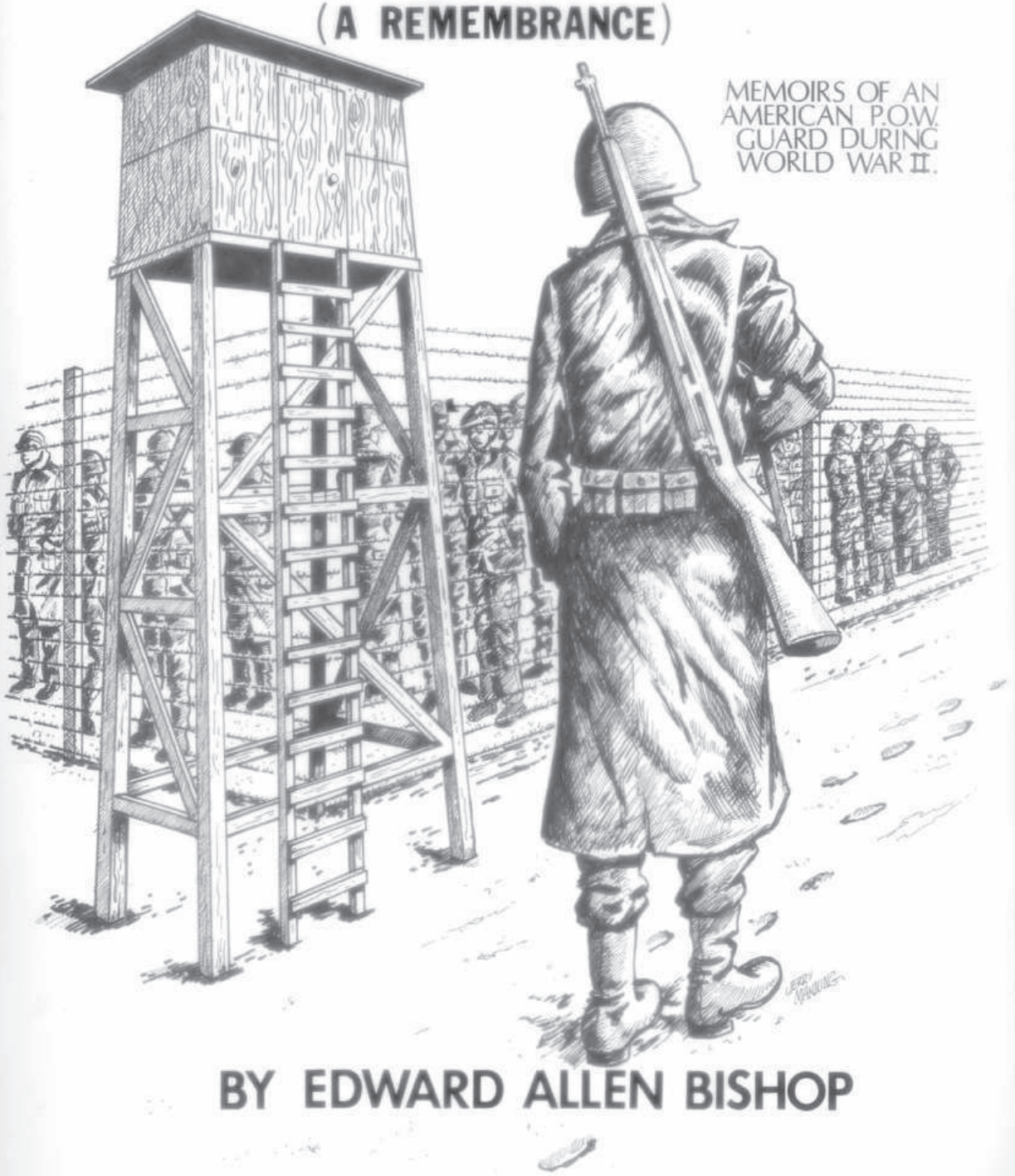
I WALKED ALONE

(A REMEMBRANCE)



MEMOIRS OF AN AMERICAN P.O.W. GUARD DURING WORLD WAR II.

BY EDWARD ALLEN BISHOP

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U.S. Army
1943-1945

For My Children

“Yesterday, December 7, 1941, is a date that will live in infamy...” Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Cover Illustration By
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INTRODUCTION

I was seventeen when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The next morning the entire high school assembled in the auditorium to listen to President Roosevelt's declaration of war with Japan.

The slogan "Remember Pearl Harbor" soon inflamed the country. Young men from all over the nation flocked to the recruiting offices to join up. Not since "Remember the Alamo" did a people rise up to the call to arms in the defense of a free people. I was no exception.

I was the proverbial flag waver. A believer in liberty and freedom. I was a starry-eyed kid who lived in a world of fantasies. A daydreamer and an ardent movie goer. It was the movies I think that projected the notion within me that what I viewed on the screen was the way life was. Hollywood influenced me mentally and unknowing to me was controlling my life.

We danced to the music of Glenn miller, Tommy Dorsey and Harry James. Listened to the songs of Pattie Page and Frank Sinatra. We did the jitter-bug wore zoot-suits and duck-tailed haircuts. Although I was seventeen at the time, I would come of age for the draft in January. I watched the mail for my draft notice. Pestered the mail man and the local draft board down the street where I lived.

My induction notice finally came. "Greetings from the President of the United States" and I took my physical a week later. Again I watched the mail for the results of my physical and when it came, I was classified 4F. For some maybe this might have been a God sent reprieve from sure death. For it was discovered that I had a hernia the key that turned the lock against my going into the military, and for a boy who watched his friends

leave for the war, this was a real tragedy I can assure you.

After months of mopeing around the house, which I'm sure got on my parents nerves, I had the operation that would correct my handicap. I was deferred from the draft for six months by the doctor who performed the surgery. Time draged on. Six months might well have been six years. Three months in the deferrment the doctor gave in to pressure from me and my parents, who could no longer put up with my mopeing, my father signed a release from the doctor accepting full responsibility should I have a relapse.

On March 24, 1943, I left for the army. We traveled by troop train to Fort Custer Michigan near Kalamazoo. The outfit I was assigned to hardly fit my expectations. It was an MP unit. The word MP almost immediately refers to the men who patrol the streets of our towns and cities during war time to keep the peace between the military and the local citizenry. But all MP's were not town keepers. Many branches of the military used MP's for all sorts of activities. Our units mission, the 430th MPEG Co. was to escort and guard enemy prisoners of war.

These units were formed in the early stages of the war to handle the overwhelming flow of prisoners taken off the battle fields of North Africa. So many infact, that in Britain the problem was approaching crisis proportions so the United States agreed to take the pressure off and began to receive boat loads of POW's

By 1942 the United States had only 431 enemy prisoners within our borders, mostly Japanese. By the end of the war there were as many as 425,871 POW's in America consisting of German, Japanese and Italian scattered throughout our country. Five hundred and elelven POW camps alone housed Nazi prisoners, so the situation was becoming serious. That is where the Military Police Escort Guard companies came into play. I was assigned to the 430th, activated February 25, 1943.

While in training at Fort Custer we traveled to Boston and picked up 600 German POW's and escorted them to Trinidad Colorado. These were some of Rommel's Africa Korps. They were young men dressed in their tan desert uniforms. Some of them expected to see American cities in ruins, bombed and devastated by the Luftwaffa, and believing that they would be in the United States to greet the invading German armies.

What they witnessed was the total opposite. You could almost feel loathing from the fanatically political hard-liners when they realized they had been deceived by their government. Some of them were cheerfull however and seemed to accept the inevitable, realizing the war was over for them.

Basic training was over. We traveled next to Camp Livingston Louisiana the sight of a large prisoner of war camp and complet-

ed 13 weeks of additional training. We came in close contact with the POW's there. The farmers were hard pressed for field labor since most of the young men were off fighting the war. Most of them had worked the farms of their home land and found little trouble adopting to farm chores. But when it came to picking cotton, some of them refused because the burs cut their fingers.

At night we patroled the fence. Stood in the gun towers over looking the compound. I began thinking... was this the way I would spend the war. I became depressed. This was not what I expected. The whole world was at war and I'm stuck in some prison camp in the states. But all that was about to change.

June 6,1944, the Allies invaded the coast of trance. Our orders came for the 430th to travel to New York. We boarded the troop ship USS General William Mitchel and set sail for Europe. We arrived at Liverpool England. More POW's... more guard duty. After spending some memorable weeks in England we set sail for France.

The POW's we had charge of back in the states were nothing like what confronted us. They were battle hardened and dirty most of which were captured in Normandy. They were lice infected and carried an odor about them that is difficult to describe. For the better part of a year we stood watch over them. We listened to their sob stories about why they were in the German army. We listened and we went about our duties hoping for a quick end to the war.

We had not seen our families, our wives or our kids for more than a year. Some had children born while overseas. Being away from the ones you love and put into an environment of which you are not ready only seemed to compound the situation. A dangerous transition began to develop within us. We were beginning to harden as well.

Our inner mentalities needed professional help. The long hours of guard duty performed in all kinds of weather and the searching of the prisoners, took its toll. And to make maters worse word came down the pipe line that a camp guard from another unit machine gunned nine Nazis after watching an atrocity film.

The food was bad (canned rations usually cold) sleep came when ever we found the time. By the time the war drew to a close our attitudes were at the brink of snapping. There were no furloughs, for there was no place to go. There were woman who no longer had pride within themselves.

The world we knew as youngsters no longer existed either. I walked along the wire fences of POW camps from England, France, Belgium and Germany. Walked alone with only my thoughts of home, family and friends for I learned a valuable lesson about life in those four years lost and gone, it's nothing like the movies portrayed.

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FORWARD

Someone asked me once, "Why don't you write your war memoirs?" and I said, "Oh--theres not much to write about, I was an MP." I had given it some thought though for if nothing else, leave a record of what I experianced during World War two for maybe my grandchildren.

I mulled the thought over in my mind for a long time. I realized the longer I put it off the memories of those years would dim with age. Fortunately I did keep a journal of my travels. Names and dates of the towns and villages we entered in a small ledger. I have tried to describe the past as I experianced it setting forth what I experienced and the way I regard it at this writing.

This is an autobiography about a military branch of the United States Army and considered by me as my personal memoir. my aim has not been to glorify the past but to preserve it. Some of the events occured in this memoir are known only to me and my comrads and not on public record. Some participants will criticize me, but that is unavoidable for I have tried to be honest.

In preparation for this book I wrote the US Army Center of Military History in Washington for records of the 430th and copies of the company roster. I wrote down pieces of information on bits of paper things I thought of interest.

Tiny bits of long forgoten antiquities and with the passage of ten years after the wars end, I began to write.

At three attempts and countless hours, not to mention the number of years, these memoirs were finished. It's about real people, real circumstances and a group of young men ages 18-25 who answered the call to serve a nation in need.

Edward A. Bishop, 39042167

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Part One

The low drone of a boat whistle echoed in the smelly harbor as we waited for the pilot boat to lead us through the mine fields. It was a dreary morning blanketed with a thick damp fog with fishy smells coming from the dark, oil slick waters.

Gulls sang their eerie chants as they swooped with speedy flight over the foamy ripples searching for that extra bit of food bobbing with the swelling sea. It was a special morning in my life. One that would stay with me for the remainder of my days. The year was June 29, 1944. The place, Liverpool, England.

We had slipped into the outlaying waters of Liverpool the day before just as the western sun dipped its fiery ball into the choppy sea. The English shoreline a distant cloud upon the horizon appeared to be adrift----aloft.

From over these waters came the night sounds. Sounds of the sea. Bells rang timidly. Shrill whistles pierced the dampness. Waves licked hungrily at the metal hull. Darkness swept over our ship, and we lay helpless, our very lives at the mercy of the heavy chain which held us intow.

I was suddenly awaken to the rumbling sounds of far off thunder. A deep groaning coming from within the ship. Someone touched my arm and I came out of a sound sleep sensing that something was amiss. Liverpool's being bombed, get into your life jackets----hurry."

It was Corporal Crawford and he looked scared. I swung down from my bunk and struggled into my life jacket. I found the iron ladder leading to the upper deck knowing that all personal was to remain below. Reaching the deck I was aghast at what I saw.

Blinking flashes coming from the shore batteries spit at the ink black sky. Huge orange and yellow mushrooms billowed up from the darkness as the five hundred pounders emptied from the bowels of the universe came tumdling down in screaming madness and destrustion and death.

Shafts of red fires streaked up in a kaleidoscope of wierd patterns across a flaming sky as the blast shook the ground, shook our ship, shook the ocean floor with a savage anger. For in that moment of fear the world had become a hell hole.

The entire skyline was a live volcano of fiery, belching gasses, spitting streaks of fire and casting them high into the violent night with trails of orange and red embers streaming back to earth. The droning of enemy bombers as they passed over their target invisible behind a cloak of flack smoke. Sirens vibrated and wailed and the ground shook again from working guns. Bombs screamed and burst shattering the night.

We lay helpless, vulnerable, a prime target for the enemy in the sky. Three ships laddened with a cargo of human suffering. Waiting for that moment when all would end in a flury of twisted steel and cries of anguish and death. For I watched and I waited. I was spellbound. And as I looked out over that smoke filled panorama that erupted before me, the droning of those enemy bombers grew quieter and quieter until they were no longer there. The German intelligence had goofed. Somehow we managed to survive.

I stood at the rail peering out into the twilight that next morning, my arms resting on the cold clammy rail, my fingers laced together, my nostrils sucking in the odors coming from the sea. I watched in wonderment as the gray columns of smoke lifted from out of the carcass of that embattled city feeling a new awareness within me. For there it lay, like some defeated beast----------WORLD WAR II.

My mind reached out into the confines of my inner thoughts wondering what awaited us out there. What awaited me. This is what I'd dreamed of for the past year. On MY mind ever since the last of my pals went off to war. I'd seen to many war movies as a youngster. Everyone in those flicks were heroes. But out there lurked the real thing. A stigma. A cancer eating away at ones soul.

As I watched the dark outline of the English harbor my thoughts traveled back into my subconcious. My mental computer taking me back into a time when all was at peace. My only concern then was of growing up.

THE BEGINNING

It was on a Sunday morning as I recall, a morning that began like any other in my life. Myself and two of my friends, Bob Fisher and Don Griffen, were in the foothills of Oakland California exploring some abandoned mines. We were young adventurers but on this day we were unaware that the events of which had already occured would change our lives forever.

We'd spent the greater part of that day searching the dark caverns with nothing more than a petered out flashlight. We could hear water seeping in from somewhere as the light flickered in the shimmering dark pools. It's a wonder we weren't swallowed up by some sudden drop. Or burried alive in a rock slide.

It was getting dark by the time we went home to our families. When I entered my house I sensed something was wrong. Mother was at the sink washing the supper pots and pans dad was in the livingroom listening to the radio.

My mother glanced at me rather oddly as I came in so I figured I was late for supper again and in for a scolding from my dad. But dad, he just sat there. His ear glued to every word that vibrated from that old Majestic.

“I didn't mean to be late , mom!”

Dad came in then, and looking down at me, said " The Jap's attacked Pearl Harbor today."

“Where's that?” I asked.

“Hawaii, we'll go to war over this. There'll be a draft, you may have to go."

The prospects of going off to war thrilled me then. I have had such fantasies now and then especially when I went to the movies to watch Errol Flynn slash his way across the screen. It looked exciting. It was exciting, and I wanted to experience the

adventure. My eighth grade teacher had called me a romantic once. She said I spent too much time daydreaming out the classroom window. Well she was right. I did look out that window. And I did daydream alot. But I had reached a point in my life where everything seemed so mysterious. And I was beginning to notice girls, too. One in particular that I'd met at the movies one Saturday afternoon. Her name was Lois McCutchen.

"I'll enlist!" I heard myself say and saw something in my mothers eyes. Almost tearful.

"You're too young," Dad reminded me

"I'll be eighteen in January!"

"Maybe it'll all end by then." Mom said wishfully.

Dad was doubtful. "I don't think so. It's 1917 all over again only this time it's a man named Adolf Hitler that's started it, now the Jap's have brought us into it."

I understand now what must have been going through their minds, because what they feared happened. I received my Greetings from the President of the United States shortly after my eighteenth birthday and was ordered to appear for my physical examination. I was overjoyed with the prospects of going into the military. Afterall, most of my friends had already gone. Don Griffin enlisted in the Marines and Bob Fisher had left for the Navy.

I watched the mail like a hawk for the results of my physical. I was a regular pest at the local draft board located down the block from my house. It was in back of a hardware store owned by a middle aged couple whom I had always remembered as being there.

Finally my card came in the mail. And when I read what was on it, I felt a little sick. I'd been classified as a 4F. My God what a disgrace. What a degrading and demoralizing mood I was in. Mom was happy. Dad took it all in stride.

4F was a brand. A cowardly brand. How could I face anyone. How could I tell them I was a 4F and keep my head up high. I had openly expressed my feelings about going into the military. Those were the days when patriotism ran high. I was ready to face the dangers for the sake of liberty. And I wanted to stand in the ranks and be counted with the rest of my friends. Be a part of this war. Then came the final blow. I tried to enlist in the Home Guard and they to rejected me.

I went into a period of depression. Being turned down by the Home Guard was the last straw. I thought it worse then what the government had done to me. At the time I was working as a dishwasher at a local restaurant and my new girl friend, Dorothy Lehman, was the waitress there. The owner, a big redhead named Blanche, became kind of fond of me. Very fond I later discovered.

The clientele that came into the restaurant were mostly service men from the near by Oak Knol Veterans Hospital. Whenever some of them looked at me I had the feeling they wondered why a boy my age wasn't in the service. I could see it in the eyes of those who had lost an arm or leg, and I think what really upset me was when one came in blind helped by his buddy. Both were Marines. Both were veterans of the Guadalcanal campaign, and both were very young. His buddy asked what I was doing swamping in a restaurant instead of in the military. I said nothing. Instead I departed with great haste to the sink in the kitchen and a stack of potatoes to be pealed for french fries.

Blanche sensed that something was wrong.too. And after closing hours asked me to stay. She wanted to have a talk with me. Dorothy said she was tired and went home. Blanche sat at the end of the counter drinking coffee royals, (thats coffee with a little whiskey mixed in,) when I came from the kitchen.

"Sit down Eddie,--have some coffee?"

"I'm tired too, Blanche."

She sipped her coffee. "Eddie,----what's the matter with you lately, your all on edge."

"Nothing."

"Nothing hell, You've been pouting for a week now. Is there something I can do to help?"

"It's nothing, Honest."

She sighed heavily. Her big breast strained at her white uniform. She was a pretty woman, with upswept red hair and a good figure. "Don't give me none of that crap," she hesitated a moment then said, "well you might as well know, I asked Dorothy if you two had a lovers quarrel or something and she told me what was troubing you----damn, being 4F is nothing to be ashamed of"

"I think it is, she had no right saying anything."

"I asked her because the way you feel effects my business, Eddie,---you'll have to pull yourself together when your around the customers, heaven knows, those poor boys have seen enough pain and suffering in their life time, the least we can do is show then some courtesy."

I was dumbfounded. "I don't mean to act that way."

"I know you don't."

"I'm sorry."

"Look, Eddie,---look at it this way. Your home and the rest of your friends have gone to war. Just think what you have here. Every girl around here needs a man, even us older ones. This war has taken most of them, so, your left behind, so what. Someone has to stay behind why should'nt it be you. Just think of all the nice girls you can have. Why, you can have a different one every

night of the week. Keep 'em all happy. Be happy yourself." Her knee knead mine. "Even us older ones if you know what I mean, Eddie."

I was a little shocked and embarrassed too. I think I even blushed a little. "I think I do but--"

She never let me finish by embarrassing me a little more saying, "Good, you come on home with me Eddie, we'll have us a little drink, and who knows, I may make you forget all about your silly notions of going off to war. What do you say to that, eh ?"

What could I say. There it was. Pushed right at me. All I had to do was say yes, but all I could do was sit there like a dummy waiting for something to happan. I could see her out of the corner of my eye staring at me. She was looking at me over her cup rim waiting for my answer. I had very little experiance with sex at that age. Infact Dorothy and I were experimenting at the time. As I look back on it now, it was more like fumbling.

Hell, Blanche was alot older than I was. She was at least thirty with some gray in her hair. Oh, Dorothy and I had done it once or twice in the back seat of my dads 37 chevy, but to do it with a woman that old, and what if Dorothy found out.

"I'd better not."

"Is it because of Dorothy?"

"Well---"

"I won't tell if you wont." She said mockingly.

