

B-84-MED- IN ACTION

The history
of Company "B" of the 84th Armored Medical Battalion
in combat in the European Theater of Operations.

Written by the men of Company "B" as their part
of the story of victory in Europe in World War II.

Compiled by
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I

This is IT, soldier! This long troop train, rushing along high speed Eastern rails, is taking you to N. Y. POE. None of us know just what is ahead. We're going to Europe. But why Europe? The war there is almost over. Maybe we'll go through the Panama Canal to the South Pacific.

Hardly anyone in Company "B" could have helped feeling a little excited as we saw the New York City skyline from the Jersey City rail yards, that morning of Tuesday, October 3, 1944. New York! Fantastic metropolis of the Western World! For some of us this was home, for others a new adventure. We were told there would be passes to New York City.

Our train moved up the West Shore and finally rolled into the station at Camp Shanks, N. Y. Carrying full field packs, we marched up the long hill to the port staging area. There we were quartered in long, one story barracks.

Our 84th Medical Battalion Armored had lost its identity as such. We were a shipping number, 5242-S, first unit of the 14th Armored Division to arrive at the camp for processing. Few of us had ever been through processing at a POE. None of us anticipated the mad whirl that was to follow.

Supply was the big issue. Our Company commander, supply officer and supply sergeant attended a meeting at the camp Quartermaster, to acquaint themselves with the simplified and speedy procedures used in issuing supplies at the camp.

There were inspections of clothing and equipment. Each item received minute scrutiny by inspecting officers and non-coms. Missing or unserviceable articles seemed to be replaced in a matter of minutes. But it was no easy job for our Company supply. S/Sgt Leon Updike, supply sergeant, was a pretty busy man. Lt. Thornton, supply officer, acted as liaison between the sergeant and our C. O., Lt. Schwartz, who braved the wrath of higher authority, in correcting any errors committed by his able assistants. If things got really rough, the Company's trouble shooter, Lt. Johnson, was called upon for advice and support.

First Sergeant Jimmie Smith was keeping close tab on his men. He had to be sure that none of them missed their physicals, gas mask tests, or any

other part of the processing. We were introduced to boat drill regulations at a large wooden structure resembling a ship. Here one of the men attached to the post, delivered a lecture in such a tiresome monotone, that one felt that any ship we boarded was certain to sink.

Processing was completed on the third day and twelve hour passes to New York were issued. The big town was ours! Glittering Broadway, Radio City, the famed night spots, the queens of Queens, the ladies of Jackson Heights! We all had our fling before the entire Division was placed under a twenty-four hour security blanket of restriction and censorship. Even Tec 5 Dixon was beginning to think that this was no longer a dry run.

Friday the 13th, of all days, we boarded a train again. People who lived along the right of way waved as we rushed past them. Millions of soldiers must have gone before us, but still they waved. Their arms must be tired by now. Silly thought! But there was no use contemplating realities at a time like that.

We detrained at the Weehawken station and took a ferry across the Hudson River. There were many boats on the other side of the river. Which was ours? Our ferry boat docked and we marched onto the great covered pier. A colored band played swing music, an incongruous accompaniment to our struggles with heavy packs and cumbersome duffle bags. However, we were immensely grateful for the doughnuts, coffee and chocolate that the Red Cross girls passed out.

Then we boarded our ship, carrying our heavy equipment and bags to our respective berths. This was our introduction to the Sea Robin. She was a liberty ship, fresh from the acetylene torch of some southern port. This was to be her maiden voyage. She looked nice and steady, snuggled against the great pier, with her armament piled aft like a bustle. Aft is the end where a bustle usually is, soldier! You get pretty well acquainted with a ship in fifteen days of convoy sailing. You may find her a little capricious. You may even get a little sick of her.

We shipped out of New York harbor on Saturday, October 14th. Our convoy headed south to a point near Bermuda, where we were joined by some other ships. Then we turned east, passed the Azores, and sailed on through the Strait of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean Sea. We headed north along the coasts of Sicily and Corsica to the harbor of Marseilles.

The city stretched along the shoreline for miles, the great rocky hills behind it, forming a rugged and bleak background. This was the colonial port of Marseilles, a city of people — almost a million of them — a city of religion, history, gaiety and wickedness, the home of the infamous Chateau d'If, where the Count of Monte Christo had been imprisoned.

That night we anchored in the harbor. As darkness came we could see the lights of the great city. The war had moved away from Marseilles. Blackout was a thing of the past.

The war had moved away, but not without leaving its marks on the port. We found this out the next day when our ship moved through an intricate maze of channel-like waterways to dock between two sunken boats at the shattered piers. Our air force had been at work on the port, before the city was liberated. They had done a pretty complete job. Piers and railroad yards had been bombed into twisted pieces of steel and heaps of rubble. Company "B" had seen its first battle-torn city — the first of many.

II

The gangplank was hung across the bow of one of the sunken boats. "B" Company was first to disembark, hitting France with both feet. We were carrying our heavy field packs and we knew we were in for a ten mile hike, but we hadn't been warned that it was uphill all the way.

Lt. Col. Louis H. Schinfeld, Battalion commander, led the column. Heat and persistent remarks brought out a command decision after the first mile. Our heavy bed rolls were taken off our packs, to be picked up by truck, later. It was a great relief for most of us, because a fourteen day boat trip, with almost as many days of sea-sickness, is hardly conducive to good performance in a ten mile hike, with full field pack.

We saw many French civilians along the route. And children! If the population of France isn't increasing, it doesn't seem to be the fault of the people in the Marseilles area. They were all around us, sniping cigarette butts and the residues of K rations. What they didn't find, they asked for. "Chocolat? Bonbons? Cigarette pour papa?"

Several hours later we reached the Delta Base Bivouac Area No. 2, "B" Company's area. A barren wind-swept field! We ate cold rations for supper and hit the hard ground for a well earned rest. Hard ground! We didn't mind. It was the good Earth! Just solid, cold ground, that chilled your spine during the night and made your shoulders sore and your limbs stiff.

Next morning we built fires, warmed ourselves and our C rations, and cooked some coffee that Tec 3 Walsh had smuggled from the States. Then we went to work.

TAT (to accompany troops) equipment was brought from the docks in trucks. Work was assigned to different sections of the Company. Maintenance, under supervision of motor officer, Lt. Johnson and motor sergeant

Conklin, went to work on the vehicles as they were delivered. There were a thousand things for them to do, before our Company would be ready to roll.

Supply was busy. There were several items to be issued to all the men in the company. Stocks of expendable equipment had to be built up. Equipment that had been shipped had to be checked. Lt. Thornton and Sgt. Updike had their hands full. They were ably assisted by the supply truck drivers, Tec 5 Mitchell and Pvt Coffey, and by Cpl. Baxter, Pfc Arnold Kirschner and Pvt. Hoerd.

S/Sgt. Magnuson and his crew, composed of Tec 4 Heiners and Tec 5s Bracco and Wiley, set up radios in our half track and command cars, and then spent most of their time working on the sets to insure good functioning of our important communications section.

The Clearing Platoon, under Lts. Sears, Dawson, Thompson and McLain, and Sgts. McCarthy, Horn, Korn, Prentice, Reese, Anderson, Ney and Tennyson, worked like beavers on SOP's for their treatment sections. They sorted and cleaned surgical instruments. They organized a records section, composed of Tec 4 Ney, Tec 5 Hoversten and Pfc. Shearer and Pearlman. The Platoon set up and operated an area dispensary and prostation. When maintenance finished work on the surgical trucks, the Clearing Platoon cleaned and painted the insides of the trucks and packed them with equipment and supplies.

The Collecting Platoon, "B" Company's utility group, did their full share of the work. The ambulance drivers were usually working on their vehicles in the motor pool under supervision of S/Sgt Nowlin. Sgt Bredeson, a section leader, was given the job of supervising the procurement of water and gasoline. His crew was made up of Cpl Sumpter and Pfc Bryan, driver of a weapons carrier. Sgt Autin, leader of the other section, supervised sanitation, including the digging of garbage sumps and latrines.

A group of men, led by Sgt. Miller and Cpl. Sumpter went to work converting Tec 5 Johnson's 6 x 6 into a kitchen truck. Meanwhile, the mess section, with Lt. Edwards and Sgt. Barlage in charge, was set up under a canvas fly. Cooking was difficult under the adverse conditions. Living in the field, in cool weather, had made "chow hounds" of all of us. It seemed that the men would never get enough to eat.

