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~~SECRET~~ WORLD WAR II EXPERIENCES (REVISED) BY SIDNEY RICHARDSON  
PART I CROSSING THE OCEAN

I have met and been acquainted with a great number of fine fellows from the time I sailed from New York until I returned. For reasons of my own, I declined to take addresses at most of the time.

I sailed from New York on the 15th of July 1944 and was back in the same docks the 27th of December of the same year. A period of less than five months, and in that time I had been wounded twice and had traveled in six different countries. I am not bragging of my exploits because I've done nothing outstanding. I feel that I am one of the very lucky ones that God let come back to his family.

I can't remember all the fellows' names that were in the same hut with me at Camp Shanks but I will mention a few of them. The ones I remember best are Riddle, Rickinson, McLeash, Riggazio, Newman, Ness. They all slept right near me at Camp Shanks. Of course, there were several of the Mpls. boys that were there, but I didn't get to see them very much more.

When we got situated on the ship I discovered that Riddle was sleeping in the bunk beneath me. We were on the promenade deck which made it easy for us to walk out to the railing and gaze at the ocean at any time. We were very inactive on the ship. Some of the boys played cards or dice, but I read most of the time. It was fun to lean on the railing and watch the rise and fall of the ocean. Flying fish would sail from the waves as the ship broke into them. One day we sighted a large whale a short distance from the boat. It was quite a sight to see his large back raise from the water and then spout water from his nose. There were 18,000 of us crowded on the ship and they really had us packed in tight. The name of the ship was "The Queen Elizabeth", the largest and fastest ship afloat.

On the seventh day we sighted land and it sure was a swell feeling to know that before long you would be on firm land again. We landed in Grenich, Scotland and boarded a train bound for southern England. Scotland is one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen. It was especially pretty looking from the boat while sailing into the harbor. The houses are so colorful and the farms laid out in such neat looking green and yellow squares.

PART II ON THE WAY TO MY DESTINATION

The trip to Yovil, England, was uneventful, but the scenery was very colorful and enjoyable. By this time the fellows were beginning to realize how close we were to getting to the actual thing, so our attitudes began to be a little more sober. The English trains were much smaller than our trains back home. The box cars reminded me of toy electric trains. The coaches had about three compartments holding six persons each. Although small, the trains traveled rather fast. We arrived at our

destination the next day and were taken by truck to the camp. It was the first time any of us had ridden on vehicles that traveled on the left hand side of the road. The roads were very narrow, but about all we saw was an occasional bicycle.

The camp was composed of tents with army cots. Here they checked our clothing and issued us a new rifle. It took about four days and then we were given orders to move again. The English children visited our camp and picked up stuff that we wanted to get rid of. They would come around with a large bag and go away with it filled up. One phrase the little ones used was "Got any gum, chum?"

One night four of us fellows went into town just to see what it looked like. The buildings over there are all brick or stone. It was a nice sized town, but they didn't have much to sell. As I said before, we were given orders to travel and that afternoon about the 28th of July we started to Southhampton. There we boarded a small boat that would take us to Omaha beach on the French coast.

The next day we reached the coast, and were taken ashore in landing craft. The craft I was on struck a submerged object and the boat sprung a leak. The fellows got pretty excited because we were packed in there pretty tight. Soon another boat came along and gave us a pull so we finally got to shore o.k. The hill we had to climb was where the attack had been staged on "D-Day". There was a large pillbox still there on the side of the hill intact. It was a very steep hill, and with our heavy packs it took all our strength to climb it. As we reached the summit a grim sight met our eyes on the opposite slope. There, row upon row, were the white crosses of soldiers who had died on "D-Day". I heard someone say that there were about 4,000 buried there. It really made us stop and think of what we were heading for.

From there we were taken to our first replacement camp in France. On the way we went through a French village that was just a shambles of blown up buildings. That was to be a common sight to us from then on.

We reached the camp before dark. It was situated near a town or what used to be a town, and it was definitely in the hedgerow country of Normandy. We were ordered to pitch our tents close to the hedgerow and dig our fox holes near the tent. I'll explain here that nearly every field in Normandy was surrounded by a six foot bank with hedges growing on top and the fields were usually about as large as a football field. Riddle and I didn't dig a fox hole there because we had a nice big ditch right in back of our tent.