I felt uneasy. This woman really means business. She wanted me to go to bed with her. She had been awfully friendly to me. There were times when she rubbed up against me back in the kitchen. The time when her dress front fell open when she stooped to open the oven door to take out the muffins and I saw her big bare breasts. The fact that she didn't attempt to cover herself, but only smiled at me, should have told me something. Oh the thoughts that went through my head. The mysteries that surrounded it. It was a brief glimpse but a lasting one. I could not do this thing she suggested. I simply could not.

"I'd better go home."

"You don't know what your miss'n."

I started to get up. "I swear Eddie, I'll say nothing, honest." She placed her hand on my arm. "Think about it, ok?"

I blushed and she saw it. She laughed then. It was a gruff laugh, deep and throaty filled with a lusty chuckle. "I beleave you're still a damned Virgin."

I said, wanting to get up and run, "I'm not,---it's just--"

"Ah--you and Dorothy, eh." Her hand slipped behind my head and she pulled me to her kind of playfully like, my face inches from her big red lips. I could smell the whiskey on her breath.

All of a sudden without any warning she was pressing them against mine, twisting and smearing her lipstick all over my mouth. It wasn't like kissing Dorothy. More like a wet piece of cold liver being pressed against my mouth. I didn't like it. I didn't like it one bit and tried to get loose.

She opened her eyes and let me go. She pulled back apologetically and got up from the stool. I could see in her eyes that there was disappointment there. She was so sure that I would accept her invitation. Now the rejection changed her mood and she went behind the counter and poured herself another cup of coffee eyeing me over the steaming rim.

There was a smile upon her lips. A twitching smile. I guess she felt a little foolish making a pass at a boy my age. Maybe it was the whiskey that made her act this way. She always drank those Coffee Royals. Always seemed permissive to me. I must confess there were times when I was tempted to reach out and touch those over developed breasts. They strained so hard at the big white buttons holding them in. They held there mysteries, there wonders, there fantasies.

"I'll not say I'm sorry Eddie, because I'm not. I can understand your wanting someone younger, ---I'd just thought you'd become man enough to want an older woman now and then that's all. And don't you look at me like I'm some kind of whore or something either. Because I'm not,----understand me Eddie, I'm not."

I nodded rather feebly saying nothing and started for the door. Blanche called out to me-- "I'll see you tomorrow night?"

"Yes."

"Eddie,---don't think hard of me, sometimes I get very lonely,--- sometimes ----" She waved her hand for me to go and turned her back. I thought I heard sobbing when I closed the door.

The evening air smelled clean and fresh. A faint glimmer of light began to glow in the east. I walked home to my mothers house stopping once looking back down that darkened street towards the restaurant. A neon light blinked on and off flashing "CAFE". There was a woman there, a lonely woman, and I almost went back.

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PART TWO

My induction into the service had been twice rejected because of a minor physical handicap that could only be corrected by surgery. My parents no doubt were relieved in knowing I would be spared the anguish of war or the sufferings of death. But I was not so overjoyed.

I was so despondent that I tried enlisting in the Merchant Marines after the Army, Navy, Marines and the Coast Guard had turned me down, calling me unfit for the service. It was a great shock to me knowing I was unable to go off to war. Or for that matter unable to go into any branch of the military.

I moped around the house during the day feeling sorry for myself. At night down at Blanches, I silently envied the wounded that stared in quiet remorse at me over the counter as I went about my chores. I could see them through the tubby hole in the wall and from time to time caught a quick but friendly smile from Blanche. She was still waiting for me. And I must confess I was tempted many times to go home with her. Maybe there I could let go my frustrations. Loose myself in the embrace of a woman old enough to be my mother.

I guess the pressure at home became to great. Mom was tired of me being so despondent, and my dad, well he was all wrapped up in his boat building on the lot above the house. A 32 foot cabin cruiser, he called the "LOIS B" a tribute to my sister. His first try at boat building was a sleek 16 footer he called "THE DOG HOUSE" named because mom fussed at him all the while he was building it.

I would help him in the evenings after school, cutting out pieces on the bandsaw, doing odd jobs, things of that nature but all the while my mind was off somewhere else. I yearned for the military.

Then one evening everything came to a head. It was during supper, a week after my graduation from high school. I'd just finished eating and was about to leave for work when my dad opened up with--- "Son,--sit down,-- we need to talk."

He looked serious. Mom, and my sister Lois looked on.

"You've been sulking around here for a year now wanting to go into the service. I guess I should understand but I don't. Is this what you really want?"

I was at loss for words. All I could say was "Yea."

"I talked with doctor Soluman, he said an operation would correct the problem."

At first mom was against it. "Gee, Eddie, I don't know something might happen to you going into the Army and all."

"But mom." I protested, "It's only a hernia operation and besides, all my friends have left for the war. I want to go too." Dad spoke up.

"I have hospitalization insurance down at the plant, he said, if that's what you want son, then we'll see the doctor tomorrow."

After closing time, Dorothy and I walked up the hill. I was jubilent and filled with a wild excitment as we strolled along the darkened avenue. We held hands and after a while we were arm and arm. We walked along as one person talking quietly.

We were both wondering I guess. Thinking of what the future held in store for both of us. Dorothy said she would wait for me. Just like the heroines in the movies and when the war was over we would pick up our lives where we had left them, and live happily ever after. A story book ending.

Reaching the corner we stopped. I could see the skeletal ribs of my fathers boat basking in the moonlight on the lot ahead. Dorothy looked up at me and I saw something in her green eyes that sparkled from the street light. I thought they might be tears. Or a mist maybe.

"Why do you have to go, Eddie?"

"I thought I explained all that to you."

"Yes, but..."

"I'll not be going for a while yet, anyway, the doctor say's I'll be deferred for at least six months."

"I wish you wouldn't go. Maybe it will end soon. It can't last much longer, can it ?"

"I don't know."

"Oh,--I wish it would end tomorrow."

I took her hand an squeezed it a little. "Let's go down to the garage and get into my dad's car and have a little fun,--- how about it ?"

"Sure."

I pulled the garage doors closed and went around to the drivers side and climbed in. Dorothey had the radio playing. It was a Glenn Miller tune. She came instantly into my arms. I felt like I was on top of the world. Everything was going my way. Soon I would be in the service and off to war with the rest of my friends. And I had Dorothy too. A very wonderful girl. We began to experiment. My hand seeking out her mysteries.

I was so excited the first time that I leaned on the horn. I bet it sounded for miles, and I expected dad to come busting in at any moment. But tonight was a special night. For tomorrow I was going into the hospital, then after that, the army.

"I want this to last forever." she whispered "I love you."

"And I you."

We kissed again, then tumbled to the cushion. Afterwards, we lay quietly, our heartbeats pounding as one. This was a private moment shared by two people. Two people sharing each other.

I lit two cigarettes and gave one to Dorothy.

"Promise me you'll wait."

"I said I would and I will, honest."

"Well have a good life together after the war, you'll see." I told her. At least I thought it was at the time. For I was very much in love with Dorothy and blinded by what the future held for both of us. I'd been in love with Lois McCutchen to, but not like this. We never did anything other than hold hands. Or a quick kiss once or twice. I never did touch her. Not in the way Dorothy and I did. Not like then, not like we did on that night. I suppose Lois would always remain in my thoughts. A first love one never forgets.

It wasn't that Lois was such a puritan. I think it was me. She might have went all the way if I insisted but I never did. I was the one who had no idea what to do. It was me. Afterall Lois was my first love. She was a very lovely girl brought up in a very traditional family as was I. There was those mysteries however. Those dark secrets that all girls seemed to possess and I was fascinated by them.

I guess what attracted me the most about Lois was that she resembled actress Judy Garland. A screen idol. She had a rare quality about her. I wanted her but was to afraid to ask. We were two young people tasting the bitter fruits of adolescent love. Standing if you will, in front of that mysterious door waiting for something to happen. Wondering what would happen once we opened it.

We were learning about life and sex. And we were learning about it in the streets. Our parents never told us anything about carnal education. That was taboo in most housholds in those days.

I don't ever remember seeing mom or dad express any kind of effection between each other in front of us kids. And I often wondered about that when I saw it on the movie screen down at the local theater.

We met one Saturday afternoon at the theater. She was with a friend, Irene Mason. They were sitting behind me. We talked at the popcorn stand during intermission and she agreed to let me walk her home after the show was over.

After several weeks of courtship, I'd began feeling a little lovestruck. We called it "Puppy Love" in those days. But I had that strange feeling in the pit of my stomach. It always seemed to be there when ever I was around Lois.

I would see her every evening after school.We'd sit on her front porch and talk or go to her neighdors house next door and visit with the Kelly's. When Pearl Harbor was bombed things began to change. I had an obsession about military service and whenever I talked about it she would clam up.

Lois hated the thought of anyone going into the military. In High School I was a member of the ROTC and for two years I studdied the military. And on several occasions I'd wear my uniform home from school. At first Lois didn't mind. I think she was kind of impressed. Then Pearl Harbor. This represented something else and she began to back off.

The climax to our relationship came when a new family movedinto her neighborhood. They were refugees of a sort from Pearl Harbor and naturally I was interested in them because they had witnessed the bombing and I thought of them as celebrities. After a while we all became good friends. Claud Cook was the same age as I. He Had a sister, Helen, who was eleven, and a girl friend named Delores Mengay.

Delores had the reputation of being the neighborhood plaything. She was very permissive and had long since discovered that she could use her body to get what she wanted. I guess every boy on the block had their way with her with the exception of me. She was the girl who came from the other side of the tracks. But to Claud, she was a living angel. Lois was acquainted with her extra curricular activities too and saw her for what she was. Delores was just not a nice girl.

Lois once said that if I was ever near Delores and she found out about it that would be the end of our relationship. Well I had no designs on Delores or intentions of being caught with her either. I was to involved with my fantasies, and I loved Lois.

One friday night I went to Clauds house. We sat around playing 78's and I listened as he told me about the attack at Pearl Harbor. He showed me some bullets he'd picked up on the beach

there. I was very impressed. Then he showed me the gun. It was an Army issue Colt .45 automatic. I was fascinated to say the least.

The Springfield rifle we used at ROTC up until that time, had been the only military weapon I'd held. I felt it's weight. It was heavy. A clip went into the stock but the clip was missing. He said it belonged to his father who was stationed at Pearl. He took the gun and put it back in the drawer of the nightstand by the bed and we went back into the living room.

The next evening, Saturday, Lois and her parents were going to visit her aunt and would be home late.

So I walked on up to the Cook's. Only that night Clauds mother had gone to the movies with a neighbor and left him home to stay with his little sister, Helen.

Claud found a bottle of whiskey and some soft drinks and we played records and I danced with his sister. One of the songs on the turn table was a Dinah Shore tune entitled, "I DON'T WANT TO WALK WITHOUT YOU." It was Lois's favorite, and it was Claud's too. He raved all evening how he was going to marry up with Delores.

The music played on, the atmosphere became thicker and Claud began to get tipsy. Helen came out of the bedroom wearing a grass skirt and began to do a Hawaiian dance. I would not drink any of the whiskey because I didn't like the taste of it. I drank a coke instead and watched Helen wiggle her hips.

Rain began to fall outside, thunder rumbled and lightning flashed in the curtained windows. There came a light knock on the front door. Helen opened it and Delores walked in dripping water on the rug. Claud was all smiles as he went over to her and kissed her on the lips. I began to feel uneasy remembering what Lois had said and wished Delores would go home.

"I'm glad your here." Claud said.

"I'm not staying."

I sighed a little.

Claud took her hand. "Sure you are. Come on in the kitchen, I've got some of my mom's whiskey, I'll fix you a drink."

She gave me a sidways glance. "No----I haven't got time, Claud, I'm leaving home. I'm run'n away."

"You can't."

"I have to."

"Have to, why?"

Her shoulders slumped a little. "I can't stay there any longer, that's why."

He took her hand again. "We'll leave together. I'll go with you, Delores."

"No, I'm leaving alone."

Claud became angry. His words began to thicken from the

whiskey he'd drank, and I saw something very ugly there.

"Your mine," he chanted, "I'll not let you go----you belong to me. You said so yourself."

"I know."

"Please stay."

"I can't Claud, I'm sorry."

Abruptly he turned saying over his shoulder, "You will be, you will be." And he ran into the bedroom.

All the while I said nothing. I didn't want to be a part of their quarrel. Most of all, I didn't want any part of Delores. She was still wet from the rain. I don't know if it were tears that ran down her cheeks or water from her blond stringy hair. But I did sense something in her, she did feel something for Claud. A hidden something like the one I felt for Lois.

She brushed her wet hair from her face saying, "I'm leaving," and when she turned to go Claud appeared from the bedroom brandishing the Colt automatic pistol.

"Your not go'n anywhere, Delores." he challenged, "not without me."

I saw right then I'd stepped into something I'd regret for the rest of my life. "Put the gun down Claud." I said hoping he would listen, but he didn't.

"No Eddie,---she's staying here with me."

Delores began to cry. "Claud, be careful, that thing might go off and hurt somebody."

"Will you stay here with me if I do." he asked

"I can't."

"Oh yes you can."

Delores was almost hysterical. "Please, Claud, put that gun down, please?"

"Only if you'll stay."

"My God, Claud----"

He was standing in the hallway door with Delores on one side and me on the other. Helen was standing in between about three feet ahead of us. Claud pointed the gun straight at Delores, his hands were sweaty, the gun wavered nervously as he held it. It was heavy and he was scared. Suddenly, there came a loud explosion. The noise rocked the windows in the house ringing in my ears. The night before the gun was unloaded. I had seen it. Held it. Claud must have loaded it while I was talking with Delores. When the gun went off there was a muffled scream. I could almost feel the heat of that bullet as it passed between Dolores and me. I was unaware at the time that it had buried itself in Helens stomach.

Claud dropped the gun and ran like a mad man between us. I looked down, he was cradling Helens head in his lap. I watched as the little girl died in his arms. He stood up, resting his dead sisters head on a pillow that Delores had brought. And showing little emotion spoke to me.

"Get Delores out of here before the cops come."

"We'd better stay," I said.

Claud shook his head woodenly. "No, I don't want you two involved."

"Were already involved Claud, the police might want us for something, we'd better stay."

"No, take Delores and go someplace, please!" He poured the whiskey'd drinks down the sink drain.

Well the fat was in the fire now, to quote an old saying, The next morning it was on the front page of the Okland Tribune. Mom read it to me and I reacted with a genuine shock. But Lois read between the lines, and as I remember, I never could convince her that there was ever anything between Delores and I. And our relationship ended.

*

PART THREE

Time passed swiftly in the hospital. After fifteen days of laying flat of my back, which was the custom in those days after surgery, I had to learn how to walk all over again. Dorothy made periododic visits with my parents and each time I could feel something different about her mood. She knew what I was thinking. My inner most thoughts were of going into the military. She must have felt excluded in my world of make believe. We had talked of my plans several times and as the time for my surgery drew nearer, her attitude began to change.

There was a shortage of men because of the massive callup. And unknowing to me, the young girls and women who were left behind became victims of a silent battle. The battle of emotions. It was evident in Dorothy's attitude only I could not detect it, I had no way of knowing what was eating away at her. Only she knew that. Maybe we were both to young to cope with it, I don't know. Blanche tryed to tell me but I wouldn't listen. Lois did to before my relationship with Dorothy and now I saw it in her eyes each time she came to visit me.

Not once did Lois come to see me. She stood her ground and ever since the death of Helen I could feel a guilt spread over me. I had nothing to feel guilty about it was the look in Lois's eyes that I could never shake. She had layed down her ground rules and she stood by them emphatically. She cut off our relationship as final as a surgeon would sever an arm or leg. It was a permanent thing and I had to learn to cope with it. I never saw her again.

I was deferred from the military draft for six months. Meanwhile the North African campaign opened in Novenber of 1942 two weeks before my surgery and would rage on through the spring and summer of the following year. Don Griffen and Bobby Fisher

were both in the South Pacific and I was at home nursing a raging inferno to join them.

I continued to work a while longer at Blanche's once I returned home from the hospital. Then one night I simply quit. It all came about after I got into an argument with a drunken Marine who accused me of being a draft dodger. Me of all people a draft dodger. I was still a little sore where that surgeon had cut on me to correct my reason for not wearing that uniform.
He wasn't much older than me. His chest was ablaze with all kinds of campaign ribbons including the Purple Heart and Bronze Star. I guess he felt cheated. He'd become a man long before his time. And seeing me there behind that counter still wearing civilian clothes must have touched off something inside him.

Hell, I was ready to go. I was wanting to go. In fact I was thinking very seriously about cutting my deferment short and go for my physical in three months instead of the agreed six. When I told my parents of my decision, they faced it with a strong awareness. For actually the operation was only a means of putting off what was inevitable in the first place.

I had to get a release from the doctor clearing him of any responsibility should I have a relaps because of my decision to trim three months off my deferment. Warning me of the serious consequences should a relaps occur. He checked me over and gave me a clean bill of health. I was physicaly fit and as far as he could see I should have no trouble, providing I did not strain myself in any way. "With boy's like you Eddie," he said, "we can do nothing less but win this battle." Doctor Solumn later joined the medics. He was killed on Guadalcanal shortly after arriving their by a Japanese sniper.

I carried the doctors release to the local draft board then awaited my letter designating the time and date of my physical. It came, and dad took me to San Francisco the site of the induction center. Everything went off well until I stepped on the scales. I was underweight for my five ten frame, 128 pounds. At the desk where I turned in my papers the examiner glared at me while I struggled into my pants.

"Damned skinny bastard, ain't ya!"

I was scared to say the least. I'd been in line for forty five minutes. I was as naked as a jaybird bumping butt's with all kinds of naked people. Had fingers crammed up my rectum, my privates inspected like some kind of prized bull and pushed along from one examiner to another all of which looked at me in a way that made me feel ashamed of my nakedness.

I tried holding the folder in a way that I wasn't exposed all the while. When it came time for the hernia examination the

examiner took the folder from me with the greatest reluctance upon my part and began to finger my testicals. He noticed the fresh scar where the hair had hardly had time to grow back and asked me how long ago since I had the operation.

"Three month's."

"Who was the surgeon."

"Doctor Soluman."

He rubbed his finger along the red scar. "That's a fine job." He thumbed through the folder and found the doctors release notice.

"Who's idea was that?"

"Mine."

"You want to go that bad, eh."

I nodded my head. "Yes."

He handed me back the folder and remarked, "Well, good luck, kid."

At the end of the line I put on my shirt while another examiner thumbed through the folder. While standing there someone tapped me on the shoulder. Turning, I came face to face with an old school chum. Al Grossman.

"I'm glad that's over." he remarked with a grin.

"Me to." I said. "I think my blood pressure is to high."

"Mine to, the man said I was to excited."

The examiner, a pocked face man wearing an Army uniform, his chest cluttered with campaign ribbons, looked up at me with an appraising glance his eyes going over the length of me. He motioned me to one side.

"The blood pressure we can control. You're just excited----but your weight. Your to skinny kid. You go home and buy a couple pounds of bananas. You come back tomorrow. Before you get on the scale, eat them bananas."

"I want to pass my physical."

"I read the report from your draft board. We get alot of kids like you through here---you'll pass---just do as I say. Eat them bananas."

The next morning I carried five pounds of bananas into the restroom at the induction center and began to cram them down. Whenever I felt like I could not eat another one. I remembered what the examiner said so I'd peal down another and go to eating. I stuffed the peelings in the paper sack and threw it in the trash can.

They checked my weight, I was still a pound underweight. After some fast talking on my part, the man marked my new weight at 132 pounds. Then he checked my blood pressure. I passed that obsticle right on the boarder line all the while assuring him I

was overly excited.

I came before that pocked faced examiner again, only this time I was given a choice of what branch of the service I wanted to join. Sitting behind a long table was a representative from the Army, Navy, Marines and the Air Force. I chose the army and went home to wait out the seven days for my orders. It was March 17, 1943.

Every night for those seven days, Dorothy and I went up to that garage and the back seat of my fathers 37 chevy. We were two young lovers making the most of the time we had left together. I could have taken Blanches advice and remained a 4F, for if I had, Dorothy and I might have been married. But I was still living in my dream world trying desperately to become a man. An act that did not come easy.

On the night of the seventh day, we met again. For she cried on that final night. She clung to me like somekind of frightened child.

"I'll wait for you." She said tearfully.

"I hope you will."

"I'll write you every day, I promise."

"I'll write you to."

"Let's get married, now---tonight." she said.

"No,--we don't have time."

"Then I'll come to wherever they send you, and we'll get married there."