The mess section never will forget the time the Division Sanitation Officer made a spot check and told Sgt. Barlage he would have to sweep the dirt floor and kill the flies that passed through. The latter seemed a difficult job, because the flies came in with a fifty mile an hour tail wind behind them.

We all knew the purpose behind all of our work, and it was our job to be ready when called. The 84th Medical Battalion Armored was composed of Headquarters and Headquarters Company and three letter companies, "A", "B", and "C". In ordinary operations, the 14th Armored Division would work in three combat sections, Combat Command "A", Combat Command "B", with Combat Command Reserve usually in reserve, as indicated by its name. Each Battalion in the combat command would have aid men attached to each of its companies from its medical detachment. The detachment also would operate a battalion aid-station. The aid men would pick up casualties at the front and send them to the battalion station, where the wounded would be treated and sent back to duty, if possible. This work of the detachments was called the "First Echelon" of evacuation. If the injury was serious enough to warrant further evacuation of the casualty, he would be loaded into one of our ambulances and brought back to our clearing station. In action, one or more of our ambulances, with a driver and an assistant driver, would be attached to each battalion aid-station, to carry the wounded back to us.

Our clearing station was the second echelon of evacuation. We would further the treatment administered at the aid stations and return the patient to duty, if possible. In some cases it would be necessary to perform emergency operations. If further evacuation was found necessary, the casualty would be sent to an Army evacuation hospital, the third echelon. Army ambulances would be attached to our company to carry the patients to the hospitals.

After most of the necessary work had been completed, the men were given passes to Marseilles and Aix. In these cities they had their first experiences in trying to get around in a strange country. Their American money had been exchanged for French francs, which proved very easy to spend.

At Marseilles, we began receiving our first overseas mail. From that time on Tec 5 Maczynski made daily trips to our Division APO to get the mail. The question, "Is Maczynski back yet?" was heard frequently in the late afternoon or evening of almost every day.

Another man who was in demand was Pfc Levandowski, who acted as company barber. Personal appearance became a problem for each individual, but with outside help doing most of the laundry, the men usually managed to keep themselves and their clothing and bedding pretty clean at all times.

About two weeks after "B" Company had landed, two of the Division's Armored Infantry Battalions, under command of Colonel Hudelson, were sent to the French-Italian border, to relieve elements of an airborne division, who had business elsewhere. The infantry battalions were the first units of the 14th to be introduced to combat.

III

Movement orders!

The information electrified us. Our area began seething with activity, last minute preparations. Lt. Schwartz came in from Battalion Headquarters with the hot "poop" sheet. The 14th was to join the VI Corps of the Seventh Army. "B" Company was to be attached to Combat Command "B" of the Division. There was to be a 412 mile mounted road march to the Division assembly area at Verreries de Porteau. Comment: "Where the hell is that?"

All drivers were given strip maps, and oriented as to direction and route. "B" Company was to be the last unit in the third march serial of Combat Command "B". We were to follow the historic Rhone River valley most of the way, going by way of Aix, Avignon, Lyons, Valence, Dijon and Epinal.

Track vehicles were to be shipped by rail. This meant that our half-track would not be used in the long march. Tec 4 Holman was put in charge of a group of twelve men, whose job it was to load the half-track on the train and accompany it to Verreries de Porteau. Included in the group was Tec 5 Savaglio, assigned as driver of the vehicle.

At 0720 on Monday, November 20th, "B" Company's twenty-one vehicle convoy pulled out onto the road.

Lt. Thornton, riding Pvt. March's peep, was column control officer. This gave March ample opportunity to demonstrate his technique of low flying. It was a fortunate thing that S/Sgt. Fazzio rode with them, for on occasions he would take the "stick", bringing the peep back to the ground at the comfortable speed of thirty-five miles an hour, easing the strain on the good lieutenant's nerves.

The first day's march carried the Combat Command beyond the town of Valence. Our unit halted beside some former French cavalry stables. That night the officers and men of "B" Company slept like horses!

Before dawn the column was moving northward, again. The weather was pleasant during most of the day, but it started to rain as we entered Dijon. An over-night stop was made in a park on the outskirts of the town. It was our introduction to the sticky mud of France. We slept in it all night.

Daylight found us on the move again. After a few hours of driving we reached the rear elements of the Seventh Army. At that point we were met by an Army MP on a motorcycle. He was to guide us to our bivouac area.

We followed the MP for a few miles, then SNAFU! It all happened at a three way intersection. Lt. Schwartz, in the lead vehicle went one way, Lt. Thornton went another, and the MP took the third road.

The column followed Lt. Schwartz, who, by his ingenuity and foresight, guided the company into its proper area some five hours later. Two hours passed before Lt. Thornton rejoined us, and the MP never did show up.

Our maintenance weapons carrier, bearing Lt. Johnson, Sgt. Conklin and Tec 5's Roney and Tackett, didn't arrive until the next day. They had made several stops to repair some minor trouble on one of our ambulances and had failed to catch up with the column before it deployed in three directions.

Verreries de Porteau was a small town, barely large enough to accommodate our Division CP. The units of CC "B" were camped in the surrounding fields and woods. We weren't very comfortable, for there was quite a bit of rainfall. The mud was knee deep in some places.

Combat Command "A" had gone north two days ahead of us, and they were already committed to action before we reached the assembly area. The battle of the Vosges Mountains was in full swing. CC "A" was in the thick of it.

CC "B", was not able to take part in the fighting, because the two infantry battalions were still 400 miles to the south in the Italian Alps. It would have been suicide to have sent our tanks into battle without infantry to support them.

The situation gave the units of Combat Command "B" and Combat Command Reserve an excellent opportunity to study the operations of CC "A". They made mistakes, but so had every other Division in the ETO, when green to battle. CC "A"'s mistakes were more operational than tactical, for they fought with all the bravery of seasoned troops.

"B" Company was greatly interested in the actions of "A" Company of the 84th Medics, which was supporting CC "A". Our officers kept close liaison with "A" Company, and learned much. One major change was made in our Company. It was found that the Collecting Platoon of 54 men could operate at about half strength, with the other half being absorbed by the Clearing Platoon.

The old SOP (Standing Operating Procedure) used by the Clearing Platoon in the States, in training and on maneuvers, had provided for the division of the platoon into two equal parts. Each of these parts had six sections, as follows:

Triage
Preoperative
Operative
OperativePost-operative
Disposition
Property Exchange

Under a new SOP adopted by the Company, the Clearing Platoon was split into two sections, and each section was divided as follows:

Triage and Minor Injuries
Treatment and Disposition
Property Exchange
Dispatcher

Instead of having a number of small subsections which would quickly become disorganized and meaningless, if one of them was overburdened, the records and treatment functions were carried on by two well-manned subsections.

The old SOP, seemed to be devised more for handling casualties, one at a time. The new system could treat many men with different types of wounds simultaneously.

Property Exchange was left the same as before, but the new job of Dispatcher, handled by one man in each section was an important position. The Dispatcher gathered information about changes in location of battalion aid-stations from our ambulance drivers. Before any ambulance was allowed to return to an aid-station, the Dispatcher was to see that men to be returned to duty in the battalion, for which the ambulance was bound, and medical supplies destined to go to that battalion's aid-station were all loaded in that ambulance.

Section One of the Clearing Platoon was headed by Lts. Sears and Dawson, medical officers. S/Sgt McCarthy was the non-com in charge. Triage and Minor Injuries was taken care of by Tec 5 Hoversten and Pfc Shearer. Treatment and Disposition was manned by S/Sgt Prentice, Tec3s Pekkala and Walsh, Tec 4 Tennyson and Tec 5s Triplett, Fine, Thrasher and Overman, and Pfc Carlson. Sgt. Higley was Property Exchange man and Cpl. Russell, Dispatcher. Pfc W. Kirchner drove the surgical truck attached to the section.

Section Two had Lts. Thompson and Reynolds as medical officers, with Tec 3 Reese, the non-com in charge. Tec 4 Ney and Pfc Pearlman took care of Triage and Minor Injuries. Treatment and Disposition was composed of T/Sgt Horn, S/Sgt Korn, Tec 4s Anderson and Holman, Tec 5s Dixon and Harshman, and Pfc McKeon, Friedman and A. Kirschner. Tec 4 George handled Property Exchange, Cpl. Pollard was Dispatcher,

and the surgical truck was driven by Tec 5 Zeller, who was replaced by Pfc Murphy at a later date. Pfc Sewastynowicz was driver of the Platoon's command car. Aid men, such as Pfc Whorley, Shaw, Damon, O. Davis, Goodwin and Zielinski and Pvt. Fogliani were called into either section when needed.

