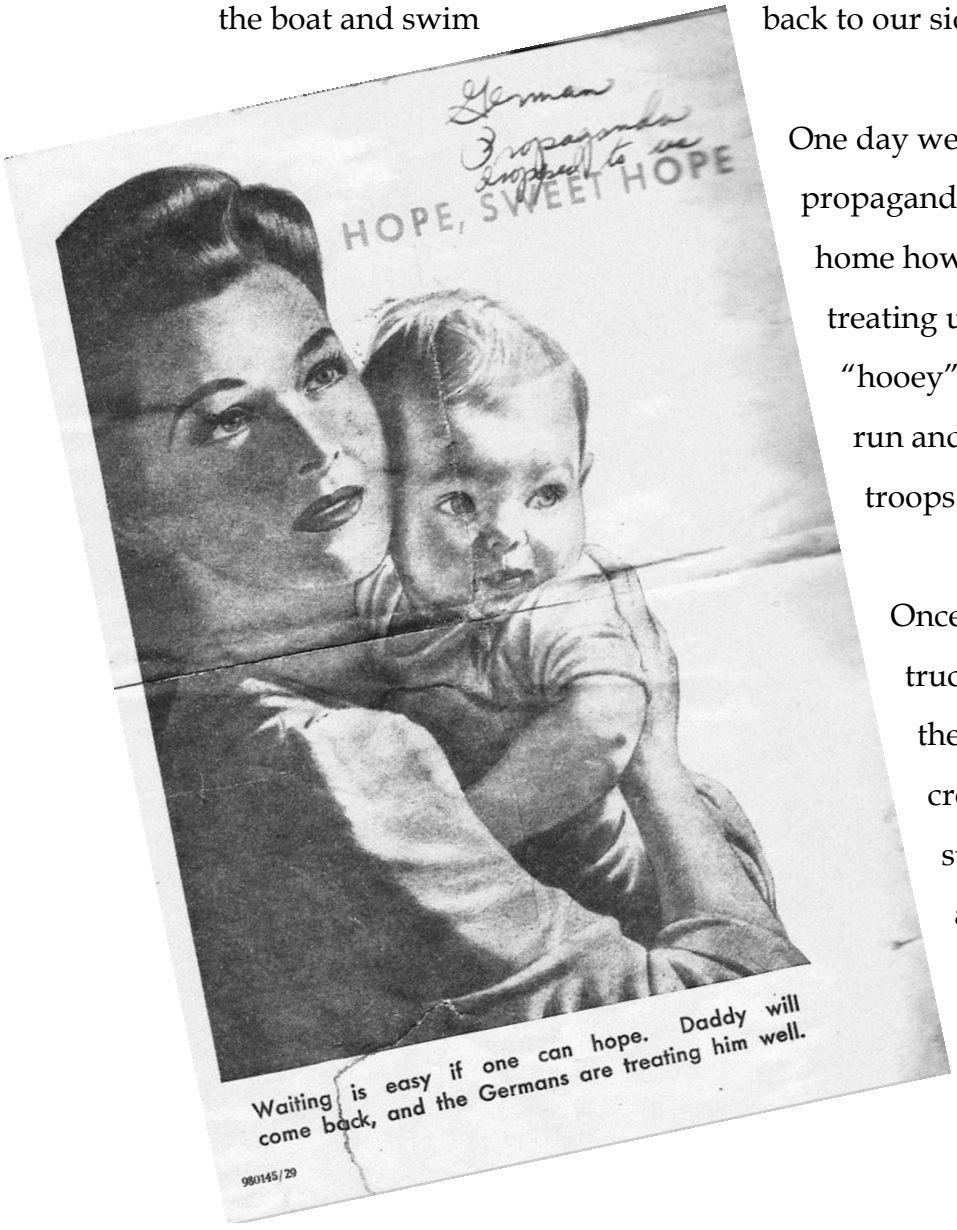
buildings in the area were vacated and we checked them out. Resistance was low and come daybreak, we looked across the Rhine. The bridge was in the water and the cathedral stood out like a sore thumb all full of bomb holes.