"Ok."

It was our longest night together. Our last. I shall always remember that greeneyed girl of whom I loved as a boy. For I was slowly becoming a man now. Stepping into a mans world doing a mans job.

March 24, 1943

The time had come for me to embark upon the most exciting day of my life. My bags were packed and I was ready to leave for the army.

Mom stood inside the door behind the screen peering out at me. She would not accompany me to the induction center. Instead she watched as so many mothers did during those frightfull years as their only son stepped over the threshold of boyhood into a mans world.

I was eager. Excited and ready to eccept the challenge. I had little sleep. It had been a long night up until the early morning hours. For Dorothy and I had said our goodbyes in the backseat of that chevy until the first light of day. Upon our part-

ing, she said she would not see me off, for it was the night she wished to remember. The night with it's sweet long rememberance.

Pictures were taken. One of mom and I together, then one of dad and I. I kissed my sister goodbye and climbed into the chevy and we were off. All the while we drove, my dad said very little, and when he did speak, there was emotion behind his words I would like to think. Even some tears maybe. For my dad and I were never very close. Not like most of the kids in our neighborhood. But I would like to think that on that day we were very close. An intimate father and son closeness.

He remarked on the way that he had a little trouble starting the car. The battery seemed a little down. It was his way of telling me that he knew of my rendezvous with Dorothy. How he knew I never found out. I guess it was that father instinct, or maybe some tell tale evidence left behind during one of our earlier relationships and I found my eyes roaming accusingly at the back seat.

At the induction center I saw Al Grossman. We were leaving together. It was a grand feeling knowing that I would be with someone I knew. Al's mom was there to. We stood around until someone blew a whistle. It was a big burly man in uniform wearing sergeant stripes.

He said that when our names were called to fall in line. Time passed slowly. Again that whistle sounded and we listened for our names. Finally our names came up and we joined the others standing kind of awkwardly about, and I saw my father watching from a short distance away. For the first time in my life I saw something in him that I never realized he possessed.

He stood with shoulders slumped, face drawn, his gray sweater buttoned up the front, looking at me through his pale blue eyes. He seemed helpless. Almost motionless. A light breeze twisted a tendral of gray hair. I think he wanted to hug my neck, I know I did his, but neither one of us moved.

My dad never had it easy. What he got out of life he had earned the hard way. He was an accomplished musician on the violin and before the great depression he bought a house supporting his family with his trade as a sheet metal worker. He had his own business and was the first to invent the metal awning. Something he never took out a paten on.

He lost his home, his business and his savings when the depression came, but he never gave up hope. He leased land from the Federal Government in Placerville and staked out a gold claim. Throughout those years of hardship he supported his family by litterely grubbing in the earth to make a living.

They led us to an awaiting bus which we boarded that was

bound for the train station. I watched my father then as we moved away until he was no longer in sight. From somewhere deep down inside me there came a churning I was homesick already.

PART FOUR

March 24, 1943

Fort Ord was situated on the peninsula of Monteray California. Off in the distance the white caps rolled inward from the sea reaching out across the sprawling sands like great long tentacles beckoning a mourning ritual to the dead sailors and ancient gladiators who wander its quiet depts since the dawn of mankind.

The sea with its mysteries. A watery coffin which has engulfed the warriors of every nation pound the beaches and spray the air with its salty mists. For man has declared war upon himself. Determined to destroy civilation despite the outcome of victory. For there will be no victory. There will be no victors, for in the end, there will be no world.

I could not see those beaches. Nor could I hear the great waves as they crashed upon the sands for afterall I was still the romantic. And while I stood gazing with awed admiration at the two storied white barracks, the same of which would be my home for I knew not how many years, I could smell the sea in the air about me. I could see and hear the gulls as they dipped in the morning air. I could taste the salt against my lips. For everywhere I looked I saw men in uniform.

A long column of threes marched in perfect cadence while we stood alongside the bus from which me had just disembarked. The column of olivedrab turned in perfect unison, boots in perfect harmony, and in single file entered a long white building advertised as the "MESS HALL" uncovering their peaked caps stuffing them in their belts upon entry.

I could feel the heartbeat of the camp. Smell the strange

odors in every wisp of air. I felt like some castaway alien from another planet who has just awaken finding himself transported upon a strange new galaxy. The newness of my surroundings awed and inspired me with a great zeal. I let my eyes travel the entire length of the camp. Consume every bit of detail, for I wanted to belong. I wanted to be a part of my new found adventure.

The sergeant in charge of our detail called us all together. We were to be assigned our quarters. After this was done, we would march over to the mess Hall for dinner. Then to the QM to draw our uniforms and equipment.

The olivedrab shirt and trousers I was issued were made of 100% wool. The shoes were a size to big and the overcoat, well, I'd have to gain a hundred pounds to fit into that. They moved us along like cattle in a slaughtering pen. When in fact that is what it was to some at the ultimate end. We were immigrants of a sort. Displaced persons awaiting to be assigned a new way of life. Stepping out of the old one in fashion and lifestyle, emerging into a world of olivedrab and weaponry. You might say we were born again.

Are names were taken away from us and they gave us a number; 39042167. They shaved our heads and dressed us all alike. No more ducktailed hairstyles, no more Zoot-suits, and in time, they will change our beliefs. Wash our minds of the past and groom us for the future. We were machines of a sort. A type of robot to act upon command. But there was one thing they could not take away from us. We were made of flesh and blood.

That first night I wrote a letter home on the new stationary mom had given me. I told them of what I had experianced and that Al Grossman was still with me. I thought that might put mom at ease knowing that I had a friend from school with me. Then I wrote a letter to Dorothy.

I didn't realize until then just how badly I missed her. I let my loneliness for her seep into every word but not leave the impression that I had made a mistake in coming there. I promised just as soon as I got my first furlough that I'd come home and we would get married.

I awoke during the night and heard sobbing coming from somewhere in the barracks. I was not the only one missing home. A mother, a wife or sweetheart. The next morning was a complete disaster. The shower room was full of naked bodies and I had no intention of joinng them. I had been a very private person in civilian life and going into the shower room with a bunch of strange people made me shutter with a profound fear.

Instead I washed my face and ran my fingers through the stubble of what was left of my hair, then brushed my teeth. After

breakfast we went to another barrack to take an exam. It was a written examination. They called it an aptitude test. The purpose of this test was to show what special qualifications we had in a specialized field. Linguists were sent into intelligence units; combat engineers and demolition experts were utilized elswhere.

Highly prized code and communications men were sent into special units; administrators, supply officers, snipers, priests, mechanics and drivers, weapons experts and armorers, doctors and corpsmen: each of them had a special usefulness of the military. Everybody of value to the war effort had a place, though as any vetern can testify, the Army's evaluation of one's skills seldom coincided with his own.

I had no special skills since I was fresh out of high school only ambitions. I selected the Air Force. I had dreams of being a turret gunner in one of them big bombers. I wished to go to gunnery school and become an ace in the air. It seemed that everybody wanted to go into the Air Force, including Al Grossman. He wanted to be a mechanic and work on those aircraft engines.

That evening we walked around camp wearing our new uniforms and took in the post theater. We met another boy who was from Berkley, Stewart McIntyre. We all three went to the PX for a soda.

"Wonder what happens next?" McIntyre asked.

"I don't know," Al said, "Maybe we'll know something tomorrow."

It was a cool night as I recall but an exciting time for all of us because of the uncertainties that lay ahead.

"What'd you guys put in for." McIntyre asked.

"Air Force."

He laughed. "So did I, I think everybody on the base wants the Air Force." he rolled his head back slightly indicating a young man setting at a table drinking a beer, "See that fellow over there, he put in for the infantry. He said they'll draw men out of the Air Force for the infantry since there's such a backlog. That's why he volunteered."

The next morning we bundled up our civilian clothes we wore to Ord, and sent them home. We were in the Army now. It would be a long time before we'd wear civilian clothes again.

We were assigned to our units. Al, McIntyre and myself went into an outfit called the 430th M.P.E.G. Co. I had no idea what that was. The first two letters, M.P. was enough to send my romantic notions to go sailing out that classroom window.

Once we were all together, a burly, bald headed sergeant, his chest like all the others, adorned with combat ribbons, gave us the lowdown about the 430th. Our duties were to process and confine the incoming POWs from the battle fronts of North Africa. A

newly created Prisoner of War Division was simply not equipped, in terms of time and personnal, to handle the situation.

London continued to press the united States for some measure of cooperation on the prisoner of war issue. Especially since England's ability to maintain and confine the increasing numbers of enemy captives on that tiny island were taxed to the breaking point. Begrudgingly our State Department offered to accept an emergency batch of 50,000 enemy prisoners.

The sergeant pointed out that we would be trained to take up the slack in the POW problem. It was just like the government. Like the time they classified me a 4F. Now they wanted me to play wet-nurse to a bunch of POWs captured by the real men up on the line. I was very unhappy with the unit of which I was assigned. For I looked upon it as another stumbling block in my life.

I was still a boy. Still seeing combat as a very glamourous and romantic adventure. Like all them heroes on the movie screen. I had seen the movie Sergeant York nine times. Wake Island at least a dozen or more times. In the lobby of the theater that viewed Wake Island they had a Marine recruiting station set up. When the movie was over I stood in line to sign up. Patriotism was very much alive in those days as were the events of which we had witnessed on the movie screen .

It was a very immoral trick to play on the younger viewers for our minds were washed to the real meaning of what that movie portrayed. We were elevated to such a deep heated frenzy, that all we wanted to do was go kill Japs. None of us thought anything about beeing killed. It was the Japs who would die, not us. After all what did we know we were just kids.

We shipped out the next morning for Fort Custer, Michigan. On march 27, 1943, our train backed into the camp with all eyes staring out the barracks windows at the new recruits. Fort Custer could be our home for the next six weeks. I saw military vehicles move about like slow canvas covered insects going about their daily chores.

Uniformed men stood about watching. Hear come a new bunch of recruits, they might be thinking, or new meat for the gambling halls set up in the company latrines on payday. Whatever their thoughts might be, mine were far more reaching I can assure you. We were green, there was no doubt about that. Anyone who thought army life was a picnic, was either a fool or green as hell.

I had no idea of what scars this adventure might leave within me. I had no idea of the pain and suffering that I might endure because of my fantasies. We all have fantasies of some sort. Everyone does. Fantasies about death, woman, of wealth. Fantasies of war, heroism and of love. The whole big world was made up of

fantacies.

We lined up in a column of threes. A rugged looking bunch I'm sure. Our uniforms didn't fit, some of us stood in a slouchy manner, some scared to death. A tall sergeant, his graying hair cut close and flat as a table top, paced up and down before us. He was no John Wayne I'll asure you. His name was Sergeant Joe Zazik top kick of the newly organized 430th.

He glared at us without saying a word. Hands clasped behind him stopping now and then to peer into the face of one scared recruit. Being that recruit he was scrutinizing I hardly blinked an eye. In fact I couldn't have moved if I wanted to. I was paralyzed I think or maybe my heart stopped for one fleeting second. That dog-face scared the hell out of me with those cold black eyes running the length of me like he was appraising a new car or a piece of prime beef at the stock yard. He was the typical top kick. Even in his appearance. His growel, I soon learned, matched his bark. Everything about him gave you that impression.

All that morning we lounged around in the Barracks getting aquainted. I met another Californian. Chris Radmilovich, he was from San Rafel. We'd been assigned our quarters and given foot lockers to stash our belongings in. Our clothes were hung on open racks between our bunks. There were three noncoms assigned to our barracks. Corpral Collins, Corpral Breedlove and Sergeant O'Hara. Each and every one made themselves aquainted.

We learned how to make up our bunks military style, and was told the taboos of barracks living. Lights out promply at ten o’clock, revelrie at five. My first day at camp disillusioned me a great deal. I was ready to get on with the business of being a soldier.

Everything was disorganized. I can’t recall how many times I made up my bunk. Practice they said, practice and more practice. I sat around most of the day trying to polish the dye out of my boot leather. Spit’n polish. Everything spit’n polish. They had some affliction about neatness. I didn’t know it at the time, but my training had already began.

That first evening we met our officers. Our CO was Captain Richardson. He was regular army, a thirty year man. He was up for retirement and it was unlikely that he would finish basic with us. First Lieutenant Paul Cromer. He was from North Carolina. His father ran a junk yard at Charletville. Second Lieutenant Homor E. Osvog was from upstate New York.

Lieutenant Cromer I didn't cotton to the first time I saw him. He reminded me of actor, George Saunders, who always played the heavy in the movies. He had an upper gold tooth that glittered when the sun struck it making him an even more villainous

kind of character.

That evening at Custer something happened in the Mess Hall that realy rounded out our first day in camp. Chow call sounded and we all fell out to march over to the Mess Hall. Now we were still a bunch of green horn kids trying our damndest to look army. At the door we fell into single file doffing our little caps as we entered.

As we progressed along in line towards the long tables (we did not go cafeteria style in those days) I followed close behind Al wanting to sit at the same table he did. I noticed that he stooped suddenly coming up with a hand full of radishes. I payed no mind to that, I was hungry too.

But those red radishes had a pedigree. They came off the officers table. Now to get that hand full of radish he had to reach over the head of Lieutenant Cromer, his armpit under the Lieutenants nose, scooping them out of the bowl under the watch-full eye of Captain Richardson.

Hell, one might think someone snatched the Hope Diamond the way everyone carried on. The Captain got all red in the face calling for the Corpral to “put that man on report, educate him in the difference between the officer's table and the enlisted man’s table.” Now I just stood there afraid to make a move. There was so much confusion and shouting going on that I could do nothing else.

Everyone stopped, like a train pulling a load of freight, and bumped into one another. Al, he got red behind the ears, as red as them accusing radish he held in his hand. So, as to add insult to injury, Al politely reached back and discharged those little gems back into their bowl. A KP promptly replaced that bowl with a fresh one. And Al, he stood there like the condemned man awaiting execution. After what seemed like an eturnity, the confrontation eased and we continued on to the tables.

PART FIVE

Close order drill came naturally for me. I'd taken two years of ROTC in high school, and could field strip a 1903 Springfield rifle blindfolded. It was all in my record and I was proud of my accomplishment. Corpral Collins asked me where I'd learned close order drill and I told him.

"Do you think you can drill this squad?"

"Sure."

"Allright, go ahead."

I called the detail to attention, put them through a series of commands, some of them didn't know their right foot from their left; column right march, column left march and so on. Corpral Collins looked very impressed. When I'd finished, I stepped back in rank. I'd been a drill sargent in ROTC so going through that routine was nothing. Everything about field exercises was simple for me.

For a month and a half we learned the ways of the army. And at the end of training, we were as fit as any combat unit in the US Army. We were issued our weapons. Mine was a Thompson sub machine gun, and we were drilled in their usage and care. A mans weapon was his life and he treated it with more care an respect than he did his wife.

In civilian life one had values of a sort. Our very life style was conjured up from a set of personal values. But these were values we lived with in our past life. The values we learned over the past few months, was something else again. I'd say the greatest majority of us came from good homes. Hard working homes. A people who survived the most difficult of times through a nation wide depression only to excell because of those values and hard work.

Our new life style was an all together different cup of tea. Now I would not think of taking a mans life, no more than I'd steal his possessions. Most of us were brought up to respect this. But in the Military, now, that was another page in the book on etiquette.

They didn't teach us to steal, not in the sense of taking something from another man. They taught us the difference between stealing a mans wallet, and taking the pennies off a dead mans eyes. To steal a wallet your called a thief. Taking pennies off a dead mans eyes, your a scavenger.

That's a mighty thin line between crooked and a thief. By taking pennies off a dead mans eyes, the whole thing might blow up in your face. Booby-trap. But killing, that was something else again. If you kill a man in civilian life during a act of violence you are called a murderer. But if you kill a man during combat, it's called survival. The whole system is turned around to meet a set of government standards.

Before this man’s war started I was a boy of seventeen in the process of learning about women. Sometimes I think I missed the boat when I didn't take Blanche up on her invitation to go home with her. I'll always wonder about that I suppose.

Three weeks after I arrived at Fort Custer, I received my last letter from Dorothy. It was a "Dear John” letter and in it she tried so painlessly to tell me that she had found someone else. A 4F by the name of Frank Garcia. He’d been deferred because one leg was shorter that the other, and he had been a friend.

Blanche said I could have any girl I wanted if I remained a 4F. It was nobodies fault except maybe mine. I was the one who was hell bent for leather to change my selective service status. Not Dorothy; not Frank, but me.

June 12, 1943

Orders came down for our first functional duty. we were to go by rail to Boston Massachusetts and pick up 600 prisoners of war and escort them to a Trinadad Colorado POW camp. The morning sky was threatning rain when we boarded the train bound for Boston. Our spirits all keyed up; anxiety running high. At last I was going to see first hand what the German fighting machine looked like. These were men straight off the desert of North Africa. Pommel's elit Afrika Korps. They were tough, hard fighting men who, up until the end, obeyed Hitler's order to “resist to the last man and last round.”

Now I had my illusions of what the enemy looked like. During my military training I'd watch training films of the German Army

in action. We saw war films never released to the public of what the Japs and Germans were doing to the Allied POW's.

I'd created a bitter hatred for these people. I was supposed to. That's what it was all about. And anyone wearing the German uniform was not of the human race. I actually hated them. Hated them even before I saw them. I regarded a German something less than human. Like some creature from outer space.

We had heard rumors that the Germans were gathering up all the Jews, Gypsies, and all other minorities in Germany, and disposing of them by means of mass murder. They called it ethnic cleansing. We called it murder. So I was naturally curious as to what these people looked like.

But they were nothing at all like I expected. What I saw were young men, boys if you will, staring at me as I walked through the train coaches. They were all dressed in Khaki uniforms, wearing short sleeve shirts and knee high pants of the typical desert soldier. I was amazed to learn how many could speak English.

"Where were you captured?" I asked one of the men sitting up front. The one I spoke to just stared at me then turned to his companion and mumbled something in his ear.

"My friend does not speak English." he said.

"I see you do."

He held up a thumb and forefinger spread about an inch apart saying, "Just a little, we were captured in Tunis," he said pointing to both himself and the kraut next to him, "both of us were." I learned later that 250,000 men fell into Allied hands there. Ninety percent of these captives were sent to the states.

"Where'd you learn to speak such good English."

"At school in Munich."

"That where your from?"

"Nien." He told me the town where he lived but I cant remember its name. His friend was looking at me rather oddly and I asked the English speaking one what he was staring at.

"Karl want's to know if you have an American cigarette. Everything was taken from us."

"By who?"

"The Allies."

"Don't give me that crap."

He frowned. "What's this crap. I don't understand, crap."

"Forget it," I said and brought out a pack of Lucky Strikes. He was right of course. The average Allied soldier viewed the prisoner of war as a source of war souvenirs; medals, decorations, daggers, and pistols. These type of souvenirs were proof of their close contact with the enemy, sought after trophies for the folks back home. And highly regarded as prized items for sale to new

recruits. Even the wounded were fair game.

They smoked a moment in silence. Then the English speaking one asked where I was from. I told him then remembered something I'd read back at Custer. Not to get to friendly with the prisoners. They had a way of distracting your attention elswhere. If one did jump off the train where would he go. How long would he be free before he was picked up by the authorities.

"Where in America do you come from."

"California."

"Ah--Cal-if-ornia,---the Japanese have established a beachhead, there, is that not so."

I looked at him a moment wanting to laugh out loud, but I only smiled. "No, that is not so. Where did you hear that?"

He looked a little bewildered. "It is so, also we have captured New York City."

I laughed then. I think that German felt insulted but I didn't much care what he thought. Sergeant O'Hara happened by and I asked "Sarge, this kraut says the German's have captured New York. What about that."

"Well, if they did, they done it this morning. I talked to my sister yesterday over the phone, and she said nothing about an invasion." He laughed and walked away.

I left that Kraut to stew in his own confusion. He was so sure that the east and west coast had been invaded that he layed his ignorance on the line. German propaganda had fed their troops lies about the war rather than tell them the truth. And the truth was, the war was over for them. And that indeed there had been no invasion. And no liberation for them until the war ended. No going home until it was all over.

By now the POWs began to lose their initial fear of mistreatment at the hands of their captors and both sides began to relax. Frankly, no one knew where it all would end. By the late spring of 1944, the Army found itself handling more German and Italian POWs than there had been American soldiers in the entire pre-war US Army. We deposited our POWs at Trinadad without any problem and returned to Fort Custer.

July 4, 1943. Camp Livingston Lousianna.