We had been in bed possibly an hour that first night when we heard the drone of enemy planes coming over. It was around eleven o'clock, and we were to learn later that they came over every night at that time and the fellows called the planes "Bed Check Charlie". As the planes flew over us our antiaircraft guns

opened up, and it was so unexpected to us that we nearly jumped out of our tents. Being our first experience of that sort over there. I can assure you that we didn't sleep much that night. The planes really weren't there to bother us, but were on their way to bomb the beach. We could hear the loud boom of the bombs exploding in the distance. We finally got used to it after a few nights.

All we did was take exercises at this camp, waiting for transportation. Of course we were in no hurry to leave there.

About a couple of days later the trucks came and we moved out. As we got deeper into France we started to see destruction on all sides. Livestock lay dead and bloated in all the fields and the stench was hard to stand. All sorts of vehicles were in ditches and fields. After getting lost a couple of times, we finally reached our destination. We were ordered to pitch our tent in the usual place. Riddle and I dug our fox hole and pitched our tent over the top. Not long before a big battle had been fought here and evidence of it was all around. There was a riddled rain coat, a broken gas mask and even the smell of death hung in the air. We stayed here over night then continued on the next morning. This was about the 4th of August and this day I saw the worst example of destruction I think I shall ever see. We went through the town of St. Lo, and I failed to see a whole building left standing. It was there that the Americans made their big breakthrough on their march through France.

When we reached our next camp we were assigned to different outfits. Myself, Riddle, Ness, Newman and Nelson, a Minnesota fellow, were assigned to the 110th Inf. of the 28th division in "G" Co. We were to stop only once more before getting to the Division. We stayed overnight in an apple orchard. While Riddle and I were digging our foxhole, a drunk soldier started shooting his carbine down the road about fifty yards. The M.P.s. picked him up quickly and I suppose he got a court's martial out of it.

Next morning we started out in the truck convoy and reached the outfit about mid-morning. They were pulled back from the front lines for a two day rest after fighting for a week. We were introduced to Capt. Wiley, Lt. Neilson and Lt. Miller. They were all very nice fellows. They tried to make us believe that it wasn't so bad up there, but after hearing some of the tales told by the riflemen, we weren't convinced. For instance, one fellow was telling us of one fellow who wanted to try out his rifle. He saw a French woman in an upstairs window fixing her hair, so he pulls up and shoots her. It was hard for us to believe, but after we had heard more of their stories, we could believe anything. I guess the French in that section could not be trusted. Many times snipers were found to be young French girls.

We were to be camped around this wheat field for about two days, getting organized. We new fellows were all put into the mortar squads as they had lost most of their men that week. Riddle and I

were ammo bearers. We were to carry the twelve rounds of ammunition which weighed about 36 lbs. At last everything was in order and the next day, which was about the 6th of August, we had orders to move out.

### PART III MY EXPERIENCE IN THE BATTLE OF NORMANDY

Although I was wounded the third day of fighting, I saw a lot and had many exciting experiences.

On our way to the front we marched with a column on each side of the road about five yards between each soldier. About mid-afternoon we reached a dense forest where we were told to dig our fox holes for the night. We felt rather safe that night. The next day we rolled our blankets and tents and left them with the kitchen. All we took with us were our light equipment. Again that afternoon our orders were to pitch tents in a wooded section on the side of a hill. Riddle and I had just got our fox holes dug and were pretty darned tired when orders came down to shove off again. We went on until we reached a wheat field and had to dig new foxholes. We were about two miles from the front lines, and the big guns made a continuous din. Every once in a while the rat-a-tat-tat of machine gun fire could be heard. By this time we were a grim looking bunch of men and not many smiles could be seen. This night was my first night on guard duty, and I can tell you truthfully the shadows concealed many scary things for me. To make it worse, enemy planes droppped a few bombs pretty close.