Our track vehicles had arrived. The two infantry battalions, relieved by the famous U. S. Japanese Regiment, left the Alps and came North to join the Division.

CC "B" Headquarters sent out a call to all units under its command for liaison officers. These officers were to come to CC "B" prepared to stay. Lt. Thornton departed to represent "B" Company. Further evidence of imminent action was furnished by Battalion Headquarters, when their personnel section moved to Division Rear Echelon, taking our able company clerk, Cpl Anthony Segon, and our company personnel records with them.

On November 30th, Combat Command "B" moved Northward to another Division assembly area in Alsace. Hard, bitter days were ahead and "B" Company was to have its share.

IV

Friday, December 1, 1944 at 0230, "B" Company's column rolled into the small farm town of Wickersheim, in Alsace. Vehicles were parked along the main street, and the men stayed in them until daylight, getting as much sleep as possible.

At dawn, Sgt. Smith aroused the company. We found that we were to be billeted in various houses throughout the town. Some of the German-speaking Alsacians weren't too friendly to our cause. The burgomeister, who had just been appointed, to succeed his Nazi-minded predecessor, was a great help to Sgt. Smith in finding places for all the men and vehicles. Sgt. Heiners, who spoke German fluently acted as interpreter.

Our Clearing Platoon established its station in a first floor classroom of the town school. The CP was on the second floor. The remainder of the company was scattered throughout the town, six to eight men to a house, with vehicles parked in the courtyards.

For eleven days we stayed in Wickersheim, doing nothing much but waiting. Our company was considerably enlarged by the attachment of twenty-four enlisted men from the 597th Ambulance Company of the Seventh Army. Their job was to evacuate casualties from our clearing station to the Army evacuation hospitals.

On our front, the Germans had been driven from the Vosges Mountains onto the plains of Alsace. They had retreated to form the Colmar pocket to the South, and the Moder River line, to the North. The VI Corps faced the Germans on the river line. The Corps was made up of the 36th, 45th, 79th, and 103rd Infantry Divisions, with the 14th Armored Division in reserve.

At one time, three of "B" Company's ambulances were sent to Combat Command Headquarters to become part of a large convoy of Division vehicles, to be sent South, near the city of Strasbourg. The route of the movement was under direct observation by the Germans on the other side of the Rhine. The idea was to make the Germans think that a crossing of the river by armor was in the offing. Whether, or not, the Germans ever got that idea, is to this day unknown to us.

On December 11th, the VI Corps infantry divisions jumped off, the 79th taking Hagenau. That day our Division received attack orders. At 2030, on the 12th, CC "B" was to move, via the Hagenau woods, passing through the 79th Infantry, to attack the town of Soultz. When Soultz was cleared, CC "B" was to move East and then North to attack the Siegfried Line. CC "A" was to follow us into Soultz, then continue North, attacking the Siegfried Line in the vicinity of Wissembourg Gap.

"B" Company's Collecting Platoon sent ambulances to the various battalion aid stations, before the battalions left the assembly area. Establishment of a Clearing station at Bernolsheim was planned. We were all set. At 0100, on December 13th, our column joined the long line of vehicles, wheeled and track, rumbling toward Hagenau.

It was about 0600 when we arrived at Bernolsheim. Our station was set up, and the men and vehicles were billeted in different houses, just as they had been at Wickersheim.

That morning, a reconnaissance task force, under Major England, a tank battalion executive officer, had cleared Soultz. This task force led CC "B" as they moved East, taking Niederbetschdorf, Rittershoffen and Hatten. By nightfall, our infantry had reached the Salzbach river, between Hatten and Buhl. Here they met strong opposition. The Germans had blown up the two bridges, and left a sizeable force of men and mortars for rear guard action. They wanted time for the bulk of their forces to reach the Siegfried Line and dig in.

In the meantime, "B" Company had hardly settled itself at Bernolsheim, when one of our clearing sections moved up to Muxenhausen, across the river from Hagenau. They started receiving casualties that afternoon.

"C" Company of the 19th Armored Infantry Battalion fought its way across the Salzbach River that night. The engineers built a bridge, suitable

for tanks, and morning saw CC "B" across the river and on its way north. At Trimbach, their column split, tanks taking one road and infantry another. Two self-propelled 88s caught CC "B" Headquarters at the intersection. The harassing fire caused no damage, and the German guns were quickly spotted by air observation and knocked out by our artillery.

The end of the second day of the attack found the infantry at the Lauter River, on the German border. CC "A", to our left, had taken the city of Wissembourg and the 79th Division had reached the Lauter on our right.

To keep up with this movement and still have a station in operation at all times, "B" Company began leap-frogging its stations. The section from Bernolsheim jumped to Niederbetschdorf, where they set up their station in the town hall. That was as far as the leap-frogging went, though. The balance of the Company moved up from Muxenhausen, next day.

Two large rooms in the town hall were occupied by the station. The second floor provided quarters for the men of the Clearing Platoon, and the officers. The CP and a small dayroom were also on the second floor.

Our supply and the ambulance drivers, attached to us by the Seventh Army, shared a school building directly across from the station. S/Sgt Magnuson's radio section settled for a court yard, as did the maintenance and mess sections. We were getting pretty well settled, because a stalemate had developed at the front, and it looked as if we were going to stay where we were for a while.

The civilians of Niederbetschdorf furnished our treatment subsections with some work. We treated a variety of cases, among them a priest who had been badly beaten by SS troopers. Our MCs even had some obstetric practice in an abortion case.

It was at Niederbetschdorf that Lts. Schwartz and Reynolds "split their bars" to become captains, and 2nd Lt. Thornton was promoted to 1st Lieutenant. Their bars were wetted down to some extent, but the tactical situation was becoming a little too serious for any real celebration.

V

Our fighting forces, after pushing their way across the German border, slammed head on into the mighty Siegfried Line and stopped. They found that armor could not break through the well-manned defense line of steel and concrete.

For a few days there was an artillery duel between heavy guns, with our fire directed in pin-point concentration on individual pill boxes. There

was heavy patrol work. Information concerning strength and disposition of enemy troops was vital.

Change in the stalemate was brought about by events in the North. Von Runstedt made his famous Ardennes breakthrough. The pressing need for troops in that sector caused shifting of the 103rd Division from the VI Corps to that area. The pulling out of the 103rd left the VI Corps without reserve, and all divisions had to spread out. Our Combat Command Reserve was given the operational name of Task Force Hudelson and took a position on the extreme left of the Corps' sector. "B" Company was sent to give medical support to Task Force Hudelson, with "C" Company of the 84th Medics supporting CC "B".

On December 22nd, section one of "B" Company's Clearing Platoon moved to Niederbronn, occupying a large house in the town. Next day, the entire Company moved into Offwiller. Here, the station again was in a town hall, with the rest of the men finding quarters in various other parts of town.

We celebrated Christmas at Offwiller. First Cook, Tec 4 Charley Ross, assisted by Pfc. A. Scott, did a swell job on the dinner. Pfc. Orland G. Sanders, deepfat frying expert, was called in to take care of the turkey in grand style. The meal was served by the officers and top ranking non-coms of the Company.

Several days later, "B" Company suffered its first battle casualty. Pfc Herman Rempel, driver of ambulance No. 10, was attached to the aid station of the 94th and 117th Recon Squadrons, at Mouterhouse. Rempel had just returned to the aid station after a trip to our clearing station with some casualties. He and another of our men, Pfc Vincent, were walking toward the house where they were billeted, when a shell hit the high corner of a building behind them. A small shell fragment penetrated the fleshy part of Rempel's leg near the knee cap. He was evacuated to his own treatment station, where his wound was found to be slight. A bandage was applied, and Rempel was returned to duty. While we were at Offwiller, the twenty-four men of the 597th Ambulance Company left us. They were replaced by twenty-two men from the 582nd Ambulance Company. Most of these 582nd men were to be with us for nearly five months, and we found quite a few new friends among them.

For several days, the G-2 reports had indicated a strong concentration of Krauts in the vicinity of Bitche. Our artillery started to pound the concentration points, and air observation was up every day to score the results. Several air support missions were called for, in our immediate sector, which seemed to indicate that something nasty was being brewed.

At that time Lt. Edwards, Assistant Collecting Platoon Leader, was on liaison with CC "R". On New Year's Eve he came in with news from the front. The Germans had attacked, in what was thought to be divisional

strength. Our defenses had been penetrated at four points. These penetrations had been contained, except in heavily wooded areas, where the Germans had succeeded in getting whole platoons behind our positions. CC "R" Headquarters had been brought under small arms fire, when one group of Krauts infiltrated the town of Barenthal.