All of our training would be put to the test here. For this was a newly constructed prisoner of war camp and it would be our task to oversee it. With the Trinidad experiance behind us we were ready to take charge. Captain Richardson stayed behind at Custer for his retirement so we were left without a CO for the time. First Lieutenant Cromer took over the duties as CO until the new

one arrived.

It was a hell of a hot day as was any day in the south during the summer. It was Independence Day but there would be no celebration. No hoop-de-do, no nothing. Not even a pass into town. The nearest town was Alexandria and it was nothing more than a soldiers town. And the women their had a thing about soldiers. They didn't particularly like them. I guess it was because there was so many of us.

The 101st Airborne, the 11th Armored and countless others invaded their town nightly. And seeing nothing but khaki's on their streets made the citizenry well aware of what their town had become. And I guess they weren't to happy about a camp that housed German POWs right on their door steps either.

There were 25,00 POWs in the Livingston compound all from North Africa. After we were settled in we were taken for a tour of the camp and explained as to our duties. They primarely consisted of standing guard in the gun towers or walking fence patrol. We were issued new weapons... 12 gauge Stevens shotguns, full choke with double ‘0’ buck loads to be used while guarding POWs in field chores outside the compound. Winchester Carbine .30 MI, sometimes refered to as the light rifle, was used on fence patrol or in the gun towers. My weapon was an M3 caliber .45 Submachine gun which relpaced the obsolete M1 Thompson. This weapon was also used while on fence patrol or in the gun towers. Meanwhile we went about our duties as soldiers. Close order drill, twenty five mile hikes, the whole bit. Our company consisted of 129 enlisted men and three officers. Each squad was designated its own barracks. My squad had a new set of noncoms. Sergeant John Verchinskie, Corpral Clarence Barrow, and Corpral Bill Crawford.

The heat at Livingston was something to write home about. It was so hot that I'd get up in the middle of the night and go take a shower. Archie Snider, he was the units comic, walked around the company area wearing an overcoat in 100 degree weather protesting the heat. Someone said he was bucking for a section eight. I don't know what he was bucking for if anything, all I knew he was an apple knocker from Washington State.

After a couple of weeks of camp life we began to settle down some. We coped with the heat, mosquitoes, and the snakes. And when we weren't scrubbing barracks floors we were out doing field exercises, stripping down our weapons, cleaning up our gear or standing full field inspection for some high ranking top brass.

My conception of a soldier had completely dwindled away by this time. The government had succeeded in turning my life around. Destroying my boyhood fantasies. I no longer looked at life through those rose colored glasses. I had become one of them. An

implement of war. I was growing up at last. Some of the older guys in my squad had been threatening to take me into town and get me bred at the local whorehouse. But I'd seen to many training films on VD and was not about to go visiting any clap doctor.

September 2, 1943 our new Company Comander arrived. His name was Captain Chester J. Stiebolt. A veteran of the North African campaign. He was a big man with a red face. He didn't seem to be a gung-ho type of officer and I liked him right off. After all the introductions were over the guard sheet was posted. I drew tower No. 7.

It was a warm evening. Some of the POWs strolled about the camp. It seemed that the entire German command were behind those wire walls. They were a cocky bunch,all spit and polish, the cream of the German Army. Hitler's so called Master Race. What they were thinking was known only to them. The war maybe, their wives or sweethearts or maybe escape. Escape was the duty of all prisoners of war and we knew this. But where would they go. Every large camp contained a so-called caution line which ran along-side the inner stockade fence. The prisoner who crossed that caution line in an attempt to flee was liable to be shot at.

With the influx of so many enemy prisoners of war already in the United States the War Department was very disturbed. And for good reason for there were 511 POW camps within our borders and all were occuptied by some of the most hardened German captives of the war.

How to handle this problem was left up to us. The POW guards and the camp commanders. There was among all of us a reasonable fear of mass escapes. After all we were outnumbered and they had nothing to fear. As a result, Washington intended to leave little chance in the area of POW security. Elaborate precautions were taken in the location and construction of the camps.

Camp commanders were encouraged to find the most efficient balance of security measures from such options as additional floodlights, patroling dogs, the censoring of prisoner mail, sporadic bed checks, prison informants, shakedown inspections, and a firm grip on military discipline.

And being a soldier myself I understood that if I were captured my first duty was plan for escape from the very first day of incarceration. And no doubt that was surly on their minds. The Geneva Convention of 1929 simply stated that it was the duty of all captured soldiers to escape. Afterall, unlike a civilian criminal who was under a legal and moral obligation to serve out his sentence, the captured enemy soldier is not a criminal and should not be treated as such.

As I stood guard in tower No 7 overlooking that prison com-

pound I felt a great surge of power building within me. I was the master of my own thoughts. And for the next four hours I'd be in charge. They were under my scrutiny. It was up to me to keep them in line. Me and the .50 caliber machinegun in the tower with me.

They walked around in pairs, their arms behind their backs hands clasped together their heads cocked in a listening mode. The war was over for them. Looking down at them gave me a chill to. For here were men of another race. Men of another time and place. There was no telling how many allied soldiers they might have killed in the war before their arrival here. Maybe even some of my friends.

They were tank Commanders, gunners and foot soldiers. I'd learned that some of them were from the German 15th, 10th and 21st Panzer division, their commander, General Von Arnim was taken by the British. Within six months we had three thousand German POW's in that camp. Now, that's a lot of kraut. During those six months the routine of army life had become second nature to me. I'd fell into step and began to feel more like a soldier. All the while I stood my post staring down into that mass of human waste, the war raged on on both continents.

I began to wonder if this was as close to the war as I would ever get. Playing wet-nurse over someones elses spoils. It was them krauts down there in the compound that brought on these unsettling thoughts.

*

PART SIX

By mid September there was a hint of fall in the air and this ment it was harvest time. The POWs would work for various farmers in the comunity. They were payed the maximun rate of 80 cents a day in addition to the 10 cents which every prisoner got for the purchase of toothpaste, shoe polish, razor blades and tobacco at their post exchange. There was even a savings program set up for the thrifty, through which they could receive currency upon their repatriation back to Germany after the war.

When groups of POWs left their compound in the morning to work at local farms, they were generally accompanied by a single camp guard. While the number of military personnel that guarded the prisoners varied according to the size of the work detail and the chore involved. The average work party was composed of one guard for every ten prisoners.

Most of the German prisoners had never seen a stalk of cotton or knew what a cotton bowl was. As for that matter neither did I. They were instructed by the farmer as to how to pick cotton through a German interpreter and before the day was over there were a lot of sore fingers. Some bleeding around the nails.

On occasion when they knew that their detail was to be picking cotton, they would protest or go on a sit-down strike. When this happened, the prisoner or prisoners were put on a "NO WORK, NO EAT" order, or seven days confinement on bread and water.

A typical day at a POW camp almost resembled that of an American army camp. Reveille at 5:30, bunks were made, and the prisoners were ready for breakfast consisting of Corn Flakes, Bread with Marmalade or Jam, Coffee with Milk and Sugar. By 6:30, the POWs had finished and were marched back to their barracks to shave and shower, clean the barracks and police the area. At 7:30

they boarded their trucks and were taken to nearby farms. At noon the POWs generally ate their lunches out on the field.

They were back to work at 1:00. By 4:30 in the afternoon, the farmer began to gather his tools, and the prisoners were loaded back into their trucks for the trip back to camp. Following another shower and a change of clothes, usually into their German uniforms, they ate supper between 6:00 and 7:00, after which the remainder of the evening was theirs. With this kind of treatment its no wonder we had no escapes during our stay at Livingston.

One afternoon at one of the local farms I had a detail of POWs pulling corn. Now it was easy to see that some of them had had experience in corn pulling. But what they did not have experiance in was that rattlesnake coiled up in one of the rows.

Two of them krauts were trying to catch that snake when I came up to see what all the ruckes was about. Now I was a little skiddish about that rattler as it drew back its head, its fangs licking at the air, those rattles sending out their message of warning, and I unleashed my twelve gage Stevens and commenced to blow that viper into the here after.

I thought nothing of the repercussions that might occur as the explosion bounced over that Louisiana countryside. I was only interested in getting clear of that snake. Now the krauts had no fear of that snake. For that matter, I learned later that none of them had ever seen a snake before. And when I told the interpeter of the consequences should those fools had caught it, he just laughed.

"You damn fool, they could have died from that snake bite." I said.

"From a creature that small?"

"That's right." I saw that he was still smiling and I added, "Ah---go to hell."

It wasn't long, here came the Army. Dust billowed up over everything as that jeep skidded to a halt and out popped Lieutenant Cromer with his service Colt in his hand. I saw at once I had some explaining to do. For Cromer was a hot-shot shave-tail looking for points all over the place. I guess he saw an opportunity in cashing in on an escape.

"What's happened here. Someone try to escape?"

"No sir."

"What then!"

"It was a snake, sir."

"What the hell do you mean a snake."

I stepped over to the headless rattler and held it up. "This snake sir."

He shoved his service Colt back into its holster. He glared

at me a moment, a long moment. I don't think the Lieutenant particularly liked me, and when I brought up my arm for the salute, he just waved a snap past his peeked cap in a go to hell attitude and ordered the driver to move out.

I watched him leave in a swirl of Louisiana dust, then turned back to my detail and the work at hand. For the remainder of that day those krauts were more aware of where they stepped. I guess that interpeter finally got it into his head that there was a certain amount of danger in that snake and passed the information on to his comrads. Later that evening in my barracks the incident was brought up.

"Why the hell didn't you let them bastards catch that snake, been two less to worry about."

"I couldn't do that Archie."

"Hell, I could."

Chris Radmilovich spoke up from where he was sitting. "I don't know if I could either, Archie, it just don't seem right."

"What's right, hell, if they get the chance they'll slit your throat and think nothing of it. I say let the snake have'm." Archie laughed, saying over his shoulder, "I'm head'n for the showers."

"He didn't mean that." Chris said.

"Ah, who know's what Archie means." Al chimed in from where he was polishing his shoes. "I'm go'n into town, want to dome along?"

"I've got another detail in the morning." I said.

"Come on, lets all go." Chris said.

"You two go."

"Ok, if thats how you want it, me, I need a piece of tail. I hear there's a hot little waitress working at the Triangle." Chris said, "for three bucks she'll do anything, for a ten spot she'll spend the night."

"You better leave them whores alone," Corprel Crawford told him, "or you'll wind up at the clap doctors."

"I know that, I've got protection." he held up a pack of rubbers.

"That's what Travis from B squad thought too. He said no whore is worth a needle up the shaft." I said.

"It's been over a month since I've had a piece, I'll take my chances. You know, not all the damned women are clapped up, theres still some around that are clean." He informed me.

Well I saw right off he was serious. who was I to tell another man his business, After all, didn't I take chances with Dorothy in the back seat of my dads 37 chevy. I knew nothing about VD then, but then there were no training films at the local movie

house either.

We were being schooled and drilled to the duties expected of us. The days of dry-runs mounted into weeks, months and all the while a danger began to build within us. A hidden danger unknowing to us all----boredom. We began to resent our role as soldiers. Often torn by the conflicting emotions that we were no nore than custodians, far from the guts and glory of the war, playing nursemaid and keepers of the enemy behind the wire. And as we approached our task with enthuiasm and efficiency we find ourselves restricted by a vague, chivalrous, outdated code of regulations. The Geneva Comvention.

January 24, 1944

It was mid January and I'd turned twenty. We were in the middle of one of the coldest winters that this section of Louisiana had experienced in over forty years.

We had small electric heaters in the towers and every once in a while I'd have to wipe the windows clean of the steam vapors that collected on the glass in order to see the compound area clearly.

The ground below me was frozen solid. At night I could hear the tree limbs snapping due to the excessive weight of the ice that accumulated on their branches. Power lines were down. And at times all communications were cut off.

Now and then I would open the door of my tower to let in the cold air to ward off drowsiness. There were times when I had trouble getting the door open. Moisture accumulated around the door jamb and freeze forcing me to kick at it until it broke loose. During the daylight hours we'd take out the work details to cut and gather wood and pine pitch for their fires. Those krauts were good workers and jumped at the chance to work the details outside the compound area.

Broken limbs were cleared and cut up into firewood. Coal was carried into the compound by the truck load, they were kept warm, as snug as bugs in a rug; they had it made and we begrudged it.

Camp Livingston, LA, 1943. Standing left, Cpl. William Smith. Center, Sgt. John Verchinski, and Cpl. Clarence Barrow.

Mail Call

Pfc. Brended Stewart MacIntyre

Left, Pfc. Archie Snider. Right, Tony V. Naranjo. Tony later died from a self inflicted gun shot wound while on duty at the Post Laundry.

Pfc. Chris Radmilovich, myself, three form another barracks & Thomas Al Crossman.

Pfc. Chris Radmilovich catching up his letter writing home.

Fst. Sgt. Joseph "Joe" Zazik

Pvt. Thomas "Al" Crossman and Pfc. Chris Radmilovich.

Part Seven

Winter finaly gave way to spring. Dogwoods were in full bloom and the redbuds and honeysuckles were in all their wonderful profusion. A letter came from home saying that Lois McCutchen had married a marine. Another part of my life was gone. I had secretly hoped that when the war was over we would get back together again. By then maybe, we would have grown up and all of our differences in the past would be forgotten. I was daydreaming again and with this new knowledge of my childhood sweethearts marriage, I felt a sudden loss creep up inside me.

The POW compound remained its awesome, bleak, ugly existence. The inhabitants there enjoying life with a day by day attitude. For the war was over for them. The war with its killing and gruesome atrocities upon mankind.

With eight months now behind me I found myself going into a period of deep depression. Boredom of the camp, boredom of the prisoners and the daily routine of watching over them. And now with this new information that Lois McCutchen had married, my depression grew deeper.

I took everything for granted. The camp, the lousy chow, the noncoms with their little details to keep us fit and alert. The privates bucking for PFC. The PFC bucking for Corpral and so on up the ladder. It seemed like such a useless existance, such a useless, boring, frustrating existance. I was not the only who felt this. For it was evident throughout the entire company. Our moral had reached an all time low. It was as if life had nothing to offer. Life with its wonderful sweetness. Its exhilarating mysteries, its awesome beauty, had nothing more to offer.

One evening we were all sitting around the barracke cleaning up our gear. Chris was writing a letter home. Al was forever polishing his boots. Sergeant Verchinski was getting all slicked up for a date at the post theater. He was all gung-ho, Army issue, and he strutted about like a peacock in heat. Now the Sergeant had a physical handicap, but it wasn't enough to keep him out of the service. He had a club-foot. when he walked his left foot turned in at the ankle and he had to wear special made boots.

On this night, Archie had gone into town alone. He and the Sergeant had had a difference of opinion that evening over something concerning Archie's dress. Archie always wore his cap tilted cocky like and Verchinski was for ever calling on him to square it on his head.

When Archie left for town, he said he'd get even with Verchinski. We all thought it would blow over because we knew that Archie was a hot head and like the rest of us, he suffered from boredom too. Well shortly after lights-out, in comes Archie stumbling around in the dark. He didn't go into town after all. But all the same, he was drunk.

"Where's that bastard Verchinski?" he demanded.

"Quiet down Archie." Someone said.

"I'm go'n to get even with him."

"Yea, yea, sure---go to sleep."

I raised up and saw Archie sitting on the sergeants bunk. Even in the dark I could see him going through Verchinski's things. "Hey, Arch, go to bed, wouldn't do for the sarge to catch you on his bunk, you know how he is about that."

"Damn the bastard."

Suddenly he gets up and begans to undress. His bunk is at the foot of Verchinski's at one end of the barrack and I figure he is going to turn in. Then he say's, "I've got to shit."

Someone mumbles, "Then shit, but go to sleep."

He pulls off his shoes, first one, then the other, both hitting the floor with a laud thud. Then he says, " I know, I'll shit in the sergeants boot."

About midnight I hear the sargent come in. I couldn't sleep thinking about what will happen when the Sergeant discovers shit in his special made boots. He didn't, not right then. But that next morning was a different story. Everyone in the barracks knew that the Sergeant would shove his foot in that shit.

Well to quote an old saying, the shit hit the fan that morning, or rather the boot. He bellowed like a stuck hog pacing up and down the barracks holding that damn boot in his hand demanding the man responsible. Well, we kept our lips buttoned and for our silence we were confined to the company area. No passes into

town and double duty at the compound. This was the price for Archies boredom.

Company Clerk corpral Young said, Verchinski came into the Orderly Room raving mad and put that shitty boot on the First Sergeants desk, demanding that the man responsibe be punished. Unable to produce the man in question, Sergeant ZaZik suggested that Verchinski go dump the boot in the incinerater and order a new pair.

The whole affair began because Archie was bored. He had threatened several times to go AWOL. I think we all did at one time or another, including myself. In due time the awareness of our frustration, which we all seemed to possess, reached the attention of the CO.

Once Captain Stiebolt learned of the low moral in his command things began to change. There was also a noticable change in the attitude of the noncoms. They listened to our gripes, suggested that we go see the Chaplain--if something was troubling us. I think that it was the everyday routine of going out into that mass of human indignity that paraded behind that safe wall of security, knowing for them, it was all over. And that the Americans would house them, give them medical attention, dental attention, and in addition, pay them for their labors. Hell, they weren't in a prison camp. It was more like a summer resort. All they lacked, was the comforts of a woman.

During the early days as camp guards a cancer began to eat away within us. We were new to the ways of our duties. They were old in the ways of war. And sometimes during the day, especially on Sunday, they would taunt us from a safe distance. Shout at us in English calling us four letter words. Some would gold-brick on detail knowing it would go unpunished. But it was our nerves they were working on. Our nerves and our anger.

It was our nerves that brought about this dangerous attitude among us. Our nerves and our fears of boredom that left us irritable, edgy, and weary from monotony. Over a period of time this boredom transformed into a sea of frustration. A frustration that would eventually cause some of us to go off the deep end.

And then it happened. The shooting. The accident, a destruction of human life. All this boredom surfaced so suddenly, so tragicly, that the shock of it was unbelievable. Tony Naranjo, a quiet, likable individual who came to us on our first week at Custer some how rested his head on the muzzle of his Stevens shotgun and blew away his head.

Tony was on duty at the post laundry with a small group of POWs when it happened. He gave no indication at any time that something was troubling him. No problems at home. Nothing. But

something was definitely troubling him. Something unforseen. Something deep down. Something called boredom.

Not much of an epitaph for that quiet nineteen year old Pima Indian, his young wife and the son he had never seen. For he went home in a bronze casket with full military escourt and honors. His boredom would trouble him no more.

That tragic incident sparked a full investigation. We were all interrogated. Our minds probed and quizzed for a hidden clue that might ignite another such tragedy. I was having problems to. For me it was my boyhood fantasies. Each and every one of us was grilled in private. We let loose our gripes. Our frustrations, our needs. For none of us were ever furloughed the whole time we were in the Army.

We were simply bored. We wanted to go home. For we wanted to get away from all the duties of playing host to the enemy. We wanted to see our mothers, our sweet-hearts. We wanted to be with our wives and our children. In short, we just wanted to get away. A tramatic change followed the investigation. A baseball team was organized. The Mess Hall turned out better chow. And furloughs were granted every man in the unit. It was a great relief knowing that somewhere someone cared enough to probe into the core of the matter and find a solution to a very dangerous situation.

Fatigue was one of the greatest enemies of the GI during World War II. During actual combat fatigue is his greatest threat. The long hours on the line. The constant threat of death, the fears, the anxiety, but above all not boredom. Most boredom occured to members of the rear echelon. Their daily routine carried out from day to day.

There is no excitement. There is no fear of death, no pain of battle, only the pain of boredom. With some it was a battle waged within. A raging conflict that invariably explodes as it did with Tony.

I furloughed home but saw none of my old friends. For ten days I was away from that ordeal of confinement at Livingston. One wonders who are the real prisoners their. I actually found myself regretting having to go back. All that luster of my boyhood fantasies had tarnished. The glamour was fading. All this substituted by fears of returning boredom.

I sat alone in that day coach staring out the grimy window at my parents standing on the station platform. Arms uplifted with goodbye gestures, the train pulled out of that noisy Oakland Depot leaving behind a life that would never be the same again.

PART EIGHT

The Allied armies swept across Italy with such devastating speed that it demorialzed the Germans. They were on the run. The great Nazi war machine began to crumble. Rome was the prime target. Rome was the key that when turned would set the stage for the great invasion that was yet to come. And as the 5th Army swept deeper into Italy, that vision began to materialize as plans were being drawn up for the invasion of Europe.