The next morning we were very cautious in our movements. We marched down concealed hedgerows in order to keep out of enemy sight. Here was when I saw my first dead German. He was lying beside the hedge and round hole was visible in his head. He looked to me like one of our own boys of about twenty years of age. We finally reached the front lines and then things began to happen. The first wave of riflemen that went over the hedgerow was hurled back with quite a few wounded among whom was Lt. Miller. The Germans were in a strong position on the opposite hill, and we had to cross an open field to reach the next hedge. Riddle and I were in the next bunch to attack. Our artillery and machine guns laid down a heavy barrage and then we scrambled over the hedgerow and down the field. Riddle was right behind me, and we got down to an unprotected hedge when the enemy opened up on us. The men were falling all around me, and I still don't see what kept me from getting hit, unless God himself was looking after me. We hit the ground right now, and immediately Riddle was hit and hit bad. I judged from where I lay that about twenty fellows had been hit. I was to learn later that I and another fellow were the only ones to come out untouched.

I lay there, it seemed, like hours with the machine gun bullets kicking up dirt behind and in front of me. I'm not ashamed to say here that I prayed a lot also. I could see that Riddle was badly hurt, and there wasn't a chance of a medic getting down there. He finally crawled over to me and I gave him water and sulfa pills. His right arm was shot through. Evidently the bullets went into

each side also, and it didn't look very good to me.

While I tried to bandage up his right arm, two machine gun bullets hit my helmet with a terrific thud, but they did not penetrate, thank goodness. I hope to God that Riddle came out of it all right. I laid there with him till after dark, then with a sgt. who came down to look us over, I crawled back to the hedgerow. I think I laid there five hours. All I had eaten that morning was about half a "K" ration and I knew I couldn't eat any more that day. I realized then my chances of ever getting back home again were very slim. It wasn't myself so much I thought of, as my dear family and how they were worrying over me.

I put in a very miserable night. I was trying to sleep in my foxhole, and every time someone walked by, dirt would roll down in my face and in my neck. Dawn finally came and I dreaded it because I felt that it wouldn't be long before I would get mine. The Capt. had gotten a couple of tanks and we prepared to charge the hill again. The tanks went on ahead, firing as they advanced. By the time they had reached the half-way point of the hill, we discovered the Germans had pulled out during the night. That relieved the tension a whole lot for me. As we advanced up the hill, I saw several of our boys who had been killed the day before. One fellow was still in the kneeling position with his rifle as though he were still alive. It sure hurt me to see all those boys lying there, and I wondered how it should be that I was alive yet.

We traveled pretty fast, and finally caught up to the enemy before noon. We dug in right away and I sure missed my buddy Riddle. I had to hit the dirt several times while digging, and I felt like an easy target. They didn't give us any rest the remainder of the day. Occasionally sniper bullets would whine close to our heads, making us duck quickly. I can truthfully say that I sweat plenty that afternoon, and not from the heat, either.

Grazing cows would come over by our foxholes and we would chase them away quickly so that our position would not be discovered. That night was pretty rough, with airplanes dropping bombs and flares that lit up the countryside brighter than daylight. I learned the next morning that Capt. Wiley had been killed by a sniper and Lt. Nielson was shell shocked. That left only one Lt. to lead the company. He organized the riflemen and they started the attack in the early foggy dawn. We of the mortar squad stayed about one hundred yards behind. When the Germans opened up, our squad was caught out in the open. We had to hit a small ravine and crawl back to the hedgerow. All this while bullets were whizzing all around us. We all found foxholes and dove in and prepared to wait. Our riflemen were pinned down way up ahead of us and were in danger of being surrounded. Soon the 88s started landing all around us. They knew right where we were and I knew it wouldn't be long before something happened.

One terrific exploding shell landed just in front of the hedgerow and dirt and rocks cascaded down upon my body. I was really getting nervous then and just braced myself for what I knew was coming. Then it came -- a deafening explosion that catapulted me nearly out of my foxhole and left me, stunned momentarily. I heard blood-curdling yells all up and down the hedgerow. I knew right away I had been hit, but had no idea of how bad. Daniels, my squad leader, was hit, Newman and Nelson. Nelson's hit was the most serious. His knee was shattered and was in great pain. I discovered that my shoulder had been hit, but knew it wasn't too bad. After they quit firing, Daniels and I streaked out for the aid station. When we got there, they dressed our wounds, and loaded us on an ambulance bound for the hospital. I can say truthfully that I was mighty glad to get out of that mess.