We occupied the river bank using the old "ack-ack" bunkers for shelter. In the bunkers were models of all the allied planes (it was the German way of ID'ing the bombers). The models were beautiful and it was too bad we couldn't collect them and send them home. Some of the metal army toys were so exact; we wished we could have collected them too.

COLOGNE, GERMANY CPL. LUTHER E. BOGER, CONCORD, N.C., SKYTROOPER, READS A WARNING SIGN IN THE STREET. THIS STREET LEADS TO THE RHINE RIVER AND IS UNDER OBSERVATION OF THE GERMANS WHO OCCUPY A STRONGHOLD THERE. CPL. BOGER IS WITH THE 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION ***(THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM)***

What a Life

Since the Rhine had been crossed at Remegan and the Allies were approaching Cologne from the south, our job was to patrol sides across the river to feel the Germans out and they tried the same. One night, north of the bridge, the Germans turned on the flood lights and it was necessary to leave the boat and swim back to our side.

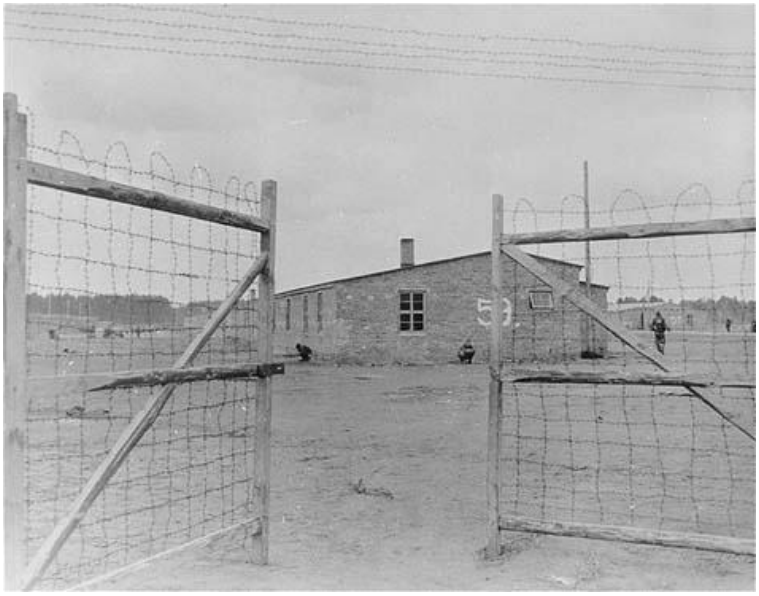


One day we got shelled with propaganda telling our folks back home how good the Germans were treating us. It was a lot of "hooey". We had them on the run and Cologne fell to our troops from the south.

Once again, we moved by trucks up north and joined the British for a river crossing which was a success. We now had armored vehicles and tanks to ride on and dismounted when we needed to rout the enemy or take prisoners.

We went so far that we were near Denmark. On our way back to Ludwiglust, we saw our first jet. It was trailing a while streamer which indicated surrender and at the airport we found the prisoners and airplanes waiting to surrender. They even had an underground aircraft factory there. Outside of the town, we found the concentration camp and the "human misery" you could never comprehend.

The concentration camp was called Wöbbelin It was a scene you never forget—human beings in striped suits and hats starving, underfed, and skinny as the bones showed like there was no flesh on them. People could hardly walk. They had a hollow look in their eyes and you could only feel sorrow for them. In the corner of one building, the dead were piled up one upon another like trash in a pig sty. We immediately started to



THE MAIN GATE OF THE WÖBBELIN CONCENTRATION CAMP. ON MAY 2, 1945, THE 8TH INFANTRY DIVISION AND THE 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION ENCOUNTERED THE WÖBBELIN CONCENTRATION CAMP. PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN UPON THE LIBERATION OF THE CAMP BY U.S. FORCES. GERMANY, MAY 4, 1945. ***(THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM)***

feed the survivors and treat their wounds with the utmost caution. We knew that we couldn't feed them too much or too fast as that would make them sick. Their bodies hadn't eaten in so long that feeding them too much could cause them even more harm.