It was apparent that it would become necessary for the company to move and billeting parties were sent out the next morning. They found that the Division Surgeon had selected the college building at Bouxwiller as the next site for our station.

The morning of New Year's Day, casualties began pouring into our station. All morning and afternoon our ambulances, loaded with patients, rolled into Offwiller, in many cases, followed by all types of vehicles, also carrying casualties from the various battalion aid stations.

That day, "B" Company set a record for the number of patients evacuated in one day. Both sections of the Clearing Platoon were working and they were very busy. Ninety casualties came into the station and eighty-nine were evacuated, one being returned to duty. Our quarters were small, so it was necessary to keep the patients moving through the station as speedily as possible.

Captain Segal, the company dental officer, did a wonderful job of disposition. Ordinarily he occupied himself with dentistry, only, but, as he said, "This is no time to stand on one's professional dignity," and with that, he waded into the job of keeping the station cleared.

The efficiency of the operation of our station, under the system originated at Verreries de Porteau was never more evident than at Offwiller. If one walked into the station, he saw only quiet activity. There was no apparent rush and no excitement, yet all casualties were given full and careful treatment and all records were properly kept. Most of the patients were cold and hungry, so a small kitchen was set up right in the station, and hot coffee and sandwiches were available at all times. Four Division chaplains gave not only spiritual assistance to the wounded, but they were a great help to the men of our Company in many ways. Father (Major) Casey proved to be a tower of strength and an inspiration to all of us. He seemed to imbue not only the patients, but our own men as well, with his calm courage in the emergency.

It was at this time that Pfc Carl Tessmann, ambulance driver, and Tec 5 Jack Thompson, medical technician, performing outstanding feats of bravery, under fire, earned for themselves the Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster.

These men were attached to the 94th Recon, who had their aid station at Mouterhouse. The route of evacuation to our clearing station was

through Barenthal and Zinswiller to Offwiller. Infiltrating Germans had these towns and connecting roads under observation and fire.

The 94th had three casualties to evacuate, and although Tessmann and Thompson knew of the dangers involved, they decided to try to make the trip to our station. It was a quick run as far as Barenthal, and it was made safely despite occasional mortar fire which fell along the road.

In Barenthal they were forced to stop, because just ahead of them was a half-track, which was firing on some enemy troops, who had infiltrated the town. German artillery had Barenthal under fire, and with shells bursting all around them, Tessmann and Thompson were in a very uncomfortable position.

Then they spotted two casualties. Despite the threat to their own safety, the men dismounted and gave the wounded emergency treatment, loaded the casualties into their ambulance and returned to the 94th aid station.

A second incident, involving these two men, took place near the town of Wingen. The 94th had successfully disengaged themselves from the enemy at Mouterhouse and had set up their CP and aid station in Wingen. The Germans were advancing from the North and another move by the 94th became necessary. All the aid station vehicles were loaded with equipment and ready to pull out, when word came that there were some wounded men up at the front. Captain Hepfer of the 94th Medical Detachment asked Tessmann and Thompson if they would volunteer to pick up the casualties.

Knowing full well that they were not responsible for the evacuation of the wounded from the front to the aid station, Carl and Jack consented without a moments hesitation. As they approached the spot where the wounded men were supposed to be, they came upon an armored car, sitting just off the road in the woods. The armored car's 37 mm gun was exchanging fire with hidden Germans. After a few minutes the fire ceased and an officer in the car warned Carl and Jack that there were no troops deployed in advance of him. When asked about casualties, the officer said that a truck had overturned in a ditch, one hundred yards ahead of their position.

Dismounting, and dragging a litter with them, Tessmann and Thompson crept forward across a clearing and found the truck. A wounded man was lying along side the vehicle. They had just started treatment, when the shooting started again. Under fire, Carl and Jack completed their first aid measures, and loaded the casualty on the litter. German infantry appeared at the edge of the woods. Some of them started across the clearing to rush the armored car, but their attack was repelled.

Deciding that they were getting nowhere just lying there under fire, Tessmann and Thompson picked up the litter and carried it back along the ditch. When they finally reached their ambulance, both men were exhausted from their efforts. Somewhere along the ditch, Jack had felt something tug at the collar of his field jacket. At the ambulance, Jack discovered that a bullet had cut a neat hole in the fabric, two inches from his neck. This was all that the two needed to speed them on their way. They breathed a sigh of relief as they pulled up to the 94th's aid station.

Some of the casualties brought into "B" Company's station had hysterical stories to tell about "hopped up" Germans, running onto our mine fields to clear them. The dead piled up and other Krauts, coming up behind, used the bodies as a pathway through the mine fields. One man told of seeing a Kraut run for a hundred yards after having his leg practically blown off at the knee. All the wounded were sure of one thing. Those Germans were doped up with something. As one fellow put it, "They just didn't act like the Kraut I've fought against in the past. They seemed like drunken men gone mad."

They also told us that Barenthal and Phillipsbourg were cut off. This caused worry on our part, because Lt. Edwards and his driver, Pfc. Lewis were attached to CC "R" Headquarters at Barenthal. Later that evening our fears for their safety were dispelled when the two came back to the company. German infantry had infiltrated Barenthal, but the town was not in German hands.

But Lt. Edwards bore sad tidings. Task Force Hudelson had been ordered to withdraw. They were to hold the enemy as best they could while moving back along the icy roads, out of the hills. A defense line was being formed some ten kilometers to the rear. Our company was placed on a ten minute alert.

Our billeting party had returned and at 2200, Clearing Section I moved out to set up a station in the college building at Bouxwiller. Company headquarters followed at 0200 on January 2nd, Clearing Section II remaining at Offwiller until the station at Bouxwiller was ready to receive casualties.

By dawn the Germans had advanced on Offwiller on three sides, and they controlled all highways, except the road we had taken to Bouxwiller. The situation was becoming precarious for Section II, so they high-tailed it from Offwiller that morning, reaching Bouxwiller safely.

VI

January 2nd the CP of CC "R" drew back to Ingwiller. The division's 19th Armored Infantry Battalion came in to reinforce CC "R", but the withdrawal was already under way. This didn't prevent the 19th from getting into the thick of the fight.

Fighting a rear-guard action in the retrograde movement, the infantry battalion held its ground at St. Louis, allowing the balance of CC "R" to move safely to the vicinity of Bouxwiller. The position of the 19th became precarious when German infantry infiltrated to the West and South of their location, and cut off their communications with CC "R" for two days.

This situation brought about an unusual incident, so far as four of our men were concerned. Two ambulances were dispatched to the 19th Battalion Aid Station as soon as we heard that the 19th had been switched to CC "R" to reinforce the Combat Command. Lt. Edwards in Lewis' jeep guided the two ambulances as far as Wingen, then finding that the highway to St. Louis had been cut by the Germans, he left the two ambulances at Wingen and returned to CC "R" Headquarters.

In one of the ambulances was driver, Pfc Landers and his assistant, Pfc McKeon. Pfc Vincent was driver of the other vehicle, with Pfc Shoaff, his assistant. Knowing that the area to the west of them was still controlled by our forces, the four decided to try to reach St. Louis in a round about way. Moving along secondary roads, they found the highway to Morsbronn, and they drove into the town. Then they turned northeast and finally managed to reach St. Louis on secondary roads.

Finding evacuation to our station almost impossible, because of the long distance of the route they had covered, the drivers began carrying casualties from the 19th to a clearing station of the 100th Infantry Division. It was a good example of the tenacity, ingenuity and ability of our ambulance drivers.

The entire Division, with the exception of the 19th, assembled in the area of Bouxwiller for regrouping. CC "B" was given the task of holding the passes of the Vosges Mountains at the point where they led into the plains of Alsace from the East. Fighting continued in the mountains, involving the 36th and 45th Divisions and the 275th Regiment. Our armor was a secondary line of defense, placed behind the infantry to stop any breakthrough by German armor.

At Bouxwiller, we had our first experience with a Kraut jet-propelled plane. Without warning, it dove over our area. Its machine guns rattled and its cannon popped, as our men dove for shelter. After that single dive, the jet-propelled plane hurried away from our pursuit ships. No one was hurt by the strafing, but it had an adverse effect on our morale, some alarmists predicting that perfection of this type of plane by the Germans would prolong the war indefinitely.

CC "B" had manned the Vosges pass defenses for about five days, while the German attack lost its impetus. Strength in the German forces began showing elsewhere, though, in the vicinity of Hatten and Rittershoffen.