#### PART IV - SWEATING OUT THE REPLACEMENT CAMPS

When I had been checked into the hospital I was told I would receive no food that day. This was the third day without having enough food to keep a bird alive, and I was getting pretty weak. I could have no food because they figured I might be operated on, but there were so many serious cases coming in that they didn't get to me until the fourth day. The next day they let me eat and the hospital food was sure a great treat.

On the fourth day, they took a small piece of shrapnel out of my left shoulder. They couldn't get it out by the usual method but they used an electro-magnet and it came out very easily. The fifth day I was taken to the 19th evac hospital. I laid around this hospital for five more days then was taken to my first replacement camp. In nearly every camp I came to I was to stay about a week in each one and I will try to give you a few things I saw and a few of the fellows I met.

At this first camp, I got acquainted with Ingles, a fellow from Ohio. He was with the 35th division and like all of us fellows, wasn't any too anxious to get back. We pitched our tent together and the second day drew a whole new outfit. This consisted of clothing and weapons. By this time our armies were on the march to Paris, so German planes didn't bother us much anymore.

It was about the seventh day they told us to get ready to leave the next morning. We got up early, rolled our packs and prepared to depart. We were marched out to a large field but the trucks didn't show up until seven o'clock that night. We were to get used to that sort of thing as it happened nearly every time we moved. This turned out to be quite a wild ride. It was dark and rainy and several times we heard enemy planes flying overhead. Two trucks in the rear ran into the ditch, and one fellow received a broken leg. We all said the guy is sure lucky, he won't have to go up front again. It was about three o'clock in the morning when we reached the 19th replacement camp. It was so black you couldn't see a thing. I unrolled my pack and just wound myself up in the blankets and shelter half and went to sleep

under an apple tree. When I woke up next morning, I discovered about five other fellows in that same spot.

I hunted up Ingles, and we pitched our tent right then. The camp was near the French town of Forgeres. Here I got acquainted with Perry Arnold, a fellow from California. About all we had to do here was guard duty once in a while. A few nights some of the boys would go into town and get pretty well lit up. This cognac and calvados was bad stuff and they would come back to camp and start shooting in all directions. After the fall of Paris we were told one day we would move about 200 miles. It took us two days to get to the next camp which was the 53rd replacement. This camp was 2 miles from Fontainbleu and 40 miles from Paris. It was situated in the forest where Napoleon had his private hunting grounds. It certainly was dark and damp in there and the sun could hardly be seen. We were to be here about ten days, which brought us into the first part of September. Of course, the way the war was going, we figured it would be over soon. How mistaken we were. The main highway to Paris was real close to camp and we would sit by the roadside and watch traffic.

The French people in this section of the country were much above the types we saw back in Normandy. Several times Paris girls came into our camp, and they spoke very good English. They were dressed very smart, and they reminded us of our own American women.

One day I carved my name, wife's and my two children's names on a large tree in the forest.

We did have a little excitement one night. The Seine river was about two miles away, and this night a bunch of German planes came over and bombed out the bridge. It certainly made a lot of noise and gave us quite a scare.

Ingles got orders to move, so Perry Arnold and I started bunking together. In a few days we learned that this replacement camp was moving within a few miles of Verdun. One morning a convoy came and we packed up our stuff and shoved off. We made this trip in one day and on the way we went through the city of Reims. This city is quite large and I saw the famous cathedral. We reached the camp late that evening and Perry and I pitched our tent down in a scrub pine grove. This camp was just like the rest. We laid around and did nothing. By this time the weather was getting pretty nippy and we had a fire going in the duty tent.