The German guards had fled and now it was time to bury the dead. We brought the people from Ludwiglust out to pick up the dead and haul them into the town square with all the townspeople attending their burial. Some young kids didn't want to dig the holes, but we threw them back into the holes and said, "Dig or else!" They dug. Some of the old senior Germans said they had never seen the camp or the prisoners either.

Years later, when I worked at SKF, one of our employees, whom we called D.P. John (Displaced Person) who was Polish, came up to me and said, "You don't remember, but you took me out of Wöbbelin Prison Camp." He told me details that I had to recall and he was right. At the camp, some of our jobs included writing up the prisoners and putting them onto stretchers and into the ambulances. I had done this for this man. Sometimes the world gets very small.

Meanwhile, back at the airfield, one of the men got into a plane pushed a button and he was ejected about 20 feet up into the air. He landed and broke a wrist and a leg. The Germans had jet planes and ejection systems long before anyone and those buzz bombs were the next rockets into space.

The Red Cross and other agencies arrived and took charge of the prison and prisoners. They came to process the POW's for return home or to a rehab camp to prepare them for a return to a normal life after the war ended.

A chaplain with the 82nd Airborne Division helps a survivor board a truck that will evacuate him from the Wöbbelin concentration camp to an American field hospital. Germany, May 4, 1945.

After the liberation of the camp, the U.S. Army ordered the local townspeople to bury the corpses of prisoners killed in the camp. This photograph shows troops observing a moment of silence at a mass funeral for victims of the Wöbbelin camp. Germany, May 7, 1945.

U.S. troops assemble at the mass funeral in Ludwigslust. Germany, May 7, 1945.

German civilians from Ludwigslust file past the corpses and graves of 200 prisoners from the nearby concentration camp of Wöbbelin. The U.S. Army ordered the townspeople to bury the corpses on the palace grounds of the Archduke of Mecklenburg. Germany, May 7, 1945.

Photos on pages 104 and 105 used with permission from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Chapter 27:
The War Ends

We left Ludwiglust, we took a front along with the British near Wittenberg and waited as the Germans were running out of Berlin in anything that could move: wagons, carts, buses, on foot and army vehicles. They wanted away from the Russians. As they passed through our lines to the prison compound the British had erected, the German soldiers left their arms in piles: rifles, pistols, machine guns and bayonets.

If you wanted souvenirs, they were yours for the taking. Swastika flags and arm bands were big takers, watches too and binoculars were choice items. The civilians were sent to another compound which was hastily erected and the

Red Cross was there to help out. The sick and maimed were sent to Wittenberg's hospital and moved elsewhere for treatment.

Since the Russians were in Berlin, the end of the war was at hand and we moved to the river to wait for the Russians. We could have taken Berlin, but the politicians had a deal at Yalta to let the Russians take Berlin. We had to wait for the Russians and were told not to cross the river onto the Russian's side. We met in the middle of the bridge, drank vodka and cheered each other. In the evening, each one went back to their side of the river. The Russians occupied a farm house. Come morning, they took the horses and wagon, loaded it with loot, set the house on fire and moved back.

We too moved back to the Elbe River as this had been negotiated at Yalta and again met the Russians. As the war was ended, the Germans surrendered and we joined with the Russians in a celebration. May 1945 was the official end of the conflict.

We moved out, found a railhead and boarded a 40&8 for a trip to France, not to Laon, but to Epinal – quite east of Laon. It was now time for some of the men to go home and be discharged. If the men had 85 points, they were eligible for discharge and for a lot of our older soldiers that represented 35% of their unit. The Army was disbanding divisions as fast as they could and combining them into other units. The 17th Airborne was eliminated and the men sent to the 82nd Airborne to bring it up to full strength.

With so many older men leaving and new ones coming in, the dispensary and the clerks in headquarters were busy. A trip to Epinal or Nancy for supplies and sending men off to separation camps on the Atlantic coast kept us all busy. Not as busy as "Old Polly" however, who was a "first class moonshiner" from Kentucky. He had us making "moon" out of fresh merchandise.