April 18, 1944.

Our orders came through and we left Camp Livingston. All the frustrations were gone. New visions emerged, sweeping away our boredom. Something much greater, magnanimously eminent began to take shape. Rumors spread over the entire unit that we were shipping out. Going overseas. But to which theater?

The Japs were struggling to hold Bougainville Island but on any South Pacific beach, very few prisoners were taken. They would rather take their own lives than to submit to the disgrace of capture. But with the closing of the war in Italy hundreds of POWs were taken daily and it was safe to assume that Europe was our objective.

April 20, 1944.

We arrived at Camp Butner, North Carolina and discovered that we were to play nursemaid to Italian POWs. Now this was a real kick in the butt. Those Italians were nothing more than puppets. Their strings pulled by Hitler.

April 24, 1944

Sergeant O'Hara and Sergeant Stremer with twenty two privates, myself included, escorted 576 Italian POWs to Camp Sutton, North Carolina. We made the trip by rail and all the way they sang. They were nothing like the tough fighting men of Livingston. Many I learned later, had thrown down their guns when they were sent to the fighting. They would be better off in the hands of the Allies, than with the Germans.

May 4, 1944.

Rome fell to the Allies. Somehow this news reached the POWs and they celebrated throughout the night. From then on, these POWs had the run of the camp. They weren't prisoners at all. They were free to walk where they liked. Free to trade at the Post PX and some of them were granted passes into the near by town of Raleigh. So what the hell was the use of us standing guard at the compound if they were not to be treated as prisoners of war any longer. Some of those I talked to were planing to stay with relatives in the states. Visitors were granted by families related to them. It was becoming a very confusing war. Who were the enemy?

One prisoner told me that he had waited until dark then worked his way towards Allied lines. He sat on a roadside stump all day waiting for an Allied patrol to find him and take him prisoner. Another prisoner said he changed into civilian clothes and surrendered as a refugee. Another said he was captured while in the stockade awaiting execution for desertion. That Dago had nothing but praise for his American Liberators.

June 6 1944.

Allied armies landed on the beaches of Normandy. The long awaited invasion was on. No matter which way Hitler looked he saw trouble. From the west were General Eisenhower's armies which had just established a beachhead. From the south were Clarks' Americans driving north from Rome. From the east, Red Russian Armies were poised to attack through Poland, Romania or Hungary. The race was on. The goal was Hitlers Berlin.

June 8,1944 Allied troops took first French town of Bayeux cutting off the highway to Caen, 18 miles east-southeast. It lies four miles inland, almost at the center of the Normandy front. The women of France threw open their arms and legs to their allied liberators expressing their joy of the fleeing Germans.

All the while history was being made we remained safely

tucked away at Butner. June 10, 1944 The entire unit moved by rail to Camp Kilmer N.J. (Staging Area) Company arrived Camp Kilmer, New Jersey June 11 and made preparations for overseas duty. We hung around the staging area for three days cleaning up our gear and writing letters home. It was real hard for some of the guys for many lived in New Jersey and could not use the telephone. All leaves were cancelled.

June 15 1944.

We arrived at port of embarcation, New York, N.Y. By 4:30 on the evening of the 16th, we sailed out of the New York harbor, slipped quietly past the Statue of Liberty, her unlighted torch silhouetted against a back drop of darkness, and followed in the wake of hundreds before us.

Her torch when lit symbolizing a beacon of freedom, touched each and every one of us. It inflated our pride, bolstered our courage. It gave us a new lease on the future. For it was for that lady so many men had already died.

Oddly enough, on the 28th day of October, 1886, that goddess of liberty was dedicated. The statue was a gift from the people of France to the people of the United States, commemorating the alliance of the two nations during the Revolutionary War. And now, once again, that symbol of freedom is behind every man who touches her shores for the sake of liberty. THE SWORD IS FORGED.

Looking out over the shadowy skyline of New York harbor, thoughts were of home. I wondered, I guess, as everyone did in those days of uncertainty, if I would ever see my homeland again. I left behind a small family. My mother, father and one sister. All that was left of a very small family tree. And I being the only male left to add growth to a withering family vine, was going off into unknown dangers.

We stood shoulder to shoulder, elbow to elbow togeather in one huge mass. Tuggs tooted in the night. I could hear tiny bells clanging from somewhere in the deep portals beyond. The ripling of water as we knifed through the murky darkness. My heart pounded as did a thousand fold. My long awaited adventure began.

Up on deck the next morning I found that we were joined sometime in the night by several ships. The making up of the convoy had began. No land was in sight. Only the sea with its deep mysteries and salty spray upon my lips.

Even there on the open sea we had our drills. Air raid drills instructing us of what to do if attacked by air or by submarine. Every day that horn blasted out over the public address system and we reacted immeadiately preparing ourselves for the worst if and

when it came.

During the day we lounged on deck feeling the salty spray against our sticky skin listening to the music that came over the intercom. I watched the sea as the white caps rolled away and the green waters flipped and turned to gusty winds. I recalled when I was a young boy back in Oakland when I would go fishing down at the pier. I remembered seeing Japanese ships being loaded with all kinds of scrap metal. I fished along the piers unaware that in the days yet to come that that same scrap metal would come so savagely back as an impliment of war.

Our ship was the General William Mitchel only six months in service. This would be her third voyage and it was equipped with all the comforts of a sea going tanker. These ships were manufactured not for comfort but more for space and limited luxuries. We did have showers with hot and cold running salty water. Our bunks were tiers, one over the other. They were hard but comfortable after a fashion.

The nights were spent shooting craps or playing cards. Someone had a wind-up victrola and we played Glenn Miller songs. I don't remember who it belonged to, someone from another outfit other than ours. Know one as I recall brought a phonograph on board with them let alone fragile records unless it was someone from QM.

Each and every day I'd go up on deck to watch the sea and count the other ships in our convoy. I'd lose count somewhere between fifty five and sixty five with still several tiny dots on the skyline and beyond I supposed. Once I saw a whale. And on several occasions I saw dolphins knifing through the whitecaps. Flying fish skirting about disappearing in the water. All this seemed so serene and peaceful when actually below its watery surface lurked enemy subs searching for a kill.

On the morning of the 24th, nine days out, that blast came from the intercom only this time it was no drill. Everyone scampered down into the hole like rats. That intercom wailing, shrieking, hasty boots clattered down iron ladder rungs. Someone said over the loudspeeker that this was no drill and our hearts pounded frantically and the blood raced through our veins sending cold chills up our backs.

That horn continued to wail. Not another sound could be heard in the tiny compartment. All around me men stood in quiet repose, faces whitened... fearing the worst should it come. I stood with hands clutching the iron rail of my bunk, my fingers already turning white, my face too must have shown the strain of the unknown. It was a hectic moment. One of great fear. A fear of not knowing. The fear of being trapped. This was no place for someone suffer-

ing claustrophobia, this was no place for any man. We were sitting ducks. We were at the mercy of the man on the bridge. We were at the mercy of god. I think we all said a silent prayer.

The horn continued to wail and the silence deepened. Then all of a sudden there came an explosion from under the sea. The lights dimmed and the ship shuttered from stem to stern. Then the lights came on again brightly, someone muttered, "Depth-charge," then another charge exploded and the lights dimmed again. The ship rocked this time rattling our gear and my heart jumped into my throat.

I scanned the interior of the ship for the first time and wondered how thick the hull was between us and the sea. I noticed the metal superstructure and the round head rivets counting them as one does marking off the time in minutes, in seconds. The sea shuttered again and the ship shook and moaned and the lights almost went out that time.

We were helpless. Confined in a steel coffin and at the mercy of poor aim from that sub. There was nothing to worry about as long as those depth-charges continued to explode. They would keep the predator underneath unable to unleash his torpedoes. But I don't think that thought crossed my mind at that moment. All I could think about was that torpedo coming through the side of the ship sending us all to a watery grave below.

Then as suddenly as it began, the wailing stopped. The underneath explosions ceased, and the ship seemed to settle back to normal again. It was some time before the talking resumed. Someone laughed nervously and you could hear the sudden exhailing of breath held for long moments. Sometime during that afterneen we were informed that indeed there was a submarine in our convoy. And that indeed the depth charges had ended that threat sending it to the bottom.

For the remainder of that trip I payed very close attention to the air raid drills wishing all the while that we would hurry up and get to England before another incident occured. On the morning of the 12th day we saw the coast of Ireland. It was a long stretch of land shrouded by fog and mist, but no matter, it was the first piece of real estate I'd seen since we left the States and it was a beautiful sight.

I have heard many times that when one faces death or the nearness of it, his life begans to pass before his eyes. I knew then that this was true. And as I watched the thin gray columns of smoke coil from out of the rubble of Liverpool, I realize too that my thoughts had leaped back in time to the beginning of what had ultimately brought me to this place and time in my life.

I had relived my life from boyhood to manhood in one fleet-

ing moment. I have unearthed fond memories and mused over some I would rather forget. All this within a space of seconds. All this and more to come. For as I stood there looking out into the twilight of that morning, I understood how I missed all my friends. My mom,my dad and my dear sister. For I was coming of age in the cradle of war.

England

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PART NINE

I walked down the ramp along with one hundred and thirty five officers and men touching foreign soil for the first time in my life. Setting foot on something solid for a change was a great feeling. My sea legs and stomach somehow could never quite adjust to the movement of the sea. And I must confess I'd have made a poor sailor.

The experience of that submarine attack and the events of last nights bombing of Liverpool had somehow sharpened a keen edge towards my childhood fantasies of what war was all about. I could smell the odors of war coming from the smoke laddened air. In just a matter of seconds my attitude towards the glamour of war, its thrill and romance, were gone.

The day as I recall, was a warm one. On the docks, stevedores were busy unloading another ship. It occured to me that in spite of last nights bombing, life on the docks went on as usual. There was a job to do. There was a war to win. And ask any Britisher and he would attest to this without further ado.

Some of the stevedores paused long enough to stare at us womdering, I guess, just how green we were or how many of us would ever see our home land again. For this was a time of uncertainty, bleak futures and the beginning of a new generation.

We were hurried along to awaiting trucks. Our duffle bags would be sent ahead. Our weapons and field gear we would carry with us. They wasted no time in getting us out of there and before we realized it we were at the Lime Street Station awaiting to board a train.

The evidence of war was everywhere. Liverpool and the train station had taken a teriffic pounding. I saw long columns of smoke creaping out from under piles of stone and rubble that had once

been some ancient building. People stooped in the awesome task of searching the brick and stone piles for personal effects. Some of the buildings stood in dangerous positions, half split, half gone, in some cases nothing but heaps of smoke and ashes.

At the Lime Street station we encountered the same scene. Workmen were busy replacing cross ties and rails. Removing the ugly, twisted rails that were lifted from a teriffic impact and transformed into weird patterns of war art. Ugly craters, some deep, others shallow, were filled in, debris cleared, some simulance of order was restored.

The roof overhead was almost gone. Glassless windows in every section of the station looked blankly out over the methodical restoration as the workmen neared completion of an all night task. Soon the station would be in working condition again, the trains would move, and we would depart for our first assignment of the war.

From my teachings in school, my impressions of the English was of Knights in shining armor, of ladies in waiting, of great castles and combat on horse back. But as I stood there in that mass of tangled steel and glassless windows, my early visions of the English disappeared. For five years they had stood their ground and fought off the hordes of enemy bombers, the terrifying screaming of falling bombs, the destruction of their lives and property, the fears and tears of death, and through all this, they have survived.

They fought back. Day after day, night after night, Hermann Gorings' Luftwaffe pounded that tiny Island trying to shatter their spirits. Bring them to their knees, only to receive in return the loud roar of their traditional lion.

My thoughts returned to the hustle and bustle around me. Of a shrill whistle, escaping steam, and the clanging of a train bell. The train pulled into the station, slowly, cautiously, creeping to a grinding halt. The shrill whistle echoed again and slide doors were pulled open.

We marched in a column of threes, eager, excited, and faced the long line of wooden coaches. Sergeant Verchinski, he strutted around like a cock in a henhouse barking orders, snapping salutes here and younder and making gestures with pointed fingers.

We entered the small compartments assigned us, six men in each, and we waited. After a while the high pitched train whistle shattered our ears again and the train began to move. Chris Radmilovich, Al Grossmen, Stue McIntyre, Noland Wyatt and myself, all Californians, somehow managed to come together in that tiny compartment. Corporal Barrow who was in charge, hailed from Illinois.

We moved out of that station creaping along slowly, the workmen standing along side the tracks, waved at us as we passed. That whistle shrilled again and we began to pick up a little more speed until we were out into the country side.

Beautiful green farm land appeared upon the landscape. Ancient hedges of hazel and hawthorn and stone made fences for fields and pastures. Some cottages were seen. Sheep and cattle grazed the land. No evidence of war here. No destruction, no blemishes upon the land, only a place of beauty, peace without the ugliness of war.

We talked alot, mostly about home. At a time like this all of us missed our loved ones. Chris said something about his girl and wondered if she would wait for him. Deep down inside I remembered Dorothy. She said she would wait to, she did, for six weeks, then along came Dear John. Somehow I managed to get over that obstacle in life. Oh, at the time I thought I never would. Someone once said, out of sight, out of mind, and I'm sure that before this life ends, there will be many scars. Many disappointments and many many heartaches.

I listened to the others reminisce and in doing so, my own thoughts turned back a few pages in my young life to when I was a very young boy. Home had been a wonderful place for me; for my sister too. Every year during the summer school vacation I would go to my uncles farm in Hilmer, a small village near Turlock, California.

For three months I enjoyed farm life. Going without shoes, turning from city white to country tan, eating fresh grapes from the endless vinyards, peaches, apples, apricots a good life with fond memories.

My uncle raised watermelons, cantalopes, pumpkins, just about everything one would want on a farm. And so did the neighbors. Like all the farms in the valley they depended upon irrigation to water their crops. Man made concrete ditches that brought the water down to the low lands when water was needed..

Now us kids, we would wait until the water was high and for a dark night. Then came nightfall, we'd slip into the neighbors watermelon patch, select a few of his finest, carry them to the irrigation ditch, which was well up stream, roll them into the water, jump in neck high and float along with them until we reached our destination then carry them out. Well, one night, my uncle was waiting for us. Needless to say, it was painful sitting for a while. My tender years were very dear to me.

We traveled on. Smoke filled the compartment. Chris was still talking about his girl; had her picture out now showing it around. Mentally I wished him well with his girl, for I knew the pain of

rejection.

June 30,1944.

Morning came and it was a terrible one. Rain fell in a steady slanting sheet washing away the dirt from our compartments window. Wyatt was smoking a cigarette looking out the rain blurred window. Al, Chris, Stue, and Corporal Barrow were breaking out the K-rations.

"Better chow down," he said, "we'll be get'n in soon."

We packed our gear then settled back and waited. The rain stopped and the sun came out briefly. Looking out over the countryside through the window, I saw sheep and cattle grazing as I did yesterday. Wild flowers dotted the landscape, unfamilier trees waved majestically at us, a long line of willows, indicating a brook or stream, drooped sadly as we rattled by.

Some small houses appeared. Thatched cottages, some hundreds of years old passed our window. I saw a woman on her knees scrubbing the cobble stone walkway leading to her small house. Gaily colored shrubbery blossomed, a white picket fence stood against the backdrop of the stone and brick building. It was peaceful, a beautiful place showing no scars of war.

As we moved along the buildings became more consistant. I noticed on top of each and every one a lightening rod had been installed suggesting heavy thunderstorm activity in that vacinity. As we continued on the train began to slow down. I could see children waving at us. Women in brightly colored dresses staring at the train as we continued on. We passed under a tressel, began to wind into a rail yard. I saw the web work of track. Engines standing idle, some belching black smoke from their stacks, flashing red and green lights blinked then we came to a halt.

We began to struggle into our field packs, gas mask and cartridge belt. I heard someone call out the name, TIDWORTH, a strange name for a town. The slide doors opened and we formed our ranks on the platform.

First Sergeant Zazik called the company to attention. we made a right face and marched off to a line of parked trucks. Amazing how efficent the Army was. No matter where we would go, at the end of our journey the trucks would be waiting. At this particular time I noticed that everything was turned around. Instead of being on the right side of the street, all the trucks were on the left side just like in those foreign movies back in the States. We loaded up, someone slammed shut the tailgate and soon we were off to who knew where.

PART TEN

One fifteen that afternoon we reached camp. The sun began to filter through the gray black clouds shedding further disappointments in my mind as to what the camp would be like.What I had expected I'm not quite sure of. But I wasn't ready for what we encountered.

The ground was churned and twisted with mud. Deep tire ruts criss crossed the camp area. Run down buildings stood awkwardly about. English soldiers patrolled the gate. Entering the camp we rolled to a stop in front of a weatherbeaten clapboard building. I saw rags stuffed in the broken windows. A door sagged on a broken hinge.

I'd seen better shacks in the deserted mining camps back home. "Was this to be our quarters?" I asked myself. "And where is the compound?" There were no POWs we soon discovered. In fact, this was no prison camp. It turned out to be a stop over until our orders came down from headquarters. The furnishing inside certainly were not by American standards. Our bunks were made out of two-by-fours. Straw mattress and straw pillows were on them. The place smelled like a barn.

Later I went out to tour the grounds. It was quite some time before I learned the real purpose of the camp. Nestled quietly beneath clusters of live oaks stood English Spitfires. Camouflaged netting hid the artillary pieces. The runway was a nearby pasture. Members of the RAF lounged in tiny knots talking, one looked up as I passed and spoke; "Hello Yank.: It was an atmosphere reminiscent of the 1938 Errol Flynn movie, "Dawn Patrol."

For the next two mornings, that devil Zazik had us up at five. Fall out on the double. Police the area, calisthics, one, two, three, four, breakfast, close order drill, guard duty on the

Motor Pool, tramp up and down in the English mud, three days of this, then our orders came through at last.

We climbed aboard the trucks again. Chris was seated next to me. He was nineteen, with big brown eyes, slim baby like face, shaving was a waist of time but the army said shave, so we shaved. He had a funny laugh, more like a giggle than anything else and he was bow legged as hell.

"Think we're going to France?" he asked.

"I don't know, maybe." I said

"Boy I hope so. Wonder what it's like?"

"What."

He shrugged boyishly. "France,--you know."

The trucks moved out in single file. We traveled all that day, stopping once to stretch our legs and break open the K-rations. All through the night we rumbled through darkened towns over cobble stone streets, some only wide enough for the trucks to pass, and through back alleys. Everything was blacked out. The headlights on the trucks were painted black with just a pin point of light allowed to show through. We were under strick blackout conditions. The going was slow and very exhausting. Sleep was useless.

July 2, 1944

Henly, a small English hamlet; On the outskirts of town we pulled to a stop. There were several tents scattered about in the darkness. The flap of one opened and two dark figures came forth.

"All right, off'n on 'em," barked Sergeant Zazik. "Fall in on the double."

We did so very reluctantly and stood at attention as the old man, our CO Captain Stibolt, came forward with the two figures from the tent. One of the dark shapes was a man. The other was a woman. She wore the traditional olive drab coveralls, helmet liner and jump boots, with the trouser legs stuffed in at the tops. We were assigned quarters, eight men to a tent, and the guard sheet was posted.

Al, Wyatt,Chris and my self were among those chosen to stand the first watch. Four hours on, eight hours off. That was how the original set up stood. I didn't mind, I was proud to have been one of those chosen.

My post was to patrol the area in back of the tents. Al, his post was inside a tent designated as the area morgue. Now I had some reservations about Al's assignment. Standing watch over a corpse wasn't my idea of fighting a war. And when it turned out to be a German prisoner who had died that morning during surgery,

it seemed less exciting. But before that night was over, excitement flourished all over the place.

About one in the morning I hear Al shout for the Corporal of the guard. That signal in the middle of the night meant trouble. Voices raised excitedly in the night and I saw a dim light move about inside the tent.

The shadows cast eerie images on the wall of that tent and I was womdering what all the fuss was about.

I saw no one outside the tent, no movement. I could not leave my post, and the suspense was killing me. What had happened to justify Al to shout for the Corpral of the guard in the middle of the night. Had there been an escape. Had one of the injured POWs fled in the night? I glanced at my watch. In ten minutes I'd know the answer. For it was time for my relief.

PFC Bob Reed relieved me on time and when I asked what had happened he began to laugh. "That dead kraut on the table began to stiff'n, Al said he saw him raise up with that sheet over him, then it fell off," he laughed again, "he was scared stiff."