One day, which was about the 15th of Sept. I got my orders to leave so I said goodbye to Arnold and teamed up with Sawicki, another fellow from the 112th regiment, 28th division. We were sure surprised when we learned the trucks were heading back towards Paris again to the 19th replacement camp. Oh, well. We didn't mind that, at least we were heading away from the front. This turned out to be a very pretty camp. It was situated on a large hill and down in the valley was a fair-sized stream. On the opposite bank was a large French chateau with a moat surrounding

it. There was a large flagstone courtyard. It was just like the kind I had seen in pictures. We washed our clothes and bathed in the stream. There was a large open air theater where movies were held nearly every night. Bing Crosby had been there the night before I arrived, so was that close to seeing him.

Well, we fooled around this camp about another week, when one day all fellows from the 28th division were ordered to move out. This time we were headed straight for our outfits. Of course, my co. was up on the Siegfried line, so it was to take five or six more days to reach them. I stopped over in a couple of more camps and then one day I reached our company kitchen. Here I received my first mail since being across, and boy, did it make me feel good to hear from my dear wife. In all, I had about fifty letters. I sat down and had nearly finished reading my wife's letters when a soldier in a jeep drove up and told me to climb aboard, that he was taking me up to my outfit. In a few minutes I got my first sight of the dragon teeth and pillboxes of the Siegfried line. It certainly was a formidable sight and one I shall never forget. The jeep driver let me out about a half mile from the Co. C.P. and I walked up to the pillbox they were using for that. I saw two or three fellows that had been with the company when I joined them the first time.

The first sgt. put me in a rifle squad which was the first squad. They were located in a pine grove just down the slope about 500 yards. The squad leader put me in with Seager, a fellow from Penn. I sat in the foxhole and finished reading my letters. Those letters were sure a joy to me because I knew that my family was getting along all right.

#### PART V -- MY EXPERIENCE IN THE BATTLE OF GERMANY

I had just started reading my letters when some mortars began landing up by the C.P. Evidently the enemy had seen the soldiers bringing me down to where the squad was. It didn't last long and in a little while the squad leader told me I would be on the first guard shift from 8 until 10. Ten o'clock finally rolled around and I was glad to hit the hay. It seemed like I had been sleeping but a short while when we were awakened and told to roll our equipment and move to a new spot on the other side of the pillbox. I'll tell you right now, it is no easy task to make a decent roll in the dark, especially when the shelter half and blankets are wet.

Finally we were all set, and we moved out in single file about one half a mile the other side of the pillbox. By the time we got through, the dawn was breaking, so we all picked out a foxhole. We were taking over a position so the foxholes were already dug, which was some consolation. The foxhole Seager and I picked was pretty snug for two people, and we had to dig it a bit wider. We had to stay in our foxholes all day long because to get out and show oneself was to bring on rifle fire. We were to stay in this position for two or three days.

One day a mortar shell landed at the edge of a foxhole about 50 yards down the line from us and a soldier jumped and started yelling. We thought he had been hit, but found out later it was shell shock. One landed about five yards from our hole one day and I can tell you it shook the ground and threw dirt on top of us. About the third day we learned an attack was coming off, and were glad to know we were not leading it. We were to take over the new position after E. company had taken it.

We saw the tanks advance with the foot soldiers bringing up the rear, and a vast smoke screen in front of them. Then there was that indescribable din and confusion of battle, so hard to describe on paper. About an hour later we were ordered to follow and our position was a mile ahead on a bald hill with the enemy 100 to 200 yards away, looking at us. I bunked with our assistant squad leader, Garibaldi, and we got a foxhole about twenty feet from the pillbox that was our C.P.

The five days I spent there were the longest I have ever known. We had just gotten in our holes when two terrific explosions rocked the earth. It was our own artillery, and our Lt. soon gave orders to fire a couple hundred yards farther on. After that, we had no more trouble with our artillery, but we had plenty with the Germans. They gave us no rest during the day. It was on the second day then that a fellow by the name of Smith got his leg practically shot off as he was climbing out of his foxhole. His pal, whose name also was Smith, then came up to live with me as Garibaldi claimed to have battle fatigue, so was away for a while. Olan Smith and I became very good friends and had many a long talk of our past lives, our families, and what we would like to do in the future. We both knew the future was rather remote, but it cheered us to talk anyway.