With all the changes going on, we were selected to occupy the American zone of Berlin. Berlin was divided into four zones: the East belonged to the Russians; the bigger half and the other was split into three – American, British and French zones. All of this part of Germany was controlled by the Russians and access to Berlin had to be given by the Russians through that territory, even the train ride was governed by Russians.

Chapter 28: Berlin and Then Home

This time our trip to Berlin was going to be via the Autobahn on trucks. The Autobahn was a superhighway, something never seen in Europe before. It was like the turnpike here in Pennsylvania, but wider and more open. We had a stop before we entered the Russian territory, bivouacked and had hot chow that night and in the morning.

As we drove through the Russian territory, we saw hundreds of horse and wagons manned by Russians soldiers moving to the border. The most

amazing sight was that no two Russians had the same boots, not like us G.I.'s – ours all looked alike.

As we rode along the Autobahn, each town and city we went through was full of bombed out and burned out buildings. When we got to the outskirts of Berlin, it was the worst of all as all of the streets were littered with debris. The streets were being cleaned by civilians, young and old, under the watchful eye of the Russians. The workers kept piling up bricks and stone along the side of the road or street.

Our quarters were an apartment complex one city block wide on all four sides with an open courtyard. We could only use the lower five floors as the upper ones had no roof. The roof had been burned out so when it rained the uppers were soaked and we were dry. Eventually, the German crew blocked off the roof and we had maid service to clean the apartments. The courtyard became our mess hall under big tents and each meal there were so many kids begging for "Bitte Speise" (Please food) that you would give them some otherwise they would go into the garbage cans for scraps. Once they were given food they would run home to their houses and feed their families.

The first thing our officers were told was that they were to tell their men that, "The Russian Zone is off limits." I guess that was where the "Cold War" began. Those soldiers who did go into the Russian Zone were held until bailed by the American M.P.'s and were told in no uncertain terms, "Don't come back!"

Disease was rampant in Berlin and our dispensary handled many Germans. There was so much V.D. among the women that separate clinics were set up in each zone. Most women complained that they had been raped when the Russians entered Berlin. We really didn't know how bad things were in the Russian Zone but we did have many East Germans who came to the clinics for treatment.

Since Eisenhower, Montgomery, and deGaulle had a central headquarters, a lot of our tallest men were chosen for honor guards. The soldiers who were chosen for this duty were six feet tall, wore chrome helmets with white silk scarves, white gloves, white shoelaces in their boots and white belts with chrome plated bayonets on their rifles. Their drill team was the envy of all and at a football game the Russians cheered their drills.

To show off to the Ruskies, we had a parachute jump at the area field around Tempelhof Airport. It was windy and a lot of us got hurt when we hit the ground. It was embarrassing to "Ike" and we were sent to a German hospital for treatment. The hospital had old white iron beds that looked like old baby cribs. We were treated with traction, x-rayed for broken bones, and the nurses would put hot bricks at our feet at night. You know the old saying "Warm feet, warm mind."

Soldiers were given passes for R & R or leaves while in Berlin. As I had never been to England, I chose to take my week's leave there. We flew to England in a C-47 with a General on board and he demanded good behavior on the

trip. There was also a British officer on board and he offered to show us the sights of London. He did and we saw hotels, restaurants and shows. He even invited us to come home with him. This British officer was in "full military dress," even down to wearing a saber on his side. He looked like a Guard from Buckingham Palace. At the train station, the townspeople were there to greet him. We got to meet all the celebrities and dignitaries. We then got another train to Leicester which was the English home of the 504.

Back to London and the fog set in and we were fogged in for four days living in a transit barracks, wearing dirty clothes and almost broke. This was our extended leave. The fog lifted and back to Berlin we went. All we could see from the air was the burned out roofs of the houses.

Basic duties and parades were to show off to the Russians at the football games (American, not soccer) and we always kept busy sending men home to be discharged if they had enough points. The Army was offering a month's leave in the USA and a $600 bonus to re-enlist—very few took the deal.