Because of the concentrated effort on the part of the Germans to take Alsace, and because the VI Corps had all of their divisions committed on the line, it was decided that the Corps would withdraw all forces from the fringes of the Siegfried Line and establish defenses along the old Maginot Line. Following our withdrawal the Germans made a second bid for penetration. They threw the 22nd Panzer Grenadier Division and the 7th Paratroop Division into the line around Hatten. It was this attack that brought the 14th Armored Division back into the fight. The Division was assigned a sector only three miles wide and both CC "A" and CC "B" were committed. CC "R", rejoined by the 19th AIB, was placed to the right of the Division area later.

"B" Company, assigned to support CC "B", moved to Mertzwiller on Jan 11th. When CC "R" was committed, we also supported them. Ambulances from "A" Company of the 84th were attached to us, so that we could have an ambulance at all battalion aid-stations in the Combat Commands.

The Company had hardly settled itself at Mertzwiller, when one of the most vicious engagements of the war took place. The German drive was entering Hagenau Forest, when the full fury of their attack was spent in the bloody battle at Hatten. The heavy fighting started on January 12th, when our Division launched a counter attack, with infantry and armor. The high ground beyond Hatten was our immediate objective. The two forces met in the village and fought each other for nine days.

At long last, on January 20th, our forces withdrew, leaving Hatten to the Germans. But the enemy was not the victor. The spearhead of their attack had been blunted. The 22nd Panzer and the 7th Paratroop Divisions had been practically annihilated. The German offensive was broken.

During the battle at Hatten, our clearing station was very busy. Casualties poured in during the whole period of fighting. Our New Year's Day peak was never reached in any one day, but we had our busiest nine days of the war.

Artillery fire from our batteries around Mertzwiller was heavy and there was a great deal of air action. Great fleets of bombers were passing over every day, pounding at the German front lines and the Siegfried Line.

Following the battle of Hatten, the VI Corps withdrew its lines to the Moder River. The 14th Armored Division again became a mobile reserve of the Corps. The battle of Hatten had taken a heavy toll on our Division's men and vehicles and the 14th had to be practically rebuilt.

VII

On January 20th, "B" Company pulled out of Mertzwiller. Our next stop was Marmoutier, a town just outside of Saverne. The number of wounded gradually tapered off as our whole front settled down to artillery duels and patrol action.

Casualties among front line medics were running pretty high in the Division, so the companies of the Medical Battalion were called on to furnish replacements. After a few men had been sent to the detachments, we received new men to take their places in our ranks. Rather than have our more experienced medical and surgical technicians drawn out of the Company, disturbing the smooth operation of the Clearing Platoon, Captain Schwartz decided to give special training to our replacements. After being trained, the new men were sent to the detachments.

Starting with Pvts. Bienlein and Johnson, two of the men who had come overseas with us, we furnished the detachments with quite a few men including, Tec 5 Dixon, Pfc. Sessions, Shearer, Carlson and Buice and Pvts. J. Miller, M. Miller, Gisser, Davis, Lawson, Creager, Martin, Costello, Haggerty, Mullins and Wink. Some of these men were volunteers.

Bienlein was killed in action a few days before the war ended, when he was shot through the forehead by a sniper. Mullins was evacuated through our station, with a broken leg, the day after his transfer. Dixon and Wink were retransferred to our Company. Our ambulance drivers brought back many stories of the fine work some of the other former "B" Company men were doing in their detachments.

The second section of our Clearing Platoon departed from Marmoutier on January 25th, to establish a station at Hochfelden. The site was a brewery and the station was set up in a large room, which had once been used as a cafeteria for the brewery employees.

Two days later the remainder of the Company moved to Hochfelden, occupying some of the brewery buildings and some nearby houses. It was fortunate that all the Company found good quarters at Hochfelden, because our stay was to be a long one.

A penetration of our Moder River defense lines saw CC "B" sent into action again at Schweighausen. Following a battle at Schweighausen, CC "B" was attached to the 36th Division and sent to Bitschwiller. At Bitschwiller they were given the mission of clearing the towns of Offendorf and Herrlisheim.

"B" Company was in support of CC "B" and on February 5th, the first section of our Clearing Platoon moved from Hochfelden up to Weitbruck, only two kilometers from the front. That was the closest approach we had made to the fighting lines up to that time.

CC "B" was returned to Division control on February 8th and our first section returned to Hochfelden from where we supported CC "B" when Division stuck them into the line in the vicinity of Phaffenhoffen. We remained in support of the Combat Command until March 7th, ending more than two months of continuous operations for our Company.

At Hochfelden our morale and the tactical situation was helped to a great extent by news of the great Russian offensive, which had carried to within fifty miles of Berlin, forcing withdrawal of German forces from our fronts. At this time, too, some of our men were given passes to Paris, Brussels and Nancy.

"A" Company of our Battalion was put in support of CC "B" on March 7th and "B" Company moved to Saverne to become a Holding Company.

VIII

Ordinarilly, evacuation within the Division goes no further than the Clearing Station of the Medical Battalion. From that point, sick and wounded are usually sent to an Army evacuation hospital. Using this method, many men with minor illnesses would be lost to the Division entirely, and replaced by new men, or several weeks would elapse before they returned to their oufits through the maze of replacement depots.

The holding company was designed to take care of sick men who could be returned to duty within ten days or less, thus eliminating the long period of time required for regular evacuation and return.

We operated five wards, a Division pharmacy, a laboratory and a patients' mess. Major Cooper, Division Psychiatrist and Captain Matthews, in charge of dental prosthetics, were attached to the holding company. During the time that we operated the holding station, over 90 % of the men who were held by us were returned to duty. The number of cases held at one time varied from 15 to 45.

Our men occupied the third floor of a large factory building, some distance from the station, with the mess section in an old German Army barracks. The men did quite a bit of work in the area, clearing mud from the driveways and keeping the area and buildings in good condition.

While we were at Saverne, our CW radio, which had been in continuous operation since we were first committed to combat, closed down. It was a short vacation for our operators and the only one they were to have until the end of the European war. Pvt. Knudsen had been inducted into the radio section by S/Sgt Magnuson. The wisdom of having an extra man available was shown when Tec 5 Bracco had to be evacuated for first and

second degree burns on his hands. This was true of the maintenance section, when Tec 5 Rogers had to be evacuated with a fractured wrist. Extra men also proved particularly useful in the mess section, which was hit pretty hard by illness and injuries, at times. Trained personnel, such as Tec 5 Overman and Pfc. Fox and Sanders came in handy when Pfc. Hutcherson and Scott had to be sent to Army hospitals for appendectomies.

Tec 4 Barnetson, one of "B" Company's cooks was evacuated by our station from Saverne, with a severe cut across his right hand. His case was an example of the time involved in returning from a General Hospital to the Division. He didn't rejoin us until almost six weeks later.

We had been a little apprehensive before we came to Saverne, because of Alsace Alice. Alice was a terror. She wasn't a gal, she was a German railroad gun. Her 1100 pound, 380 mm. shells dropped into various parts of Saverne every night from an undiscovered point. One of her shells had hit in the area occupied by "C" Company of the 136th Ordnance and had killed eleven men. Our fears proved groundless, because Alsace Alice was located and put out of action at just about the time we moved into Saverne.

On other Army fronts, the crack-up of the German Armies was becoming evident. Cologne had fallen and the First and Ninth Armies had crossed the Rhine. It was hardly necessary to tell us that some big action was in the making on our own front. For several days, heavy artillery had been moving up through Saverne. Many of the guns were 155 mm. "Long Toms."

On March 19th, a meeting of all officers and top ranking non-coms was called by Captain Schwartz. The plan for our coming drive into Germany was explained briefly. The VI Corps was to take Hagenau, proceed northeast across the German border and establish a bridgehead across the Rhine. Just like that!

And it seemed to go just like that! Our holding company moved with Division Trains Headquarters from Saverne to Hagenau on March 21st. The holding station was never supposed to fall more than thirty-five miles behind the front lines. That meant that our front had crossed the German border.

IX

We had passed through Hagenau several months before. The city had seen a lot of warfare since then. Previously, only the railroad yards and manufacturing districts had suffered much damage, but on our second visit, homes, schools, hospitals and churches all showed the marks of shell and bomb explosions.

At Hagenau, we moved into a modern hospital, large enough to house our entire station and all men of the Company. The water and electric systems of the city were out of order as a result of the war and we were unable to use most of the hospital's facilities.

Quite a few troops were in Hagenau when we were there and there was some air action by the Germans. Kraut planes did some bombing and strafing on several nights, but our immediate area was never hit.