This same night he joined me it was raining and about three o'clock Kumicant, our sgt. came after me to go on a patrol. The company was leading us to blow up a pillbox just over the hill about 200 yards. We were nearly there when the enemy saw us and started landing mortars all around us. We were lucky to get out with only one casualty. About six, he decided to try again, and this time we were successful and got down there all right and even brought back two prisoners. One of the prisoners was so pale and shaken he could hardly walk.

The nights in the foxhole were not so bad, but the day time was when they kept shelling us. For hours at a time the shells would land, so close it seemed impossible for them to miss. The sand and rocks would fly in on top of us and really upset our nerves. We had to go back of our line about 500 yards each night for our water and rations. One night when I was on this detail, a dozen of us fellows started up over the hill and there being a bright moon, I guess, the Germans saw us silhouetted against the skyline, because they they let loose with a terrific barrage of mortar fire. Luckily, no one was hurt badly, and I imagine it looked pretty funny to see six of us fellows piled up in one little old foxhole. I happened to be on top, and I was level with

the top of the hole.

One night the Germans staged a counter attack, but it didn't last long after our artillery laid down a barrage. Such a noise one can't imagine unless you are there to hear it. Our artillery is really terrific.

Finally, one day we learned the second division was taking over our position, and we were going back for a rest. Boy, was that ever good news to us. This was about the fourth of October, and sure enough, that night after dark, they came. We filed out past the pillbox and all at once we heard that telltale whistle, and we all hit the ground and let a few shells explode before we moved on. As usual, it was raining, and the mud in the road was about ankle deep. We marched in this for about two miles and then pitched our tents in a woods for the night. I stood guard so didn't sleep hardly any that night.

The trucks came for us in the morning, and we were packed in like sardines for a ride to an old German camp in Belgium the Americans had taken over. By this time I had no feeling in my feet from the wet and cold. This camp was in a clearing and was surrounded by high hills and forests. It was quite beautiful, but we were not in the mood to appreciate nature's beauty. We certainly did enjoy the peace and quiet there and the good food our kitchen prepared for us. We did practically nothing here for ten days. We did get a new captain and three Lts. They reorganized the squads and got our equipment in order. I went out on the rifle range one day and fired a few clips to see how my gun was working. I also fired the bazooka one day.

About the 14th we were loaded onto trucks for a journey that would take us to a woods within six miles of Aachen, Germany. I can say truthfully that was the worst ride and night I have ever put in. We were cramped up in the truck and my legs got so stiff I had no feeling from the hips down. We arrived early and had to wait for the dawn to pitch our tents. By this time Olan and I were good friends, and we were pretty good at pitching tent in a hurry. We were told to dig foxholes near our tents in case of shelling. It was rather low ground and most of the holes were full of water in the morning. One night when I was on guard duty, coming back from the post I fell in the latrine. The night was so black you couldn't see anything. The guys got quite a laugh out of that incident.

Our big guns were just at the edge of the woods and every time they fired, our tents would sway from the force. We got used to it so that we even slept through the noise at night.

On the morning of the fourth day in this camp we received orders to roll our packs and prepare to move. We knew this meant we probably wouldn't move before nightfall and such proved to be the case. Just as it began to get dusk we marched out on to the road in a double column. It wasn't long before we reached the highway leading to Aachen, Germany. It was a bright moonlight night, and

we moved along very cautiously. We could hear the continual roar of our cannons and the incessant chatter of our and enemy machine gun fire. As it grew darker we could see huge fires light the sky caused by burning buildings in Aachen. It was only six miles to the city, but we moved so slowly that it was nearly midnight before we reached the outskirts of the city. Here we were told to sit down and wait for further orders. After what seemed hours, our Lt. told us to move on to our new home which was an apartment house that wasn't damaged too badly. We were too tired to look for beds that night, so just lay on the kitchen floor for the rest of the night.