Berlin had a large lake, Lake Wanee and river that fed it. Our General Garvin commanded a 30 foot cabin craft for official use. One man in my unit had been a tug boat captain on the Ohio River and he was picked as Gavin's boat master. Gavin went to the USA and six of us had use of the boat for the weekend. We didn't have hot dogs or beer, but we looked important as all get out sailing around the lake like VIPs.

The Russians walked around with Tommy guns and ours had been taken away; only the MPs on the check points had arms. The Russians would walk into a tavern or store, line up the Germans, take their jewelry and if we would object they would point the gun at you and we couldn't stop them. They would ask in broken English, "We buy Mickey Mouse or fountain pen." They showed us that they owned Berlin and we were only guests.

ME WITH REGINA (L), HELEN MURPHY (R) AND MARIE PETSCH (B)

Supplies had to come through Elmendorf to Berlin and they controlled the routes and delivery times. Most airplanes using Tempelhof airport were allies and even before the "Berlin Airlift", most planes carried supplies in. While in Berlin, I found a jeweler who engraved a parachute and serial number on the Army half of my miraculous medal which was hinged together so it swiveled. Later on, the hinge broke and one Sunday in church in Pendel, PA, by mistake my wife put the miraculous side in the plate collection; goodbye medal. Fortunately, I still have the etched Parachute side.

85 Points and you could go "HOME". November 1, 1945 I had the points and also was the N.C.O. in charge of the 504th Medical Unit and was offered the position of medical administrative officer of the division, but only if I re-enlisted, went home and when I came back, I would be appointed. I took no chance at that and

decided to be separated from the Army. The Army was never trusted to keep their promises. My replacement, Sgt. Reds Watson, never got it either. He still was a sergeant when Regina and I watched him in the victory parade in New York.

To leave Berlin, I took a passenger train ride to Elmendorf with the barracks bag then a 40& 8 train to a camp called 'Lucky Strike' near the port of Cherbourg, France.

Rule #1 – Keep your eye on your wallet and money. It had a way of disappearing in the camp. You had to find a buddy to watch your stuff while you showered and you watch his; it worked. Lots of paperwork and shots and then get on board an ex-ocean liner called the U.S.S. Washington. We were packed in like sardines, but no one cared because we were going home.

Five days across the Atlantic to Newport News, VA where we originally started from Camp Patrick Henry. You still had to keep an eye on your money. I had sold a Luger, camera and binoculars to the sailors on the ship because they had greenbacks, not occupation money. I had also won around $300 in a craps game. I left that ship with a little over $600 in greenbacks.

At Patrick Henry, our barracks bags we emptied of most G.I. property and then off by train to Indian Town Gap where we first started our Army journey. We are now free of all excess baggage but the clothes on our back and winter outer gear.

What a Life

It is amazing when I think of the addiction to drugs today and how it never bothered us in the service; no one ever stole morphine for a fix. When I left Berlin, I turned in my first aid with 40 cerrettes of morphine into the pharmacy, that wouldn't happen in today's world. Morphine was for relief of wound pain, not a jag!

November 17, 1945 I was discharged and took a bus ride to the Pennsy rail road station in Harrisburg, PA where I bought a service man's round trip to Philadelphia. The other half of the ticket sits in my shadow box today. Upon arrival in Philly, my watchdog buddy bid me adieu and I took the El and trolley home to Bridesburg. I left the trolley and walked down Orthodox Street to Number 2854. My neighbors and parents were amazed. I wanted to surprise them and I did!

In those days, when you came home from the service, you were greeted with respect and honor and thank you's for a job well done, not like the rotten disrespect that the Vietnam Vets got. How could a great nation change so drastically?

Home Coming!

After the War

Chapter 29: I'm Home – What's Next

When I got home, there was still rationing and we had to learn to cope with it. My first move was to see my girlfriend, Regina Buchheit. Since I entered the war, she was waiting for me to come home. So, I got on the trolley and off I went to our first reunion. I met her at her house and went around to see some of our friends. After 32 months of writing, we were dating again.