It was true. Al had been sitting in a chair at one end of the tent when that corpse began to stiffen from rigamortis. Al said that he saw it raise slowly up slightly tilting to the left. The sheet slipped and the ghostly white face of that dead German made the hair at the back of his neck stand up. All he could think of was shouting for the Corporal of the guard. It was a night of grim humor, but one that Al Grossman will never forget.

July 5, 1944 Bourton On The Hill.

I spied Chris coming out of his tent rubbing his eyes. He had been on watch from four till eight and he looked tired. It was to be our last duty there, but we didn't know it at that time.

"You look beat." I said.

He nodded, "I am...I'm go'n to the PX, you want to come along? I'm go'n to get Kathy a souvenir."

"Kathy?"

"Unh, hunh, my girl."

The light in his eyes was very charming and so was the smile on his boyish face. I prayed that he would keep it there. Not loose it's glimmer like the one I carried for Dorothy.

"Sure, I'll go along."

When we returned Sergeant Zazik was blowing on his whistle. The rest of the company was gathered around the old man, so we joined them. That tyrant Zazik stood with his hands on his narrow hips giving us the once over. He spat something at us through his yellow teeth but I couldn't hear what was said.

Orders came down from headquarters that we had to move again. This time I thought maybe we would do something worth while. At this time we were stationed at the 304th Station hospital. Part of our company was stationed at the 306th Station Hospital and we were to join them and continue on to our new assignment. We all wanted to get into the fight, with maybe a few exceptions, get to France with the rest of the army.

In fifteen minutes I had my gear packed. I'm sitting on my bunk smoking a cigarette when I hear a strange noise outside. It sounded like an outboard motor. But this was coming from the sky. Then I walked out into the sunlight I saw that a large crowd had gathered. All eyes were turned skyward and my eyes to turned in that direction. It was then I saw it just as it cleared the clouds. The flying bomb. Or more widely known as the buzz bomb. It was a long cigar shaped thing. Its nose packed with a ton of high explosives with short stubby wings and spurts of orange flame coming from the small jet engine.

As I watched transfixed and amazed, the pulse engine stopped. Everyone fell to the ground. I was fascinated by that thing and stood there watching that flying bomb as it continued its silent flight. The rocket seemed to be about five hundred feet up. And when the motor quit there came a hissing sound as I watched it glide a long way going down, down, down----then there was a ter-iffic flash, followed by an explosion that rocked nearby windows and a gigantic mushroom of smoke blossomed in the sky.

People got to their feet then as if nothing had happened, and went on about their business. Those flying bombs were capable of speeds of more than 450 knots. The “Buzz Bomb” was a new weapon of the Germans and it proved devistating since its first launch-ing against London in June of 1944. As I watched the smoke lift-ing higher I wondered how many people were dead because of that new weapon. How much anguish and pain was suffered because of its inovation.

We joined the other half of our outfit at the 306th station hospital a half hour later. The bomb had fell 300 yards from the hospital area. Trees were stripped of their bark. Their branches hanging limp like great spiders. It had been lucky that that bomb had fallen where it did. The ground there was low and the trees had taken most of the shock.

A large piece of the red metal was sticking out of the Ground. There were several shattered fragments every where you looked. Smoke, and the odor of gun-powder were thick in the air. It was amazing that anything was left of that bomb. It wasn’t long before we were told to clear the area by the high brass, so when I reached the top of the hill, I took one last look. Somehow I

felt drawn to that alien from outer space. It was a monster of a thing even in its destructive state. I had no way of knowing then but the buzz bomb would influence my life.

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PART ELEVEN

Morning, July 6, 1944. The night had been a very bitter one. We were all crowded inside that truck trying to get some sleep. It's difficult sleeping with your chin resting on your chest. That was the first time I ever tried sleeping sitting up. It was terrible.

Sometime during the night I saw a buzz bomb streak by. It was an awesome sight, a terrorizing reminder that the war was not very far away. Not a city, town or village was left untouched by the American G.I. They were everywhere. The English had a saying about the Americans--- They were over sexed, over payed, over fed and over here.

On the horizon I could see the morning sun pushing its way up from the east. Gray, crimson clouds streaked the skyline as if painted there by the stroke of an artists brush. Power poles, some cottages and trees and sign posts flashed by. The steady drone of the truck hummed in perfect contrast. The morning appeared to be a nice one.

Chris was asleep next to me. His body bumped against me several times when the truck hit a rough place in the road. It was that movement that awakened me. How can anyone sleep in that fool position. But it could be worse. I could be in a foxhole someplace or I could be on the line where there was no sleep. No rest only fatigue and death.

The truck began slowing down. It tilted slightly to the left indicating a roadside stop and rolled to a halt. A whistle shrieked and I heard old burr-head Zazik shout "piss call."

"I wish he'd swallow that thing." Wyatt grumbled.

"Yea, me to," Al said, dropping to the ground.

"I wonder what planet he came off of," Archie asked, "if I knew, I'd put him in one of those buzz bombs and send him back----C.O.D."

K-rations were broke out and we ate canned spam with a piece of cheese. Someone made some instant coffee. It was a make do breakfast but it was the stretching of our cramped legs I enjoyed the most. I opened up a pack of cigarettes (three to a pack) that came with the rations and pulled out a Chesterfield, both ends leaking dry tobacco, giveing one end a twist, and lit up. As always the conversation was of women.

"I knew a broad once who could really make you feel like a man," Corpral Collins was saying. "She didn't have a brain in her head. She sat on hers with an IQ of two hundred. She was some woman."

"Likely story." Archie piped up.

Collins grinned, "when we get back to New York I'll see to it that you meet her."

"I can hardly wait."

"Oh, a wise guy, unh?"

"Must be a dumb blond." Someone chimed in.

There was a ripple of laughter. Archie lit up a smoke and pushing his helmet liner over his eyes, fell back on the grass and began to puff.

"When we get to where were go'n," Wyatt said, "I'm go'n to find me that big dumb blond, with a figure like that statue of Venus, and a pair of cans this big," he said extending his hands out from his chest.

"Not if I get there first." Someone said.

"Now who's the wise guy."

"You sound like a section eight, Wyatt" Archie implied from under his helmet. "Where you go'n to find a babe with a pair that big----eh?"

"You wait pal,I'll show you."

"Get a load, big lover."

Sergeant Zazik appeared. "Alright, off an on'em let's go, on the double----you to Snider."

Archie grumbled. "If I only know which planet."

JULY 5, 1944
Sundown; Featherstone Park, Haltwhistle.

It was good to get out of that truck. We stretched our legs, trying to release the cramps and stiffness from our abused limbs. I had no idea the army was like that. I always thought the army, traveled on foot. That can be tiring to. At least your bones and

body are active, only your feet hurt.

We smoked, talked, flexing our aching muscles looking around us not quite sure of what was next. We were never told as to what our mission would be from one camp to another. Something to do with security. This seemed understandable, after all there was a war going on and many lives were at stake. Mine included. But how could our whereabouts with POWs influence the enemy. Maybe it was not us in particular, maybe it was those around us. The combatants of whom we came in contact with. The location of every allied unit was essential to enemy intelligence, their size and function. Back in our training days at Fort Custer the importance of security in troop movement was very much a part of our indoor classroom teachings. We saw training films on the subject. Seen what could happen if the information of troop deployment reached enemy intelligence. One such film impressed me so that I was afraid to speak to anybody about our movements. Even during our training period.

The film in question portrayed a newly wed couple saying goodbye at the train station. The soldier was leaving for camp and was destined to go overseas. During their conversation he mentioned the time and place of their departure, all so very innocently, it was a touching sceen, the young bride was shedding tears all over the place and the boy was doing his best to console his young wife.

During all this, there stood a dark figure in the shadows listening to every word. When the soldier boarded the train waving goodbye to his wife, that figure lurking in the darkness walked off. The next scene showed a troop ship far out at sea. In the foreground was a submarine periscope with the ship centered in its crosshairs. A torpedo was fired, the ship exploded and sank with a self impossed photo of the young couple standing on that train station platform, and the legend splashed over the whole episode saying; “SAVE A SHIP, BUTTON YOUR LIP.”

We were assigned quarters. This time we were to live in barracks. We had wooden bunks with feather pillows and mattresses. The place was clean. Nothing like back at Tidworth, and there were footlockers at the foot of every bunk. Everything gave me the impression that we were to be stationed there for quite some time. we’d been living out of a duffle bag since we left the U.S. the footlockers were reminiscent of our boot camp days.

The Featherstone Camp turned out to be our first overseas contact with POWs. It was quite a large camp, not as large as the one at Camp Livingston, but it had something just as similar, enemy soldiers fresh off the field of battle. It would be a day or two before I’d be assigned a guard post and I found myself

eager to see for myself what the Germans captured at Normandy looked like.

With each and every move we made from here on in, would bring us closer to the war and to the men who were fighting it. And in doing so, would come in contact with the men who had nothing on their minds but escape. The nearer we moved to the war,and to the POWs of that war, the greater chance of an escape.

Its one thing to be in a camp thousands of miles away in a strange country among strange people and new customs where escape is not only inadvisable, but usless. For where would they go. How would they get back to their homeland. But on the other hand as the war progressed and the men who are captured are from, or near the locality of their capture, escape is almost always attempted at one time or another.

Therefore, our security becomes tighter, we become more alert, more conscious of the job we have undertook. In one sense we were a combat unit in a noncombatant status, and at that moment enjoying all the comforts of the latter in spite of the fact that we were almost torpedoed on our crossing and escaped being blasted out of the water at Liverpool.

The guard sheet was posted, I had the night off. I was awaken at five in the morning, ate breakfast, close order drill, we always managed that even here, then the rest of the day off. Curious, I walked down to the compound area hoping to get a glimpse of the POWs. Al was standing guard at the gate. He said to stick around because a load of prisoners were due in at any moment. We made idle conversation, now and then I'd get a wiff from the compound latrine, odors coming from the prisoners that in the days yet to come would become a natural part of my surroundings.

They all had a smell about them. It was their clothes. Or their bodies. Even there I could smell them. It was a sour, musty, decaying odor. It lifted like an evil veil over the sweet English air. A kind of mocking revenge that shrouded that tiny island. I could see them watching me from afar.

I left Al and walked around to the other side of the compound. I could see a few prisoners standing about their faces expressionless. Some were young, my own age or younger. Others middle age or older. I wondered then what might be going through their minds. I'm sure some of them were thinking of home. Their families, of wives or sweethearts, even escape. If it were I who was imprisoned I know my thoughts would lean in that direction, and for escape.

There were a few plank buildings in the compound. The Mess Hall, latrines with no roof, and a clinic. They watched me as I

peered at them through the wire. The kind of look I had seen at Livingston. They wanted to spit at me, I'm sure some of them would kill if given the chance. I knew this, and what was important, they knew I did. I always carried that feeling when ever I went on guard. We had to... to survive.

To them I represented freedom. I was free to go anywhere I pleased, a luxury they no longer possessed. And I could see in their faces that captivity would be an unpleasent, bitter, and above all, boring experience.

There was also confidence there. Confidence that in the end Germany would win the war. They would become the captures and I would be the one behind the wire. Even at that moment while Allied troops were streaking across France pushing back the Nazi thrusts, their minds were entuned to one day Germany would conquer the world and enslave us all. The thousand year reich will endure.

I glanced about the compound, nothing spectacular, they all looked alike. Gun towers were at each corner, One or two in between, depending on its size. Heavy wire netting was used for the fence, barb wire at the top. In the tower there was one guard equiped with an M1 Carbine. Every tower had a fifty caliber machine gun loaded with tracers every fifth shell.

Satisfied, I returned to the gate about the same time the trucks loaded with the new arrivals came. The guards were English and they came down out of their cabs all business. Some of them spouting German, others prodded them with gun barrels as the POWs unloaded. I couldn’t help but feel a fascination for those English Tommies, they were a snappy lot going about their duties like programmed robots.

Soon they had the group assembled, and the Sergeant who was in charge, handed over his orders to Sergeant O'Hara who was in charge now that the exchange was completed. They were a rough looking bunch of POWs wearing overcoats with wide lapels, some light blue others black or green. watching them I was amazed at how they snapped around upon command. They stood in long straight lines, chins pulled back, faces blank, eyes looking straight ahead, strictly military, strictly German, no time for nothing less.

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PART TWELVE

July 8, 1944.

I will never forget that date. It was my first eight hour pass as an active member of the armed forces serving overseas. And for the first time I was going to come in contact with people from another world.

I was very excited with the prospect of meeting some of the English people or even maybe a girl. It had been some time since I'd been with a girl and in the days past my body was feeling a neglect to. Now those training films on VD were still very much on my mind in those days. There had been reports that VD had reached epidemic proportion in some areas of Europe and we were constantly reminded of that threat.

A new drug called penicillin had been perfected in curing VD and had proved very effective. Now that the old treatment was done away with servicemen were not so fearful of the disease or of coming in contact with it. If that should happen a shot of penicillin took care of everything. This was how most of us felt at that time. It was as if a door that had been locked for a long time was suddenly flung open and the ugliness that was said to be behind it, was not ugly at all. That the pathway to a clean and happy sexual relationship could be a beautiful experience.

The pain and agony of early VD treatments was more like a punishment for the act than a cure. It made me fear sex. Shy away at the least thought of catching the disease. I alawys carried those fears. Every time I came in contact with a woman, I saw that Goddamned needle coming at me, and I feared it. Respected it with a profound hatred for I knew that that image would appear every

time I crawled in the sack with a woman and the service I was doing her was not a fair one. It certainly did not release my sexual tentions, it only added to them.

Three trucks were used nightly to take us into town. We left at six and as we traveled the four miles I was very keyed up. I'd been on guard for a day and a half seeing nothing but Germans. They were a stinking lot. I don't think any of them had had a bath since their capture. They walked around the compound very proud, stiff and cocky. They were covered by the Articles of War. Protected by the Geniva Convention, but they were at the mercy of the guards, and of boredom, the greatest threat of all.

As we rumbled through the night the conversation was of women. I listened, offering no coments. Conquests would be made before that night was over. Sexual tensions eased, new relationships started. Short termed romances would flourish. Life in those days was to be lived fast. A lifetime consumed in days, hours, minutes, even in a matter of seconds, thats how it was.

The trucks turned down a long hill winding around darkened buildings. I could see people on the walks. I even saw a girl walking alone. My innards burned; my heart cried out as the moonlight touched her naked legs. I watched, my mind working, my body ached, then of a sudden she was swallowed up in an alley and was gone.

The trucks made a creaking stop and we began to unload. Al and Chris were on one of the other trucks. While standing gazing about me, I heard Al's voice. Then Chris called out to me. "Hey, Bish, let's look around town."

"Ah, you two go ahead, I'll catch up."

"Ok,---see you later." Chris threw up his hand and they walked off.

I saw a sign hanging over a doorway that read "THE COACHMANS PUB." I entered. Inside there was a small alcove or foyer over which a black curtain had been drawn. Stepping inside, I found myself in a very nice room. It was the pub area. Brass handled pumps shone behind the long polished bar. Tables were scattered around with captain type chairs pushed against them. At one end of the room two English soldiers were engaged in a game of darts.

Cigarette and pipe smoke stung my eyes. The oder of sour mash reached my nostrils. I crossed the room looking about for a familiar face but saw none. There was a lovely red headed woman behind the bar, she saw me breast the bar and walked my way.

"Hullo, Yank,--what'll ya 'ave?"

Whether she realized it or not, she had what I needed, but I ordered a beer. She poured a schooner full, skinning off the

foam with a flat stick, and brought it dripping down the sides to where I stood. The woman took the shilling I'd placed on the bar and brought back my change then returned to the three English soliders she had been talking with when I walked in.

I watched her as she talked. My mind methodically undressing her. My fantasies exploring her deepest mysteries and I became a little uneasy. I wasn't thirsty, I wasn't hungry, I was in need of a woman. Any woman. I watched her as she talked with them. She gestured with her hands describing something very large, the soldiers nodding, sipping their beer, then she laughed and they joined her.

There was something familiar in her appearance. The red hair. The cheerfull laughter, the course throaty voice when she spoke. I felt like I knew her. Of course this was ridiculus but the notion was there. She was kind of nice to look at too, with that red hair cascading down her back. The slim waist and rounded hips that tapered off at the right places.

As I drank my beer a vision began to take shape in my mind. I turned slightly, looking at her over my glass. Of course, Blanche, thats who she reminded me of. Dear sweet Blanche the woman who volunteered to teach me all there was to know about the birds and the bees back at the restaurant where I worked before my call to service. Funny, I thought, how Blanche entered my thoughts. At the time I thought her to old to go to bed with. It had been a little better than a year since my induction, and in that time I had learned a great deal about women. And in spite of my fears of VD age had nothing to do with it. In fact age kind of puts the icing on the cake.

While I was giving her the once over in walked Sergeant O'Hara. He saw me and came my way. "Where is everybody." he asked.

"I don't know, I left some of the guy's down the street."

The sergeant was a chain smoker and he had an annoying cough. To my surprise he called the girl behind the bar by her name and ordered a beer. Her name was Audry.

"You know her?" I asked.

"Sure, we met a few nights ago."

"Nice looking woman."

"Yea,---and good stuff to."

My visions suddenly all went up in smoke. She brought him his beer saying, "Evening, John," and she says to me, "How 'bout you yank." I shook my head and she took away my glass. Before she could wash it, the sergeant tells her to bring me a beer anyway.

"Friend of your's John?" she enquired.

He coaughed. "Yea, were in the same outfit, names Bishop."

She smiles extending her hand. "Well, pleased to make your

acquaitance, Bishop.” Her hand was small, soft and warm bringing back my earlier visions. I drank my beer listening to a meeting being arranged after closing time by those two and I felt so damned unnecessary sitting there.

After she left I remarked, “And I was thinking about taking her to the sack someplace before you came in sarge."

He chuckled. “I’ll see if she has a friend.”

We talked a long time. Usually the noncoms traveled in pairs. But the sarge, he was the kind that liked company. It made no difference to him how many stripes you had or didn’t have, he was a big talker eager for a good listener.

“Have you seen Al or Chris?”

“Yea, think their over at the penny arcade around the corner.” He coaughed again. “They should go find them a gal.”

Bitters and Browns Ale was about all we could get to drink, and we threw it down like water. The older inhabitants just shook their heads when they noticed how we handled the brew. One old gentleman said, “Ale was brewed to sip, not gulp like you lad's are doing.” But we were in a hurry to get the war over with and go home. I think we stayed in a rush the whole time we were over there.

Time moved so swiftly that I was really sad that we had to return to camp. The Ale was beginning to make me feel a little light headed and hungry to. The trucks were lined up at the curb and I spied Al and Chris.

“What's that your eat’n?”

“Fish’n Chips,” Al said, “there's a joint over there if you want some. Better make it fast, the trucks will be pull’n out soon.”

“They any good?”

“Yea, there ok.”

I crossed the street, the effects of the Ale working on me. Inside the cafe my hunger worsened. The odor of cooked food really hit me. I was hungrier that I realized. It was so crowded that I had to elbow my way through. Soldiers, both from the United Kingdom and the U.S. were standing three deep in front of a long counter.

I had hardly noticed the girl standing next to me there was so much noise that it was all that one could do to think. She appeared to be alone and was clutching a bottle against her breasts. Now, it was one o’clock in the morning and the streets were full of service men and she was a girl alone. I got my order, payed the man and was about to leave when someone tapped me on the shoulder.

“Excuse me please, sir” She said in a tiny voice that I could

hardly hear above all that commotion and she wormed her way in front of me holding that bottle up in her hand. Try as she did, she could not attract the attention of the waiter. She seemed so small in that sea of olive drab that engulfed her.

I started out the door stuffing the food in my mouth then glanced back over my shoulder. I saw that bottle raised up over the heads of the people there but I could not see the girl. Something pulled at me from inside. There was an urge to go but yet, there was an urge to stay and help that girl. I saw my pals climbing into the trucks, it was time to leave, time to return to camp. I looked again over the bobbing heads and saw that damned bottle raised as if in mortal pain.

I stuffed the rest of the food in my mouth, crumbled up the newspaper it was wrapped in, and went back to the girl.

"Is there something I can do to help?" I asked, assuming my sophisticated mannerism as a soldier.

She smiles and says in a friendly voice, "I'd like to get a bottle of pop, but I can't seem to get the proprietors attention." I took the bottle. "Here, you wait outside. I'll get it for you.""

For a moment she hesitated, "No strings, honest." I assured her. She smiled then handing me the bottle and melted in the crowd.