On March 25th a party from our Company crossed the German border to select a new site for the holding company. They chose a field near Schaidt. German prisoners were brought in to the area to prepare it for the arrival of the Company.

The company and the patients were moved from Hagenau to the field near Schaidt on March 28th. Large tents accommodated our wards and other sections of the holding company. Most of the men slept in their own pup tents for the first time since we left Verreries de Porteau.

When we had a chance to examine our surroundings, we found we were right in the midst of the shattered Siegfried Line. We took advantage of the opportunity to visit some of the pill boxes and we found that many of them had been tremendously formidable affairs, and had probably been manned by as many as a platoon of men. Some of the larger pill boxes even had their own mess facilities.

Our area began to take on the appearance of a real Army camp, when we had red brick walks constructed by the German prisoners. The work had just been completed when we got orders to move again. The 14th Armored Division had been transferred to the XV Corps of the Seventh Army, which was operating at a considerable distance to the north, so that we knew our move would be a long one.

The XV Corps had crossed the Rhine in the vicinity of Worms, several days before we received the orders, and had progressed well beyond the river. The heaviest fighting in the Corps area was in and around Aschaffenberg. The 4th Armored Division had passed through the town and had gone beyond without clearing it. Aschaffenberg was being cleared by the 45th infantry Division, who were meeting stiff resistance from SS troopers, Hitler Jugend, and fanatical women. The 14th Armored Division was to move into an assembly area south of Darmstadt.

The morning of Easter Sunday, April 1st, we pulled out of our area at Schaidt to join the convoy of Division Trains. All day long we travelled north and east. German people in the towns we passed through, stood along the streets and watched us as we passed. It made one wonder what the thoughts of the super-race were at a time like that.

At Worms we crossed the Rhine on an Engineer's bridge. We moved on northward, travelling some distance on the Reichautobahn, the German system of super-highways. At 2130 we pulled into Ober Rummstadt, after travelling over 200 miles.

Our Division had hardly reached the XV Corps sector, when both CC "A" and CC "B" were thrown into the line. The two Combat Commands halted in the proposed assembly area only long enough to gas their vehicles. The 84th Medics had moved as a battalion with the Division Trains columns, which had followed the Combat Commands. "A" and "C" Companies of the 84th were in the same situation as the tanks and infantry. They too could take time only for gassing their vehicles, then they had to hurry to catch up with their respective Combat Commands.

At Ober Rummstadt our patients were bedded down for the night in a school building, which also accommodated most of the Company's men. We knew this was to be an overnight stop only, so we didn't unpack all of our equipment.

Next morning we were on the move again, and in mid-afternoon we arrived at Ruck, where Division Trains set up the Division Supply Point. We took over a house in the town for our station. Most of the men of the Company slept in the field or in box cars which were sitting on a nearby railroad track. Our stay at Ruck was marred by quite a bit of rainfall, and the area was pretty muddy by the time we left it on April 4th.

Meanwhile, CC "B" approached Lohr, which was under siege by the 3rd Infantry Division. The Combat Command was ordered to take Lohr, so they passed through the 3rd Division and the town was cleared after a day and a half of fighting. CC "B" then moved on toward Germunden, which was a rail junction and supply depot for the German Navy. Supplies were being shipped down the Main River to the Rhine and thence to Naval bases on the North Sea. The shipping had been cut off, but the town was still a prize worth fighting for.

Following the usual battle for bridges, road junctions and commanding positions, CC "B" met strong resistance. Germunden fell, but not before our big guns had reduced the town to shambles.

Our Company was particularly interested in CC "B", because CC "R" had been following them all the way. It was at a road junction, just outside Germunden that CC "R" again got into the fight.

"B" Company had moved up to Lohr. Our station occupied a large school house. The building was almost completely equipped and there were many interesting things there.

The objective of the XV Corps was the town of Bad Neuhstedt. The Division split at a road junction CC "A" moving northeast and CC "B"

taking a direct route toward the town. CC "R" travelled southeast, the whole Division movement being a large enveloping action. Bad Neustedt was taken with the help of the 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions, which came from the northwest to close the pocket.

The afternoon of April 5th, we received a call for ambulances, medical supplies and medical men, to be sent to Hammelbourg. Captain Reynolds organized the detail. Two ambulances were used, one driven by Tec 5 Prince, carried Captain Reynolds and Tec 4 Anderson. The other was driven by Pfc Stephens who was accompanied by Tec 4 Tennyson. A large quantity of blood plasma, leg and arm splints and other supplies were carried.

Not much was known about the details of the mission when the party started out. They travelled east along the Main River, crossing at Germunden. East of Germunden they were held up by an armored column which had stopped along the road. This group had a public address system set up and had induced about 400 German soldiers to walk out of the woods and give themselves up. Our party finally passed the column. They ran into some difficult cross country driving to get around some blown bridges.

Driving along a road through a small woods, they found they were being followed by a peep. Then they heard shots. Snipers were firing at the peep. The officer in the small vehicle ducked down as low as possible. Some of the bullets passed over his head, two of them entering the driver's jacket and coming out at the shoulder, without injuring him. The driver remained very calm, despite the close shave. Three bullets hit the peep's windshield and one passed through the back of Stephens ambulance. No one was hurt, but they were all glad to get out of the woods.

As they neared Hammelbourg, our men came upon some tanks, which had taken a large prison camp. Just as the ambulances stopped the SSs began coming in, and everyone ran for cover. Only a few shells exploded in the area and no one was hit.

A message came through that the road to the rear had been cut by the infantry that had fired on the peep. Three tanks went back and in fifteen minutes they had cleared out all of the Germans.

The prison camp was for officers. Most of them were Serbs, some French and there were about 500 Americans. They hadn't been treated too badly and were in fair condition. Their medical personnel and supplies were adequate, so our ambulances started on the trip back to Lohr.

On the way back they tried a small country road, as a detour around the blown bridges. The road led along a river bank. With a steep hill on

one side and the water on the other, it was strictly a one way road. It was dangerous driving in blackout and they soon found the road to be impassable. The ambulances had to be backed about a quarter mile before coming to a place where they could be turned around.

It wasn't until after the party reached Lohr that they heard the story behind their trip. When the Division started its drive on Bad Neustedt a group of tanks and infantry under command of Lt. Day, called Task Force Day was given the mission of passing through enemy held territory and taking the prison camp near Hammelsbourg. They were without medical support and when they met resistance the detail from "B" Company was called up. By the time our ambulances arrived, Task Force Day had contacted elements of CC "B" and had already evacuated their casualties. That unsuccessful mission was an example of some of the extra work which the company was called upon to perform at times.

X

With CC "R" committed to action, our company found itself with the task of operating a holding station and also supporting a Combat Command. This difficulty was solved, by leaving a detachment of our men under Captain Sears and T/Sgt Horn to operate the holding station.

The detachment and the patients of the holding station were all attached to our Headquarters Company for rations. Headquarters Company had moved into Lohr and was near our area, so it was not necessary to move the station from the school building.

The balance of the Company was now free to move up in support of CC "R", so on April 7th at 0800, one section of our Clearing Platoon moved up to Gossenheim, set up a clearing station, and started operating in the usual manner. It was found that our section had the town to itself. There were no other American troops there. Then some German soldiers started coming into our station and surrendering. Apparently they were under the impression that the town was in our hands.

At 2000 the same day, the other section of "B" Company arrived at Gossenheim. Next morning some light tanks from our Division moved in to clear Gossenheim. We had occupied the town for more than twenty-four hours, before it was announced that it was officially cleared.

Following the fall of Bad Neustedt, the Division was ordered to assemble in an area north of Bad Neustedt. "B" Company moved back to Lohr that day, to rejoin Division Trains.

The next afternoon, Trains travelled to Bad Neuhaus to set up the Division Supply Point and "B" Company moved with them carrying the

patients of the holding station. Headquarters Company also moved up to the same town. At Bad Neuhaus, we were established at a resort, which was being used as a German hospital. Our station shared the hospital with the Germans.

On April 11th at 1900 Company "B" received an order to move to a distance of thirty-five kilometers to fall in behind the column of the 25th Tank Battalion to support CC "R". We had one hour to make the trip. The Division was attacking beyond Romhild, toward Lichtenfels. We did some fast packing, while Lt. Thornton took off with Pfc March in his jeep, to get the details. As at Lohr, our holding station was to be left behind with Headquarters Company. The same detachment was assigned to take care of the patients.