Regina started working at Exide during the war and I met her after work the next day. She took me to meet Mrs. Alice Boland, who was a mentor for Regina as her mother died in 1937 and Alice took her under her wing to advise her. Alice was a wonderful person and we remained friends with her and her daughter, Alice, until this day.

Most of my neighbors were still in the service including my brother, Mike. I could not go back to work at SKF as they were on strike. So, I joined Uncle Sam's 52/20 club for the ex-service men: $20 a week for 52 weeks or until you found a job. I made a mistake: if I had gone to my ex-employer and signed up to go to work even if they were on strike, I would have been eligible for a $100 Christmas bonus. The strike ended in January 1946 and I went back to work at 76 cents an hour, even though I had made $1.03 an hour went I left.

What a Life

Regina and I dated Wednesday nights, Fridays, Saturdays, and usually visited old friends and relatives on Sundays. We rode more Ells and trolleys than you could count. On Sundays, my family fed us to excess and of course we loved it.

My buddy Joe Lynch was still overseas in the Pacific and before he went away, he dated a girl named Betty Dickenson. Since he always wrote about Betty in his letters to me, Regina and I had arranged to meet Betty for dinner at "Becks on the Boulevard". Regina had never met Betty and to our surprise, Betty told us she didn't go around with Joe anymore. Later on from Joe's sister, I found out that Betty was Betty Riser; a girl who worked with Sister Mary.

Eventually, we met Betty and she and Joe were married. The four of us became life-long friends. Our children grew up calling Joe and his wife, "Uncle Joe and Aunt Betty." Our families had many great times together. Joe and Betty's daughter, Joyce, and her husband, Bob, call me Uncle "Knobby" even to this day (a nickname that has stuck with me today at age 87). How fortunate I was to find such a true friend in life. I always told my daughters that in life, "You will meet very many acquaintances but you are a very lucky person if you find one true friend in life." I did in Joe Lynch!

Chapter 30: What a Life to Remember!

Life is a recollection of experiences both good and bad encountered and I hope that when I am judged, by the man upstairs, the good experiences will overshadow the bad.

It is December 18, 2008 and my thoughts this time of year reflect back to those cold dreary miserable days of 64 years ago when the winter weather put us in the Battle of the Bulge. The rain and cloud-filled skies with the dreary atmosphere still sends a chill through my body. How could we tolerate so much cold and wet conditions? I still get a chill when I think about it and our present winter doesn't make any difference because when it snows I get that old dismal feeling of yore.

There is enough of the past in my writings and as I re-live those moments: some happy, some bad, and of course some that you have no explanation for,