The girl was standing on the walk when I came out of that Cafe. I gave her the full bottle and discovered that the trucks were gone. There was nothing left for me to do but walk that four miles back to camp.

"Do you live far?" I asked.

She shook her head. "No, not far. Must you go back to your camp now?"

"I've missed my ride."

"That's dreadful."

"May I walk you home?" I asked, knowing I cared nothing about that walk back to camp. My pass expired at two in the morning so there was nothing else left to do but walk the girl home.

"If you'd like, it won't get you in trouble, will it?"

"I'm already in plenty of that."

"It's all because of me, isn't that so, yank."

"It's not your fault. I'm the one who offered to help."

"With no strings, you said." She was mocking me then. I nodded, "No strings."

She smiles again and takes my hand. "We'll see."

The Ale was working on me some by then and I hooked her arm in mine and asked, "Which way?" She nodded her head and we walked off.

We strolled along the street, our footsteps sending tiny

echos in the night. Now and then we passed lovers huddled in dark doorways. The girl next to me noticed them to and I could feel her arm tighten against mine as if giving off some kind of hidden signal.

Soon we were out of town, crossing an ancient stone bridge, we seemed to empty into the country. The air was clean and fresh. Overhead there hung a half moon lighting up the black ribbon of road that lay ahead of us. It was all so lovely, an ideal romantic setting etched in the shadow of war.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Evelyn," she said timidly, "and your's?"

"Eddie." I said slipping my arm about her small waist and she moves in close to me. There came an almost intoxicating fragrance from the fields on either side of us. With all this and the Ale inside me, I felt quite brave and a good deal giddy. We walked and talked for what seemed a long time. I think I must have told her my life story. It was such a wonderful night away from that prison compound and the camp and being in the company of a girl. I wished the night would never end. I wished the whole wide world would end in that very time slot and the war had never began.

To dwell upon that night is to dwell upon total happiness. Evelyn was the very thing I needed. She represented all the women in the entire world to me then. For as we walked, I felt as if we were walking away from everything. And that our walk would finally bring us together in a total commitment to each other a man and woman commitment.

We stopped in the middle of the road and faced eachother in that moment of spellboundness. Neither of us spoke. It was an eerie feeling. The light from that half moon made her eyes sparkle. Her lips glisten. She tilted her head slightly and I kissed her. Kissed her softly. Tenderly. I had never experianced anything like it before. It seemed so natural. Yet, it was a strange sensation.

What made it seem so strange was that neither of us embraced. we sort of leaned over and kissed from a distance. Two lips coming together and nothing more. Afterwards she asked for a cigarette.

"I like your American smokes," she said. "they are much better than ours."

I handed her the half empty pack. "Here, you can have these."

"I can't take your last smoke's."

"I have another pack with me, go ahead, take 'em."

She took my hand. "Let's rest a while. I know a place down the lane."

After a short distance we turned off the road to a side trail

and stopped under a big tree. Evelyn sat down pulling her legs up and rested her chin on her knees. I sat down beside her and we smoked in silence. I finished my cigarette and flipped it away in a red arc. She snuffed hers out on the ground and put the butt in her coat pocket.

She lay back looking up at the stars. “It’s such a lovely night Yank.”

“Yea, it is.”

“This is where I live,” She says suddenly.

“Here?”

“Yes, our house is over there.” She points in the darkness, then says, “are you go’n to just sit there.”

“I said in the beginning there would be no strings.”

“I know.”

I lay down beside her and we kissed. Only this time it was a long embrace. I moved my hand up under her coat. I found her dress and brushed it aside.

“This is not the place,” she whispers and gets quickly to her feet. “Come, I know a place near by.”

She takes my hand and leads me down the trail to a large building. I notice as we grew closer that it is a barn. We entered, the musty odor of hay and manure reached my nostrils. Evelyn goes to the manger and begans pulling loose hay to the ground. She turns, a faint whisp of a smile upon her lips saying,

“We might as well make a night of it, Yank.”

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PART THIRTEEN

When I awoke it was still dark. It took a minute or so before I realized where I was. The effects of the Ale had long since passed and the realization that I was AWOL had little effect on me. I reached out and felt the girl was still beside me. She was asleep. I could hear her steady breathing. Something sprang alive within me for I was now fully aware of what that evening had brought me. This girl had been my escape from reality.

I lay there while she slept. I realized that in the girls thoughts I must be a substitute for someone of whom she is in love with. I could have been anybody. In her mind, in her thoughts as we made love, I was somebody else. A lover maybe, or a fiance who was gone to war and she has not seen in a long time.

This was a hard fact we all learned to live with. I had to when Dorothy turned to another. He was there. He was accessable to her needs. I was away maybe never to return. We all had that feeling that maybe tomorrow we'd be dead. This was a time of war. A truth we must learn to live by.

So I look down at this lovely young girl and I feel a sudden pride for her. She has done me a valuable service when in fact it could have been with anyone. But she is no whore, this I must realize. She is only satisfying her own needs and she has chosen me as her partner.

We must realize that any woman we come in contact with in Europe must have needs. Desires. For they to are human. Needing an escape from the war. Reaching out for someone to cling to in a moment of distress, fear, boredom. Women who are caught up in war are a lonely breed. They live in a class all by themselves. Some have children to raise. Others carry their unborn inside them. Some were virgins who lost their purity at an early age.

The price of being a woman in war. Then there are the whores. Women of ill-repute long before the war began. But a whore must live. She experiences hunger as all humans do. So she gives up her favors for a small price. For a small bit of food. For shelter, and yes, even for love.

Evelyn however, even while she sleeps, might be dreaming of her real lover. She feels satisfied that her needs have been fulfilled and is totaly unaware that I exist. Only until she has awaken will she realize that I'm not the man in her dreams. But only another GI who's name she'll only forget.

She mumbles something in her sleep. A name maybe. Thinking of him now. Remembering this night had brought them together at last. I reached out and touched her cheek, her skin is soft and young. No more than seventeen. We were children coming of age in the cradle of war.

She moved her head and murmurs again, then her eyes open sleepily. She looks at me as if she sees me for the first time, then smiles. She remembers and speaks softly, "Hullo, Yank," she rubs her eyes, " 'ave I been asleep long?"

"We both were sleeping."

"What time is it?"

I looked at my watch. "It's past two in the morning."

"Oh dear----you'll find yourself in trouble with your superiors."

"That's ok, I'll manage."

She sat up brushing the straw from her hair.

"Do you have a boyfriend?" I ask.

"Yes, he's with the RAF."

"How long's it been since you seen him?"

She pinched her lips in thought. "Eight months I think it's been, I hope you won't think I've been unfaithful."

"Why should I, besides, thats a long time."

"Yes it is." She turned looking at me, "Do you 'ave a girl in America?"

"No."

"That's a pitty." She lay back staring up at the loft. Then she says something I've found hard to forget these many years. And it startled me a little at the time. "You may do it if you like." There were no words after that. Only paradise in the middle of a war. She lay there, eyes closed going through the motions with a total commitment. Even as the fluids of life flow through her boby she is thinking maybe of laying with a man who might be dead tomorrow of the next day. For I am afterall a substitute. A name and face she will not remember after this night. I watch her eyes as they open in brief flutters only to close again.

She is a girl torn between her sweetheart and the knowledge that she may never see him again. And she stares up at me showing no quilt. Giving the slightest hint that what she is doing is unfaithful. And in turn I show my gratitude by being gentle, loving, and assuring her of no wrong doing because in her thoughts she might be the last woman in my life. She is being accommodating. She is accommodating me.

She may feel that tomorrow I may be dead, and while she is accommodating me, her sweetheart is with someone to, and she is accommadating him. This was the calamity of war. This was the price a woman payed in the war who are left behind. Some men might call them whores. I called them angels in time of need. For Evelyn was my angel, my lover, my first conquest as a man.

For the three next days I was on guard duty going through the motions of being a POW guard when all the time I was thinking of Evelyn. As luck would have it when I returned to camp after that four mile walk from that barn, one of our own was at the gate.

Roll call in the morning was something of a farce. Most of the unit was on guard or some other duty, the other half catching up on some sack time after a night on guard, and was sometimes neglected. That particular day proved to be one of them. At the main gate I told PFC Lloyd Cade that I was AWOL. He glanced at my pass giving some remark as to, “Was it worth it.” I just smiled and walked on to the barracks.

I had the day off so I spent it in the sack. I didn’t bother to shower, I was beat. For the next three days I saw nothing but Krauts. Lieutenant Cromer and 45 enlisted men escourted 300 POWs to Gurnock, Scotland. This had become a regular function of the 430th on the average of once a week. They’d be brought in from France, interrogated and shipped to Scotland or some other country.

Upon my completion of guard duty I made ready to go back into town. I wanted to see Evelyn again. I searched everywhere in town for her. I even went to the fish’n chips place knowing all the while that I would never find her. I couldn’t even trace our walk back into the country. The Ale had fuzzed my memory and at the time I wasn’t looking for any landmarks, and there was no last name either, only Evelyn.

I finally convinced myself after a long search, that I would never see her again. But there were memories, no one could take them from me. I later found Al, Chris, and Mac at the Coachman Pub. I drank a silent toast to the accommodating girl in back of

my mind. My dark haired angel.
July 15, 1944

Three hundred and fifty prisoners were being transferred to Glasgow, Scotland and I along with twenty two other guards would participate in the transfer. I reported at the compound gate with the rest of the men and waited for our orders.

We learned that the POWs were in the Mess Hall and that it would be a while before they were ready to be moved. So we waited. I could see other prisoners walking about, with hands clasped behind their backs, heads bowed, as if in deep meditation. Their future was uncertain as was mine. Only for them the war was over. Finally after nearly an hour I could hear the loud thud of many walking boots. They always marched in perfect cadence, with every step a credit to their training. Commands were given in German. I could hear them coming louder, then as if from nowhere, they appeared in a column of threes, arms swinging in perfect unison. Even in captivity they were a magnificent spectacle to watch. They snapped about upon orders, straight, stiff, a true credit to their fatherland.

The gate swung open. The prisoners stood at attention all eyes fastened straight ahead. The command was given and the transfer began. The process would consist with the march into Haltwhistle, board a train, and then a ship at Liverpool, then Scotland. I was to take up the rear of the column. As the POWs passed me I caught that familiar scent. A musty, decaying scent. They still had not bathed.

Mess Sergeant Matthew Brown walked up to the gate, hands pushed into fatigue pockets, with a big grin on his pocked face, and I overheard him say something to Corporal Barrow that I didn't think to highly of. He said that they, meaning the mess hall staff, had doctored the POWs chow so that they would come down with a case of the shits. He said they loaded their chow with extract. Now that might have seemed funny to the sergeant, but before that day was over, it became a very serious matter.

Although I had no idea of what might happen, or how soon, I worried about what I had overheard. When the POWs had cleared the compound and were strung out along that narrow road, I called on the Corporal. When I asked what mess Sergeant Brown meant by doctoring up the POWs chow, he gave me a very hard look and told me to forget it. My job was at the end of the column and to keep my trap shut, he would worry about the rest of the column and left.

Everything went well for a while, nothing seemed out of the ordinary. Everyone seemed in good spirits. Even the prisoners. In fact, they began singing. They always sang. I could here them at

night while I walked alone patroling the fence. I guess it was their way of warding off boredom.

Maybe the corpral was right. Maybe there was nothing to worry about, after all, I might have misunderstood what the sergeant had said. But I was not wrong. I had understood him correctly. After about an hour on the road I noticed some of the POWs seemed fidgety. The singing stopped and they began lagging in line. All of a sudden one of them hit the side of the road in a full run. I Brought up my M3 submachine gun but held its fire. The man quickley struggles out of his suspenders and drops his pants.

One of the guards came at him with a leveled carbine. At first I thought he was going to shoot him. Instead he shoved the barrel in the mans chest and pushed him down in his waste. The POW struggled to get to his feet. He tried desperately to get his trousers up all the while the guard pushed him along. Then another broke the column only he squatted by the road. And like the other he was shoved into his own waste.

By now the column was completely out of step. More POWs dropped their pants and used in the middle of the road, and I watched as the guards, my own friends, hit and kick the men who were trying to crap, showing no mercy, only vicious unwarrented attacks. Some were shoving their guns in the mens faces. I thought surely someone was goimg to be killed before that day was over and I found myself standing with my sub-machine gun trained on the men in the, column. My finger on the trigger. The intent to use it in my brain.

Finally there was a burst of gunfire. Naturally I expected to see dead men laying about everywhwre. But instead I see the Lieutenant standing in his jeep holding a smoking .45. It was Lieutenant Cromar. Everyone in that column stopped. The POWs were still crapping on the road, the place began to smell like a stock pen.

"What's go'n on here, sergeant, lets get these men in line."

"Yes, sir," came the reply from Sergeant Stremmer. He was the only one in the detail who could speak German fluently. He spouted orders and slowly the column formed back in its position only this time there was no singing. No snappy marching. And for the remainder of the trip the prisoners literally shit in their drawers.

There were other trips, to Glascow all of which had been done in an orderly fashion. That first trip might have ended in disaster all because Sergeant Brown and Corporal Barrow thought it was a humorous prank. It was a smelly one I'll assure you but not humorous. It may have set off a rash of unnecessary killing. Everyone was on edge, including myself. And if the shooting had

began, how would I have responded.

Each time I met Corporal Barrow or Sergeant Brown the sight of those POWs craping on the road entered my mind. Barrow realized that if word got out that he and the Sergeant were implicated in disorganizing that transfer they might be subject to court-martial if any of the POWs had been killed.

One night as I sat around in the barracks trying to write a letter home I overheard a conversation being discussed over a poker game.

"How'd it go today," asked one of the guys. "Same old shit," was the reply.

"I had to kick a krauts ass for goldbricking," said another. "Damn hinnies are stupid."

"I wish one of them bastard's would make a break for it, I'd blow his head off."

"They stink like hell," someone remarked.

"I call, three buck's to 'ya, what do ya have?"

A frightening sensation overpowers me. Hate is not a very nice word but hate is what we have come to enjoy. Even without not knowing it we hate. We hate the men in the compound. Hate the very thing for which they stand for. And now its gone beyond that. We have reached the ultimate low in our training. We have come down to a level below hate now we want to kill.

PART FOURTEEN

I was awakened at two in the morning with a flash light shining in my eyes. Corporal Crawford was shaking me and calling for everyone to fall out. I had just completed four hours of guard duty and was still under the influence of a sound sleep. I knew it wasn't time for me to go back on duty, although time has a way of slipping away when your scheduled to stand guard and I had not been asleep that long.

To be awakened at that hour meant that something was very wrong. An escape maybe? something we all feared. The last time I was awakened in this manner was when Liverpool was being bombed. The corporal was still shouting for us to rise'n shine. Then someone asked the very question that was on everyone's mind.

"What's go'n on?"

Crawford was shaking Archies bunk. "A woman from town was beat'n and raped tonight she's here with a constable to identify the man responsible. Every outfit in the area is being questioned-so let's go."

"Hell, it wasn't me."

"Just fall out Snider, we'll let her decide that."

We stood at attention while roll call was given. Some of the men had not returned from leave yet. Others were on guard. We stood at attention as the two figures came down the line. A flashlight was turned to every face in that line. The woman shaking her head slowly indicating that she did not see her attacker and they moved to the next man. The light was turned on me and I felt a chill come over me. What if she identified me? I knew at the time I was safe, but a mistake in identity was possible causing me serious problems should I be singled out.

I remember her clearly as she leaned forward looking into my eyes. She stared at what seemed a very long time at me. I looked straight ahead trying my best to look military with that light blinding me. Even with that blinding light I could not help but notice her. She was no young woman, and no beauty either. There was a bluish discoloration in her left eye and a cut on her cheek. She wore a long coat, of which she clutched hysterically at her throat, and walked with a slight limp.

Finally she shook her head and the light went into the eyes of the next man. When the inspection was over, old burr head Zazik, told the constable to bring the woman back in the morning so she could get a look at the men who hadn't returned from pass yet if they didn't find the man rasponsibe for the rape.

We heard nothing more about the matter and the subject was forgotten. It was a humiliating experience none the less. It seemed like when ever trouble broke out in town the Americans were accused, when in fact, there were other servicemen from all parts of the world throughout England. After all, we were there for a common cause. Each and every man jack of us was there to bring the carnage of war to an end no matter how great or small our contribution seemed.

Passes into town were discontinued for three days. A sort of cooling off period. Now I don't have to elaborate on the feeling that spread over the camp. Some of the men had women in town they shared their beds with and the thought of some other GI sharing that same bed while they are confined to quarters irked them to say the least. Some slipped into town anyway inspite of the captains order only to be brought back to suffer further restrictions and punishment handed down by the CO.

It made very little difference to me for I was scheduled to stand guard for the next three days anyway and the extra time would catch me up on my rest and letter writing home. One morning shortly after I was releaved of my post, a POW was found dead in the compound. The death occured during my tour of duty and I was questioned about it. I told the captain that I saw or heard nothing during the night except for some singing.

The questions continued anyway since the man was killed near the spot I was assigned to and I had to make out a report explaining my activities in detail during my time on guard. I learned later that the man had been beaten then strangled to death. Probably some personal feud between the murdered POW and someone known to him. Unfortnuately, due to the influx of so many POWs arriving in the camps from France the separation of Nazi and anti-Nazis were seldom executed. The only way to distinguish a Nazi from and anti-Nazi is when you see a man being pursued by a crowd

who are howling murderer, you can be sure the man who is running is an anti-nazi.

There had been sporatic outbursts of fighting in the compound. This was a fact that we all witnessed at one time or another. They usually erupted over a very snall infraction. Over a piece of bread. An insult or insinuation of some kind or another. But mostly party affilation.

All this unrest usually led to one conclusion that old enemy--boredom. They were cut off from the world around them. From the war. From their families, wives and sweethearts--and freedom. With every new bunch of POWs who came to us, the same change in lifestyle occured. And it occured frequently as new troops from the war came to us in a confused, disoriented condition.

Most of these men carried a big hate. And like us, they were taught to distrust us. We were after all the enemy. And to rid the world of the Allies was to rid the world of an inferior race. So they fought the system and some of them died in bondage never to be free again.

July 27, 1944.

The trucks left for town sharply at six and I was on one of them. Al and I were the only men from our barracks who rated a night off. Chris, Roland Wyatt and MacIntyre were escourting a bunch of krauts to Scotland. The Ale at the Pub had tasted good. But while we walked along the street I found myself searching the civilians in hopes of seeing Evelyn but she was nowhere in sight. I told no one about my relationship with her for that was something for me alone to knew because I believed in those few hours we spent together we found the real meaning of love.

We all needed someone to love, and to be loved back in return. It’s a nature within us. One of the many characteristics that make up our bodies. And I was no exception. Even during war; no, especially during war one needs love more. Needs someone to miss him when he’s gone.

Its one thing to miss your mother, father or sister, but one needs more, one needs a sweetheart. A girl or wife who will miss him after death. One who will remember him long after he is gone. We all wanted someone to write to other than our family. We needed female companionship. We need a girl or sweetheart to write to. Someone to pour out our feelings to. To confide in or share our hearts with. And we wanted letters from them in return. Letters filled with promisses, commitments and words of comfort to kindle our need to live.

I think this was the very thing that kept most of us from

going off the deep end. It's good medicine to ward off boredom. Especially when your in combat or patrolling a compound fence on those dark and lonely nights never knowing what to expect.

Al suggests that we go to the arcade. He said that alot of girls were there the last time he and Chris were there and that we might get lucky. There were alot of people there mostly servicemen. English, Ausies, Scottish. That was the first time I saw a Scotsman wearing a kilt. It looked funny, but I had no notion to laugh. I saw two unescourted young girls standing by the nickelodeon. Al saw them too and nudged me in the ribs.

"Look over there."

"I see'm."

"What do ya think."

"It's worth a try."

So we walk over to where the girls were standing, trying not to act so obvious and glanced over the selection on the playbill as an American tune "I'LL HE SEEING YOU," swooned out of that nickelodeon. I heard one of the girls giggle and say something to the other one. The quiet one looks at me and smiles kind of timidly. I took full advantage of the opportunity and ask the timid acting one if she'd like to select a mumber on the machine. At first I think she is not going to say anything, then she points to a selection and I drop in a shilling.

"Hi," I said, "you two alone?"

It was a hell of a way to open up a conversation but at the time it seemed alright. The one that giggled, giggled again saying, "You said it yank, isn't that so Joan?" Joan agreed with a little nod, her eyes trying to avoid mine.

"Yes, I suppose so."