When Lt. Thornton returned the company followed him in a mad dash to catch the column of the 25th Tank Battalion. Our destination was Romhild and none of us who made that trip will forget it. There was a lot of blackout cross-country driving, at high speeds, and several of our vehicles got stuck in the mud. First Sgt. Smith's captured CP vehicle had to be abandoned, and Smith and Pfc Wullschleger transferred all their records and equipment to an ambulance. Pfc Coffey's supply truck upset and he caught up with us the next morning.

Our trip to Romhild began a period of fast moving around for the Company. At Romhild we again shared a hospital with the Germans. The building was large and housed our whole company and the clearing station.

CC "R" was spearheading the attack on the extreme left of the Seventh Army front. Starting at Romhild it became SOP for one of our clearing sections to move with the column of CC "R" Headquarters.

On April 12th at 1215 one of our clearing sections moved with CC "R" to Buchenrod. The balance of the Company move up as soon as the advance station was in operation, arriving at Buchenrod at 2345. The Company found itself in the field and the men settled down as best they could for the night. Most of them slept in the open, but even a light rain didn't disturb them much.

Early in the morning of April 13th we deployed our vehicles and erected tents. We found we weren't to stay long, however. Section Two left for Mistelfeld at 1230. At 1830 the first section followed them, but before section two reached Mistelfeld CC "R" Headquarters and section two had already left for Wonsees.

At 1045 on the 14th of April section one moved up to Wonsees, in a rather eventful trip. Moving crosscountry over rough ground the column was halted when the trailer, hooked to the surgical truck driven by Pfc

Bill Kirchner, was overturned. Maintenance had hardly righted the trailer, when we found that one of the ambulances was stuck at the edge of a ditch. It had to be pulled out. While maintenance moved up to take care of that job, German planes came over and started strafing. We all dove for cover. Actually the planes were after some convoys of combat vehicles travelling along a nearby highway, but that was close enough to make it dangerous for us. Air action continued during the rest of the trip, keeping us pretty much on edge.

Passing through the hills as we approached Wonsees, our lead vehicle, the half track, driven by Pfc Kosheny, was hit by sniper's bullets. Fortunately no one in the command section was hit.

The part of the town of Wonsees which we occupied was squeezed in between the hills. A good size stream flowed along side the narrow road. We could see fish in the stream, and several of the men tried shooting them, without any success. One of our attached Army ambulance drivers speared one of the fish with a sword and several others were caught with nets and hooks, so some of the men ate fresh fish that evening instead of the usual B rations.

On April 15th, section one moved with CC "R" Headquarters to Trockau, setting up their station in a house in the town. Trockau was situated at the inside of a great curve in the Berlin-Munich Autobahn. A short distance to the north of this curve, front line elements of CC "R" ran into the flank of the German forces retreating from Bayreuth. Our station was so close to the battle that casualties were sent directly to our station instead of to the battalion aid stations.

The next morning the rest of the company joined section one. Our CP occupied another building in town, with the remainder of the company in a field between the town and the Autobahn.

It was at this area that we became acquainted with "Bed Check Charley". Who originated the name, we never knew. Every night, for quite some time, a German plane flew over our area, usually dropping flares and strafing and bombing nearby combat outfits. The regular appearance of a plane at a time just after it had become dark, was the reason for giving it the name "Bed Check Charley". It may have been a different plane and pilot every night or possibly more than one plane. But that didn't matter. He was still "Bed Check Charley" when he came over any area.

Pfcs Adams and Abrahams, two of our ambulance drivers had a harrowing experience with "Bed Check Charley". They were at Rear Echelon at Lichtenfels and were returning from a show one night, when they heard Charley coming over, he started strafing just outside of town where 400 replacements were bivouaced in the field.

Adams and Abrahams noticed a flashlight signal from a window in a building across the street from them. They reported it to the military government, who said that they would investigate it in the morning.

Adams and Abrahams continued on the way to their billets and again Charley came over. They saw a peep with driving lights on, coming up the street. They dove for shelter near a statue in a small square, and shouted for the peep driver to turn out his lights. As the vehicle's lights went out, Charley started strafing. The peep hit the side of a building and the men got out. Several shells hit only a few feet from the statue. One of them started a fire in a nearby house. When Charley had gone, Adams and Abrahams ran over to the peep to see if anyone was hurt. They weren't, but the peep driver was very angry because he had broken a bottle of good old American whiskey when he jumped from the vehicle. The four men then helped put out the fire, fearing that it would serve as a beacon, directing "Bed Check Charley" on a return trip.

On the autobahn, near our area, two of our ambulances were involved in a serious accident. Travelling in blackout, the leading ambulance occupied by Pfc Haymes and Rempel crashed head-on into an MP peep. The two MPs in the latter vehicle were killed, Haymes suffered a brain concussion and possible fracture, and Rempel received lacerations of his back and left leg and a possible dislocation of his left shoulder. Pfc Landers and Cpl Burns, in the second ambulance, crashed into the rear of the first ambulance, Burns suffering cuts on his left hand. Landers was uninjured. Haymes, Rempel and Burns had to be evacuated through our station to an Army hospital.

The great Third Army at the left of our sector, had begun to fan out toward both the north and South, so the Seventh Army had turned South toward Munich, with the 14th Armored Division still on its extreme left. The three Combat Commands of the Division moved down the autobahn, with CC "R" in the lead. Colonel Hudelson chose to keep his command off the highway, itself, but we still moved southward in the same general direction. Travelling with CC "R", "B" Company moved as far as Unter Rohrenstadt on April 18th.

The trip was a long one, taking over seven hours. We arrived at 2300 and found sleeping quarters in nearby houses and barns. The next day the company began setting up in a beautiful field in the town. Work in the area had hardly started, when we were ordered to pull out, and we moved to Stockelsberg, only a few miles away. Here we were rejoined by the men we had left with Headquarters Company to take care of the holding station. The holding company idea had been abandoned. Each medical company was to hold its own patients from that time on.

We left Stockelsberg on April 20th and arrived at Feucht at 1830. In this town we occupied an ice storage plant. Our vehicles were put in a courtyard and the field behind the plant, with the men living in garages and nearby houses.

XI

As soon as the Company reached Feucht, the first section of the Clearing Platoon moved out on instructions from CC "R". Their destination was the town of Altenfelden, where they were expected to set up their station. Upon approaching the town on the German super-highway, the autobahn, they became aware that CC "R" Headquarters had been a little too optimistic. Apparently CC "R" had expected Altenfelden to be cleared before our section reached the town. The section stopped in the field across the highway from Altenfelden. Only two hundred yards away, German artillery shells were falling into the town. Our men dug in.

Next morning, under the very noses of the Germans, they cooked coffee and ate their hard rations. They had hardly finished eating when shells began hitting in the section area. Our men dove into their fox holes and slit trenches. Casualties began to come in, and braving the shelling our section began treating them in the surgical truck. It was business as usual. Tec 3 Walsh even ran a smear on a gonorrhea case. Things got pretty hot at times, so none of the men were surprised when Father Casey made an appearance. We usually expected him when the "chips were down".

Although we had only 15 casualties in that location, it was hard to take care of them under fire. Late in the afternoon three brave, or foolhardy souls came in from the company at Feucht. Pfc Scardino, driving an ambulance brought in the mail. Cpl Roesser and Tec 5 Freiberg ran from hole to hole distributing the mail and some bottles of beer that they had managed to smuggle along.

German infantry had infiltrated to our rear and threatened to cut off the autobahn, so CC "R" ordered our section to withdraw that evening. Vehicles pulled out as fast as they could and made a dash along the autobahn under sniper fire. All of our men got back to Feucht, safely and they had a lot of stories for the rest of the company that night. Pfc Scott and Avalos, who were attached to the 25th Tank Battalion, with their ambulance had a narrow escape in the fighting at Altenfelden. Several snipers' bullets passed through the right front window of their vehicle, passing through the windshield.

Our ambulance drivers had a lot of close scrapes while they were attached to the front line battalions. Men such as Tec 5s Muha, Cosby, Easley, and Hurst and Pfc Juett and Rodman spent a great deal of time carrying casualties from the battalions. Experiences that would make great stories in themselves became every day occurrences with them.

On April 23rd CC "R" moved to Hilpolstein, section one accompanying them to set up a station before the second section moved from Feucht. On the same day the name of our Battalion was changed from 84th Medical Battalion Armored to 84th Armored Medical Battalion, and the

Division was switched from the Seventh to the Third Army. The Seventh Army ambulance drivers of the 582nd Ambulance Company, who had been with us for so long, left us and were replaced by a group of Third Army drivers.