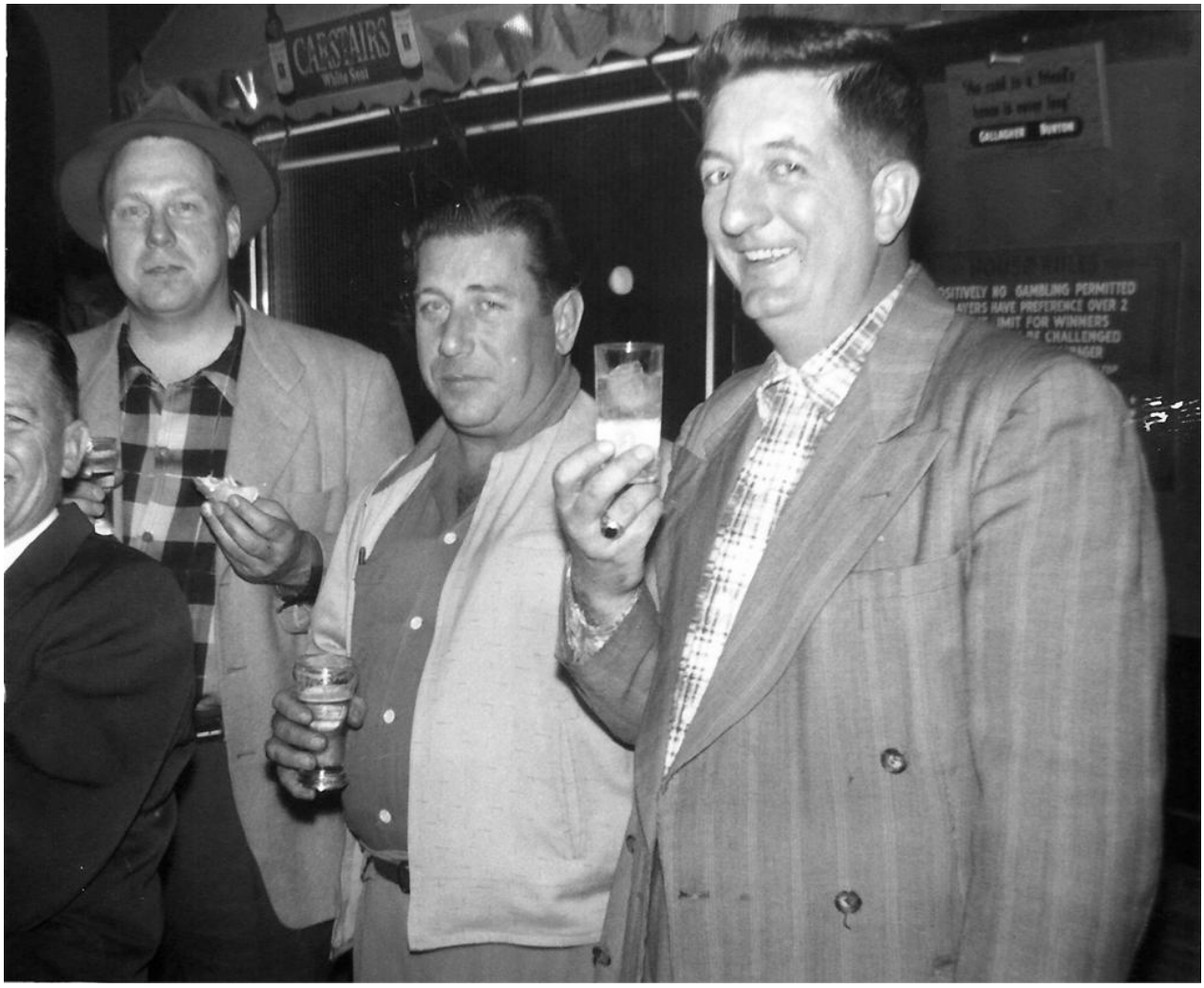
there were so many people that I met and some relationships that I cultivated. Numero uno of course is my wife of 62 years Regina. What an enduring life we have had together and being blessed with my daughters Patricia and Mary with whom I was well pleased with their accomplishments. What more could I ask for?

During my lifetime I had some real friends; those who were not trying to use you or take advantage of your talents, all they wanted was to be your friend through good times and bad expecting nothing in return, just your friendship. Number One friend was Joe W. Lynch of Cheltenham. Our friendship started in 1941 and lasted until his death in 1981. Joe's wife Betty was always a part of this friendship and now their daughter Joyce is taking over where they left off. Joyce and her husband Bob call me, "Uncle Knobby" that is what I call "friendship." There were others too: Frank Morlock and Charles Cunnane. They too were real friends expecting nothing but just your friendship. I expect them all to be waiting for me at the "Pearly Gates" Joe, Frank and Charles will ask, "What took you so long" and my reply will be, "I was left behind to pray for you fellows to make it and I hope you were putting a good word in for me."

When I think of all that has happened all I can say is, "What A Life!"

-Francis Gordon Connelly

Opposite: Me with William Calhoun (left) and Frank Morlock (middle)


CABSTAIRS
White Seal
SITIVELY NO GAMBLING PERMITTED
AYERS HAVE PREFERENCE OVER 2
IMIT FOR WINNERS

The War Photo Album

Perkins, **Affleck**, **Przymuski** and a Frenchman

Przymuski, **Affleck** and **me** behind the wheel of the JEEP. The driver in plain English (L)