Olan Smith and I were to catch the next guard duty, which wasn't more than two hours away. Our guard duty was two hours on and four off for the 24 hours. We learned that all but about a third of the city was in the hands of our troops and that we were just stationed there in reserve. Being like all Americans, very inquisitive, we had to hunt for souvenirs while off duty. We would find something we thought was pretty good, only to throw it away when we found something we thought was better.

The weather was beginning to get rather chilly and rainy and the apartments came in rather handy. The first day was rather dull, with the monotony of guard duty, but being in a city was a new experience for most of us. Our squad consisted of nine fellows and we occupied two bedrooms. We were together most of the time and got to know each other quite a bit better. Our sgt. was an amusing fellow, being half Chinese and half Filipino by the name of Kumikos. The assistant leader's name was Garabaldi, from New Jersey. Then there was a Conway, an Indian from Nevada, Stone from Kansas, Smith from Texas, Smith from Tennessee, Rogers from ~~from Kentucky, Smith from Texas, Smith from Tennessee, Rogers from~~ Carolina, Seagar from Pennsylvania and myself from Minnesota. We all seemed to be even tempered fellows and got along very well. The second day we went with our Lt. to search out two blocks of houses for remaining Germans, but didn't find any. The third day we moved farther into town and we occupied the third storey of an apartment house. The next day we prepared a real feast with vegetables and fruit we found in the various houses. We stayed only a short time in this place. About the fourth day we moved about two miles deeper into town and to the northern section, which proved to be the wealthier part of town, and our living quarters were much better. We cleaned three rooms very good and fixed up the ~~the~~ beds with nice mattresses and heavy blankets. Here we had the same routine, and we also did a great deal more of searching for stuff in the houses. I found nothing of any value, but I did send home a large Nazi flag and an Iron Cross.

The buildings were all pretty badly bombed out. Very few were in any condition to be lived in. We were about four blocks from the kitchen, and for each meal we had to go in squad formation. One day we had the opportunity to get showers, so were loaded into trucks and were taken about sixteen miles from town where showers were set up by a river. We only went for the change of clothes because the house in which we stayed had a boiler where we could

heat water for our baths. All in all we had a fairly nice time in town, but we knew it couldn't last, so when the orders came through to move a few days later, we were not surprised. The worst part of it was that we had just gotten to sleep in our nice warm beds when they came with the trucks and out we went.

We traveled all night, and by dawn we had reached the Hurtgen forest, a place I shall never forget. It was a densely wooded pine forest, and we had to follow a trail in single file. Again we were getting close to the enemy, and the big guns were so realistically audible. Close to ten o'clock we reached our destination which was the foxholes being used by the 9th division. We were relieving them and it was easy to see that they were very pleased to get out of there. The front line was perhaps 500 yards to our front.

The foxholes proved to be very comfortable. In fact, they were not regular foxholes, but a long trench with huts built in about ten feet apart. Large pine trees had been felled and served as a very substantial roof. Smith and I fixed our hut up a little better, and we lived in our hut night and day. Of course, during the day we did get out and walk around a little, but never got far from home. The two hours of guard twice a night was pretty tough, as it was pretty cold and rained most the time.

One night some one up on the front line got nervous and started firing, then all hell let loose. We thought sure a big counter attack was on, but it fizzled out in a short while. We laughed about it next day, but that was the next day. The third night I became rather sick and could keep nothing on my stomach. I had to dash out of the foxhole five times that night, and finally the aid man called a jeep from the aid station, and I spent the rest of the night and also the next night there.

This morning that I started for camp wouldn't have been half so pleasant if I'd known what was in store for me. This was the first of November, and when I reached my squad they told me that the next day we were starting a big attack at 12 o'clock. That night we packed everything up, ready to leave it behind with the kitchen. The next morning we cleaned our weapon real good, checked our ammunition and then nervously awaited the order to move up front. Finally at eleven thirty our Lt. came around and told us to line up with the other squads, then we shoved off in single file. When we had gone perhaps 200 yards we came upon a stack of dead German soldier piled up like cord wood. I would imagine there were at least fifty in the pile. When we were nearly at the edge of the woods we spread out in fighting formation and were told to advance. We had moved maybe fifty yards, and I was walking in a crouched position and was still in the woods when something hit me in the stomach, such a blow that it sort of dazed me at first. Then I realized what had happened, and I lay down on the ground expecting to pass out any minute. I was rather panicky at first and said goodbye to my babies and wife.