We were now on the extreme right of the Third Army. The 14th Armored Division was driving to the southeast, toward the Danube, Isar and Inn Rivers. The Seventh Army was nearing Munich and as part of the Third Army we were to the east of the city. At Moosberg on the Isar River, the Division liberated 200,000 prisoners of war.

On April 24th our second section left Hilpolstein and moved to Eysolden. The Company left Hilpolstein the next day and travelled to Hirnstetten, where they were joined by the second section from Eysolden. We were in the field at Hirnstetten in an area adjoining that of the 62nd Armored Infantry Battalion. A road crossed our area, and although it was narrow and surfaced with only gravel, it had quite a bit of traffic passing on it. There were many "Long Toms" going by. Part of our own artillery came along and moved in beside the infantry. Their observation plane, finding the fields too irregular, used the road as a landing strip.

April 26th our second clearing section moved to Lenting where they were joined by the rest of the company on the 27th. A short move to Ingolstadt was made the next day. Ingolstadt was a large town and we established our station in a hotel. The men of the company had quite a time at Ingolstadt. The town was full of displaced personnel and they were glad to have us move in. They seemed in quite a festive mood and an abundance of all sorts of wine discovered in various cellars in town helped the celebrations considerably.

We discovered a German ration dump and picked up quite a bit of food to supplement the hard rations which had been our daily fare for quite a few days.

Section one left Ingolstadt on the day we arrived and moved to Unter Pinhardt. The following day they went to Furth and on April 30th, the rest of the company came up from Ingolstadt to join them.

On May 1st section one moved ahead again, arriving at Hohenpolding, on May 2nd at 0400. Heavy traffic had extended the relatively short trip into a tiresome fifteen hour journey. Later on May 2nd the balance of the Company moved up to Hohenpolding. They ran into heavy traffic too, but their trip didn't take nearly as long as that of the first section.

The whole company was in Hohenpolding for only one hour when the first section took off again, arriving at Ober Berg Kirchen at 1900. At 1600 on May 3rd the rest of the company joined the first section.

XII

Ober Berg Kirchen! The name has a familiar ring, and brings back pleasant memories to all of us. Our first section had moved into the town, itself, but in order to have enough room for the whole company, the station was moved to a farm house in a valley a short distance from the town. Another house adjoining a small German airplane factory was occupied by the rest of the Company's personnel when they arrived from Hohenpolding.

It was at Ober Berg Kirchen that Captain Schwartz called a meeting of all the company on the night of May 5th. He had good news for us. The 14th Armored Division sector had been entirely cleared. The European war was over so far as we were concerned. This news had hardly reached our Company when "Cease Fire" orders were given along the whole Third Army front.

We had expected this news, or something similar, for some time, but actually hearing it was another matter. Blackout restrictions were lifted and it seemed funny to see light showing from every window of the buildings we occupied. Vehicles were driven with driving lights on, too. Light seemed to be our strongest reminder that the war was over, and that we were safe from bombs and shells.

There were several radios in the Company area, and during the next few days we followed the news closely, as one German front after another surrendered. Fighting ceased on May 8th and on May 9th, 1945 at 0001, V-E day was proclaimed.

Those were days of excitement and celebration. Every one seemed to be in high spirits. Then our attention turned to the news of the war against Japan. It was good enough, but the realization that we still had a big job to do in Asia and the Pacific, tempered our celebration of V-E Day to some extent.

On May 8th, two groups of men left the Company, to take over operation of two hospitals, one at Ecksberg and the other at Ampfing. Captain Schwartz headed the group which went to Ecksberg. Men in the party were Lt. Thornton, S/Sgt Korn, Tec 3 Walsh, Tec 4s Holman and Heiners, and Pfc March, Landers and Levandowski.

The hospital at Ecksberg was a two story, winged building, situated on a high hill near Muhldorf. Our men found the establishment in deplorable condition. The patients, about 300 in number, all had been inmates of the infamous concentration camp at Dachau. Many of them had been imprisoned for as long as five years, and had literally been starved during all of that time. Their experience in the concentration camp had not only wrecked them physically, but had affected some of them mentally.

Conditions in the hospital, itself, were bad. Sanitation simply did not exist. Medical attention for the patients was poor. There were hardly any medical supplies in the place and the food, bedding and clothing was as bad as it had been at the concentration camp. Patients were crowded in the hospital, four to twelve to the room. Dysentery, typhoid and other diseases, caused by unsanitary conditions, preyed on their weakened bodies. Some nuns from a nearby cloister were serving as nurses in the hospital and doing as well as they could under the conditions.

As soon as our men arrived they started things moving. The burgo-meister at Muhldorf was contacted, and ordered to furnish food, bedding, beds, clothes and other supplies from the town. Stocks of medical supplies were furnished by "B" Company. Some women were brought in from Muhldorf to help keep the hospital clean, and two men were assigned to keep the grounds in order. Plumbers, electricians and painters were brought in to make necessary repairs to the building. The kitchen in the cloister was used for cooking the patient's food, and additional cooks were recruited.

Medical care was supervised by Captain Schwartz. Blood plasma or whole blood was given to most of the patients. The improvement in conditions at the hospital gave the nuns a little more enthusiasm for their work and they took good care of the patients. Army rations of cigarettes, smoking tobacco, candy, and other items were brought in from all over the Division.

After a week the building began to look like a hospital, and things were beginning to run smoothly. The patients were much improved, more active and were gaining a little weight.

Much the same conditions were experienced by the men who went to Ampfing with Captain Sears. His group was made up of Lt. Edwards, Tec 4s Anderson and Tennyson, Tec 5s Harshman, Fine, Thompson and Pfc. Tessmann and Sewastynowicz. A former office building of the Nazi party was being used as a hospital at Ampfing. There were about 150 patients in the building, and they too, were all from Dachau.

Actions taken by the men sent to Ampfing were much the same as those at Ecksberg, and the same splendid results were obtained. In about a week the hospital began functioning well, and the patients were in much better condition.

The two groups from "B" Company rejoined the Company on May 16th. They were sorry to leave the hospitals in which they had brought about such great improvements. They were getting the advantage of the improved conditions themselves, and they were a little disappointed that they had to leave when things were becoming a little easier for them.

The work that our men did at the hospitals was excellent, and it should not be forgotten. But of more importance to our memories should be the

broken bodies and deranged minds of the former inmates of the prison at Dachau. The stories and pictures of German atrocities are not fairy tales. They are true. We saw them. We will remember. It must not happen again.

On May 11th the Company, minus the men who were sent to operate the hospitals, moved from Ober Berg Kirchen and joining the long convoys of CC "R", moved about 75 miles to bivouac in the field between the towns of Altdurnbuch and Siegenberg. Mosquitoes were our chief menace in that area. If one found a way of controlling these pests, everything else was okay. In contrast to the cold, dreary weather we had had during most of our months in combat, the weather turned clear and warm. In our area was a soccer field, which we used for baseball, of course. The field was bounded by roads at both ends, and had woods on both sides. We set our tents up in the woods and lived a very pleasant life for a few days. About a quarter mile away was a good stream where we went fishing and swimming. Recreation was our prime activity.

A lot of our outside interest centered on publication of the workings of the discharge point system. There were many arguments, pro and con, when the details were announced. Only one of our men was eligible for discharge under the point system. That was Tec 4 Jack Holman, lucky stiff!

Rumors favoring our going to the Pacific in a short time found some foundation when instructors were called in from the 62nd Armored Infantry Battalion and we began brushing up on our marksmanship with the M-1.

Our men had returned from the hospitals at Ecksberg and Ampfing and on May 18th we made another long motor march, which took us to Alt-Otting in Bavaria. We were in a field at the edge of town for two days, before we moved into Neu-Otting, only three kilometers away.

At the present time, "B" Company occupies four large houses in Neu-Otting. Our surroundings are pleasant and are getting better every day as we improve our billets. "B" Company is acting as a sort of "Health Department" in the area occupied by CC "R", which corresponds to the County of Alt-Otting. Supervision of medical care and sanitation, for both displaced personnel and German civilians, is in our hands.

One of the sanitation measures is delousing, which is handled by two teams, one under Cpl. Russell, composed of Pfc. Kosheny, who acts as interpreter, Pfc Scardino, and Pvts. Wink and Covington. The other team, under Sgt. Higley, is made up of Pfc Crnobra and Pvts. DeMarco, Muha and Zeller.

Rumors are flying thick and fast, but beneath all of them is the realization that no matter what happens to us as a group or individually,

we still have a big task ahead of us. We know that we must fight Japan, all out, whether we are in the fight, itself, in the Army of Occupation over here, or back in the States in uniform in civilian clothes. Japan must be beaten as we beat the Germans.

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