Ray Gutierrez , from San Antonio, munching on an Apple

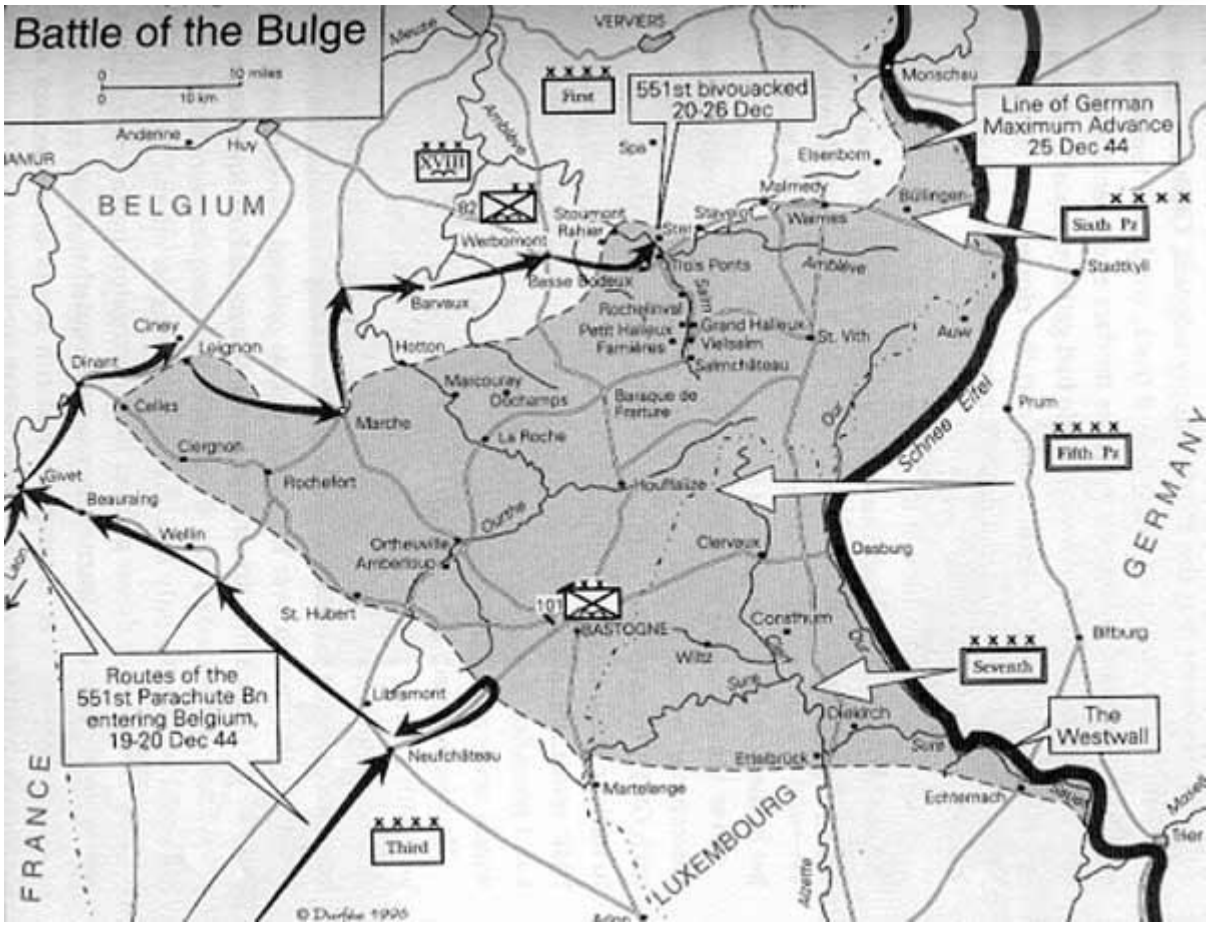
Eugene and his buddies (A)

Eugene during the War

What a Life

BELGIUM Medics' jeeps bring up the rear, laboring through narrow cuts in snow along woodland trails as parachute infantrymen of the 82nd Airborne Division fight ahead into Weneck.

Map of 551st Route into Belgium



Soldiers of the 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion moving up to the line of battle early in the Battle of the Bulge, World War II, before the weather turned.