My stomach became numb, but didn't hurt a great deal. I probably

I lay there three minutes, and shells started landing pretty near, so I figured I had better get out if possible. I looked at Rogers, and I could tell by the expression on his face that he was sympathizing with me. My ammunition belt and my pants belt was all shot to pieces. I slipped all my heavy equipment off and started to crawl back to the command post. I crawled about ten yards past a dead American soldier, then got to my feet and limped back to a foxhole where an aid man gave me a hypo and dressed my wound. He told me he was sure the bullet didn't hit any internal organs, so it buoyed my spirits up a great deal.

There was no one to take me back immediately. I lay in a foxhole for two or three hours with the aid man who had gotten a case of nerves and was shaking quite badly. I smoked cigarets to quiet my nerves, as the big shells were landing pretty close to us yet. Finally another fellow said he would help me down to the jeep. By this time I was pretty weak from loss of blood, but after steadying myself for a couple of minutes, I was able to make it o.k. The jeep rushed us to the aid station, ~~where~~ the doc just looked at me quick and put me on an ambulance headed for the separation hospital. At this hospital they separated the cases into slight and serious. Mine was considered serious, so they put me on another ambulance and sent me on to the 51st Field Hospital, which was about six miles further back.

I was taken up stairs when we arrived, and the major looked me over, and a ward boy cut my clothing off and told me I would be operated on shortly. It was a funny thing, but I wasn't a bit nervous or scared about the operation. The only thing I felt was the confidence I had in the doctor who was going to work on me. Finally I was taken down to the operating room, and the doctor started to clean my stomach off, and I was kind of touchy, so he told the nurse to give me a pentathol shot. Before I could open my mouth, I was out like a light. The next morning, when I awoke, I discovered that in one arm I had intravenous feeding, and in the other I had blood plasma. There also was a tube leading from my stomach to a large jug over my head. It was quite uncomfortable for the three days.

On the fourth day I was transferred to a large tent next door where there were a large number of other wounded. I lay on a stretcher with no underclothing and just 2 blankets covering me. I caught a cold right away and every time I sneezed or coughed I thought I would split open. The next day the weather became real bad, with a lot of snow and rain. I happened to be right under a hole in the tent, and the water kept dripping in my face, and I couldn't avoid it. The wind would gust real hard and it seemed like the tent would leave the ground.

Evidently the penicillin I had every four hours cured my cold and made me feel a lot better. In a few days of real discomfort, I was well enough to travel so was put on a train headed for Paris. This was a trip I'll never forget because of the misery I endured. They fed me Spam sandwiches and black coffee, which caused a terrible amount of gas. Being bound up so tight because

and to say the least it was a very rough trip. I had to hold my stomach real firm because we were traveling quite fast up and down bumpy roads. I could feel the blood sloshing around in my stomach.

of my wound, I could hardly breathe by the time I reached Paris. In the Paris hospital they relieved me of my pain and from then on I began to mend rapidly. When I arrived in England, and was situated in the hospital, I finally got nerve enough to look at my wound, and was astounded to see such a long scar. Instead of just two bullet holes as I expected, there was this long scar. It started just under my right ribs and ended at my left hip, where it had really gouged out quite a sizable hole. Then I knew why it had been so painful turning from one side to the other. I remained bedridden for thirty days, then the long days of trying to get my strength back so that I could get around normally. Eventually I became well enough to sail home, and we left England on the 20th of December.

We had a real good Christmas dinner on the high seas, and then on the 28th of Dec. we arrived in New York. New York was the most welcome sight I have ever seen. I was then sent to Borden General Hospital in Oklahoma to recover. I was finally discharged on the German Armistice day, May 8, 1945. I had finally ~~gotten home~~ *arrived* again after being overseas from July 1944 to Dec. 20, 1944, and ~~had been wounded twice.~~ *from*

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