Well, my impression of these two young ladies was nothing to write home about. But first inpressions don't always cast a die. I saw right off that we had bungled the job but Al, he keeps the conversation going and before long has the darkhaired one laughing. So as not to act the complete fool I introduce myself to the aburn haired girl named Joan. The dark haired one spoke up touching her friend on the shoulder.

"This is Joan Rial, and I'm Joan Sullivan, were here on a holiday from New Castle."

"Are you visiting friends here?" Al asked.

"Joan has an aunt who lives in Haltwhistle," said the dark haired Joan, "I just tagged along."

We walk outside and stood on the sidewalk talking. It's been a long time since I stood talking with a girl in that manner, probably as far back as my relationship with Dorothy. Most girls I had met since my induction into the army, were only after two

things. A good time and my money. The price of a piece of tail depended on how much you were willing to pay for it. And if you were willing to pay the price, were you willing to take on the burdon of coming down with the clap.

Standing on a street corner was considered as being corney. Strickly for squares. On the night I met Evelyn I was pretty well under the influence and didn't take the time to ask many questions. If I had, I might have seen her again, or knew where she lived. But I seen something in the aburn haired girl I liked.

It wasn't a physical attraction, although she was something to look at with her upswept alburn hair that turned a copper gold as the moonlight touched it. Her face was oval with no rouge or powder (something most women did not posess due to the war effort) and her eyes were pale blue. The fullness of her lips and the whitness of her teeth painted a lovely picture.

There was something else. She seemed rather shy and this I liked to. There was a homey atmosphere about her, Something I missed dearly. She seemed to bubble over with all that sugar and spice that little girls are made of right down to her tight little butt. I found myself rather struck by her.

She begins to talk freely and I see Al and the other Joan are getting along well to. Something about that night has pulled us together. Four people standing on a strange street corner thousands of miles away from our birthplace carving our nitch in destiny. This might seem odd, but the war had a way of bringing people together if only for a short time, but at the time, I thought it would never end.

I was back in my fantasy world. Not the real one I know today. And as we stood there talking, our lives seemed to mesh together. We lived in a time slot that is gone forever. We were gradually, willingly falling in love. It seemed to be the thing to do. It was at the time because we were lonely. In a hurry to live but willing to die. We were the victims of World War II.

It was not a sexual attraction that I felt for Joan it was More like a boy and girl infatuation. She might have thought all I was interested in was going to bed with her someplace because I was wearing a uniform. I don't know.

I'll never know. But the more we talked the more we understood each other. I saw it in her eyes to as she expressed her private ambitions. Even with a war going on she had ambitions for a future and I pride her in this for its typical of her people.

"Will you be in town long?" I ask.

She gives me a sweet smile. "I have only two days left of my holiday, then I must return to my job."

"What do you do there?"

“I'm a hair stylist for a beauty salon in New Castle, its nice work, I enjoy it.”

Soon we were chatting like we’ve known each other for a long time. Her father was killed in one of the bombings during the London Blitz and she is living with her mother in a rented apartment at New Castle on the Thames River. I became very relaxed while she speaks. Maybe it’s because we’ll never see each other again after she goes back to her home for we are living in a time when relationships never quite blossom into the flower of which we would like to dream about. And when this night is over she will go her way and I mine. And the war will go on.

Time passes to quickly when you wish it would stop forever for it is time to go to the trucks. I do not make the same mistake as I did with Evelyn, our hands clasp together and we walk down the street. Al and his Joan are in close pursuit behind us. Everything is so wonderful and filled with the atmosphere of a great war time movie epic. Two lovers saying farewell, but in this sceen there is no music. No drums rolling, or symbols clashing, only the shouts of men loading up, the dropping of a tailgate and the rattling of chains. During all this we hold hands and arrange to meet at the arcade the next evening.

July 28, 1944

The next morning Joan stood at the main gate the relief guard informed me that she had been waiting for two hours. I was very pleased to see her again. I’d been looking forward to seeing her that evening but this was an unexpected thrill. She was dressed in a plain brown cotton dress. Her up-swept hair in perfect fashion, not a tendrel out of place. She smiled as I gave notice to her appearance.

“Well,” I said, expressing my surprise. “It’s nice to see you again.

“It’s such a lovely day, I thought I’d take a walk, and then I found I was near your camp, so--I come to see you.”

I was amazed. “Four miles,---you walked four miles to see me?”

She stood there smiling. “Yes, it’s alright, isn’t it?”

“Yea, sure.”

Without a word she takes my arm and we began to walk. It is a nice day at that. And with her by my side it seemed a far better day than I can remember. I was an intruder in a strange country walking along with a strange girl I had barely met the night before. In some circles her appearance their that morning might have raised a few bushy eye brows. For such a thing was never

done. The girl never made the first move that was the mans initiative. A system of courtship handed down through the centuries. For there were many of us young, lonely and vulnerable.

In those days tradition gradually out weighed the intervention of our new generation. We were living in a time when the old ways of life were shoved aside because of a war we found ourselves comitted to. And the scale of frugality in due time would sway the other way. For we were helping in a very small way to change that balance even if we didn't know it at the time.

With Joan's sudden appearance at our camp I discovered a new concept in boy and girl relationship. For she must be lonely to. Needing male companionship; needing an escape from the turmoil of war. One must realize that with all the vast changes in life styles, especially in English women and those in France and elsewhere in Europe. The sudden needs of so many men was expected of them. And with these needs, to many young girls found themselves in bed with strange men solely because they thought it was expected of them. Fifteen year old girls find themselves suddenly in the possition of grown women.

We continued our walk interupted from time to time as she kicked at a stone then pointing after it as it bounded away in the tall grass. "Will you be coming to Haltwhistle tonight?" she asked.

"Wild horses couldn't hold me."

"Wild horses?"

I laughed. "An old American saying."

"I see."

"We'll meet at the arcade, ok?"

"Yes, I think that will be very nice. I must leave for New Castle tomorrow you know."

I was at a sudden loss, as if someone had kicked me in the stomach. I knew she would be leaving but not that soon. We held hands as we made our way up the hill all the while something was passing between us. Something very beautiful. We had only met the night before but yet, on that day we were lovers holding hands. And a creaping fear comes over me.

Reaching the top of the hill we pause looking down into the valley below us. A patch-quilt design of stone and hawthorn hedges ramble over the land. I can see the POW compound. It's ugly and dirty, with it's evil occupants strolling in the afternoon sun.

"Isn't this a lovely view," She is saying swinging her arm out before her.

" Yea, except for that prison compound down there."

"Not that, silly, I mean the view. It's so lovely, I love this time of the year don't you."

"Yea, reminds me of home."

"And where is that."

"California."

She smiles and a wonderful sparkle came into her eyes. "Oh thats where the celebrities from the cinema live isn't it?"

"You mean Hollywood?"

"Yes, I think that's what you call it. Have you ever seen Gregory Peck? I think he's wonderful."

I had to smile. "I have never been to Hollywood in my life and the only time I ever saw Gregory Peck, is like you, in the movies."

She tossed her head back and laughed. She was lovely. with the sun in her hair, the flakes of gold that leap from the silky tendrels. "You must be pulling my leg."

"I will if you laugh again."

She made a playfull pass at my face with her soft hand.

"Silly, be serious." she said.

"Well its the truth, honest."

"That's dreadful." She says then stretches out on the ground.

I could not help but notice how kind nature had been to her. Her breasts were tiny in size. The outline of her slender waist tapered off to graceful thighs. As I looked down at her I had the strangest feeling that this was some kind of cruel dream. That Joan did not exist. And I shall awake to find it all one of my childhood fantacies. How could such a girl, a real beautiful woman be interested in me. A fifty dollar a month GI with a future that reached no further than tomorrow.

I stretch out beside her. "It is a fine day, I'm sorry to hear your leaving tomorrow, we just met. Maybe I can come to New Castle to see you."

"Oh would you that would be nice. Do you think your superiors will give you a holiday?"

"I'm due a twenty four hour pass."

"Thats Marvelous."

I reached out and take her hand gingerly. She squeezed her fingers to mine and smiles at me. "I think your nice, I really do your such a gentleman."

"You think so?"

"Yes, I wouldn't say so if I didn't mean it."

Looking down into her eyes a sudden thought comes to mind. Is she a woman who regards me as a substitute for someone else? Am I to be shared in her dreams in the place of another. What is she thinking. What are her motives. How do I measure up in her thoughts.

"Do you have a boyfriend in New Castle?" I blurt out.

She looked startled. “Heavens no. Do you think I would be spending the day with you if I had?”

I felt foolish but relieved. “No,--I don’t know why I asked.”

“Honestly,” she said shaking her head. “I’m flattered that you asked, most boys don’t care. But I like you for asking.”

“I like you to.”

*

PART FIFTEEN

In those days romance flourished overnight. It was not a common occurance for two people to fall in love at first sight. Everyone was needing someone. Even if it meant for just a few hours. The need for companionship between both man and woman was one of the greatest prescriptions known to ward off boredom.

Some of our greatest classics in American literature were written about people who knew each other for only a short while. Wars have been the format for most of these classics the reason for this being the constant threat of facing death or the danger of losing a happiness that came into being overnight.

Death was always there. In every film I watched death played a leading roll. It was grilled into us every day of our training. And we learned to live with it. Respect it. And when it came, we were to glory in it. I was no exception for I had found Joan. She became the answer to all my boredom.

The thought haunts me however that Joan might be thinking that she is doing me a patriotic service by letting me fall in love with her. It was easy at a time like this when all the world is aflame with war to cling to someone. And that is what I was doing, clinging.

They were very accommodating these English women. They will do anything for you to make your stay in England a pleasent one. For they feel that we are living on borrowed time, and after were gone there will be others and they will accommodate them.

But with Joan there is something far reaching. She is a girl of eighteen but a woman long before her years. The qualities she has shown tells me that she is looking for something to cling to. She is a working girl with a widowed mother. A victim of war and the tragedy of loneliness that follows in the wake of destruc-

tion. But why I wonder does she turn to a man like me. A man who comes from another side of the world, why?

There have been rumors that English women, who finding themselves alone because of the war, are seeking companship with American service men with the intent of marriage so they can become US citizens and go to America to began a new life.

Some have been known to abandon their wartime husbands once in the states and go it alone, beginning a new life in their adopted country. I have even heard of English women wanting American babies so they can make their claim good. Is that what Evelyn wanted? Is this what Joan wants?

I carry these thoughts with me as I go into town to see her. Al expects to see Joan Sullivan to. I had no way of knowing his feelings about her because he never confides in me, and in these matters its just as well. The general feeling about Europeon women during war tends to settle on one thing, sex. After all most of the men in the allied command have wives at home. They may feel that what they are doing in bed with foreigners does not count as cheating. Its their way of relieving the pressures of combat. For these women are only substitutes. Someone to share his desires, his needs, and some cases, abuse.

I knew this was true because I've heard my friends brag about their conquests; "I made her go down on me," or, "The bitch I was with wouldn't screw layin down, I had to fuck her standing up." Now being a boy who came from close family ties, this kind of behavior shocked me. I had never heard such language until I entered the military.

I had no idea how men felt about women. There was no respect. I guess it was those training films we saw. Especially the ones showing womens sex organs eat up with VD. That in it self scared the hell out of me.

The woman who was raped and beaten at Haltwhistle was a good example. They never did find the GI who did that. It was probably some combat infantryman on R&R ready for a lay. when she wouldn't lay down taking the missionary position as was expected of her he might have angered in his haste and took it from her by having to beat her into submission. These women had a myth about having sex laying down. They thought by doing it standing up they wouldn't get pregnant there were alot of hunch-back GI's in England.

I went directly to the arcade as soon as we arrived in town. Both Al and I expected to see our women. Although Joan said nothing about bringing the other Joan with her when we met earlier that day, Al tagged along enyway. My feelings for Joan I kept to myself. I didn't want any advice from anyone as to how to handle

our affair. If Joan wanted to have sex with me that would be great. But I sure as hell was not going to pressure her into doing something she did not want to do. I respected her, and I respected Evelyn to.

We entered the arcade and almost immediately I see Joan standing by the nickeodian talking with Al's Joan. She sees us and they wave. She still had that glorious glow about her and she comes up and takes my arm.

"Have you been waiting long?"

"We just arrived this minute," my Joan says.

"What do you girls want to do?" Al asked.

They looked at eachother undecided. "We can go for a walk."

"A walk." Al sounded disappointed.

"Sounds good to me" I said.

It was a wonderful evening. We spent alot of time walking around town getting aquainted. We exchanged addresses then Al and his Joan went off someplace and Joan and I went to a nearby park and sat on a bench holding hands. Now that don't sound like a very exciting evening but it was a very special one for me.

"I enjoyed our walk today."

"I did to."

"Will you come to New Castle to see me like you said?"

"Just as soon as I can get a pass. You can never tell about the army, but I'm sure I'll get one."

"Then I'll make plans for your arrival you have my address, give me a few days notice before you come."

"I hate to see you leave just when we're get'n aquainted, can't you stay over a few more days?"

She smiles "I'd like to really, but I cant."

"I've never met anyone like you" I said.

She laughed. "I bet you say that to all the girls."

"No, only you your different."

"Your lonely."

"Yea,---I am."

She was nice to be with. I think we enjoyed each others company but I still had that feeling in the back of my mind. Was she using me as a stepping stone to the states. Is she seeking citizenship in a new country without having to go through the hassel of emigration. I told myself no. She wasn't like that. She was to good a person to be mixed up in a scheme like that. But I had some reservations.

Time has a way of passing when you want it to stop. It was time to return to the trucks. Arm and arm we walked down the street. I did not want to let her go because I felt I'd never see her again.

"You'll write me" I said, feeling as if she were slipping away from me, "You won't forget?"

"Every day." She promised.

I had my arm around her and she snuggled up close then I heard the sargent shout, "Load up," Men bumped into us as we stood talking. Suddenly I gathered her up in my arms and kissed her. I didn't care who saw us or what any body said, I just clung to her and she did the same. Finally after a long embrace, I climbed aboard the truck and we rolled off. I felt like a part of me was left behind.

July 29, 1944

I awoke at one thirty in the morning. I'm to stand the watch from two till six. Outside I can hear the rain thumping on the roof of our barracks. There was a white flash then a clap of thunder coming from somewhere in the night. As luck will have it I'm scheduled to walk the fence between post number three and four. It's going to be one of those nights.

I go to the Mess Hall and down two or three cups of black coffee, exchange a few words with PFC Edward Donaldson then go out to relieve PFC Willian Johnson on post number four. Reaching my post I see Johnson walking my way with his carbine slung over his shoulder up side down.

"What a night," he remarks.

"Everything quiet?"

"Yea, haven't seen a kraut all night."

"Ok--see you in the norning."

Johnson mumbles something and walks off. I began my tour in the rain.

August 7, 1944

I receive my first letter from Joan. She is lonely and wants me to get a holiday and come to see her. I smile at her reference to a pass as being a holiday and go the the CO and put in my request.

August 10, 1944

We escourt another load of POWs to Glascow. There have been no more "doctor'n up" the POWs chow like our first trip, but the crowd at the depot always seemed to grow a little larger every-time we bring in a new batch. There is always jeering and shouting from the townspeople. Slant remarks in German, ugly overtones

in English, “You should have shot the bloody bastards before you brought them to town, yank” or “Let me ave’m, yank, I'll save the crown the trouble of feed’n ‘em.”

There is another letter from Joan awaiting me when I return from Scotland. I went to see the old man again and get a three day pass beginning the first of the week. I wrote Joan that same night telling her to meet me at the Red Cross in New Castle on the 17th. For the remainder of that week I went about my duties cheerfully. I stood in the rain and mud, would have stood in shit if I had to.

How I made it through that week I’ll never know but the eventfull morning finally arrived. I picked up my pass at the 0rdely Room and hopped a ride into Haltwhistle. At the train station I’m told that I will arrive in New Castle that evening. So I purchase a ticket and hang around the station until train time.

Upon my arrival at New Castle I find quarters for the night at the YMCA. That was the longest night of my entire life. Sleep was not easy to come by. All I could think about was Joan and what those three days held in store for me. I was loaded for bear and filled with a ton of anxiety, but I would not pressure her into doing anything against her will.

In the morning I shave and shower and change clothes then hurry out to the Red Cross. I am early I think for she is not there yet. I pace up and down in front of that old building fearfull that she will not come. Then a horrible thought strikes me. Maybe she didn’t get my letter. The mail those days was terrible. Then to my delight I see her cross the street and my heart jumps into my throat. She holds out her hands.

“Hello, Eddie, your letter came in the post yesterday, I’m a bit late I know.”

“You look fine, real fine.”

“Thank you.”

“I was beginning to think you weren’t coming.”

“You knew I would.”

“Yea, I guess I did, what shall we do first?”

She took my arm. “Lets walk a while. Then if you care to, we’ll go to the cinema.”

“Ok with me.”

So we walked a while and we talked. From our conversation I can tell that she is a lonely person and that her mother was in bad health and spent a lot of time in London where Joan has an aunt. After the cinema, we go to a restaurant, or tea house, and have my first tea and crumpets.

We go to a park and sit on a bench. I had no idea as what to do. I was in a strange country with strange customs so I let

Joan suggest our day just being with her was an adventure in itself. Time passed quickly and when I say I'm staying at the YMCA, she says that I can come and stay with her at her appartment. Her mom had gone to London to visit a sister and won't be back until the end of the week.

I'm at a loss for words. I had no idea that I would be sleeping with her although the thought had entered my mind, many times since we met. After all she was a very attractive young woman and I had not been with anyone since Evelyn.

The suggestion however is very abrupt. Maybe my first impression of her was all wrong. Maybe she is after a ticket to the states. I feel a sudden frustration overpower me. She is after all like any other woman caught up in the war. She has desires, needs, maybe even a duty to perform.

We go to the YMCA and pick up my gear. We hop on one of those double decker buses and head for her appartment near the Thames River. All the while we ride she is talking and pointing out the landmarks of New Castle. I have tiny knots in my stomach for I am in love with this girl, and I want to tell her so.

We come to the end of our ride and leave the bus. Then we walk some more holding hands. It's beginning to get dark and I can smell the odors coming from the river. Suddenly she stops, pointing to a three story building saying that this is where she lives. She and her mother have an apartment on the third floor. Inside I find that it is modestly furnished. She opens a door showing me a room with a big bed in it.

"This is the guest room, you may sleep here tonight.

Well, I must have looked dumbfounded for she adds, "You didn't think" she puts her hand to her lips and smiles. "Did you think we'd sleep in the same bed?"

I felt kind of foolish, "Well, I didn't know----"

On the second night we did. The next morning I left for - Haltwhistle. Left Joan standing on the platform waving goodbye.

PART SIXTEEN

For the remainder of that week I'm living the greatest fantasy of my life. I've found the girl of my dreams. We have made plans never to forget eachother, hoping one day after the war I will return and we will be married and return to America and live happily ever after. A story book love affair? Maybe. For this is after all what fantasies are all about. Even when a war is going on love conquers all. This might seem like pure rubbish to some, for I read somewhere that love in the midst of war does not exist. But they were wrong.

Loneliness is a more accurate definition for love during wartime. No two people fall in love, marry, and live their lives within the shadow of death. War brings people together. There apt to do or say things that at the time seem natural, when in fact, its the war, the killing, and the uncertainties of life we fear. But to me then, it was love. Not fear, nor the war, not the uncertainties of life, but the beauty of love. For, I had found something of which to cling to.

August 22, 1944

We marched the four miles from camp into town and boarded a train. We left Haltwhistle leaving behind beautiful memories. A young English maiden whom I only knew as Evelyn had her dreams and fantasies in the midst of a world gone mad.

August 23, 1944,Wootten Bassette, England

For the next three days we were quartered on the outskirts of this town. It was not a POW camp only a lay over or rest peri-

od for our move into France. It's been rumored that we were finally on our way to the war. We had some catching up to do for the Allied armies had already captured several key towns in their sweep across France, and the Nazies were gradually losing their foothold there.

Wootten Bassette turned out to be a typical English town. Typical in its ancestral architecture. The criss crossing of stone and hawthorn hedge rows. The thatched cottages and the accomadating women. Accomadating to every menber of the United States Military.

There was a racial war being waged there that surpassed any anywhere in the world at that time. There were several colored QM outfits stationed at the camp along with seasoned white combat outfits. Many of these men were southern boys from the deep south looking for a lay. There was sporatic fighting in town between both races over the women their.

The place was a real pest hole. Some blacks were found floating in the Thames River shot or beaten to death. It became so serious that a curfew was ordered. The whites were granted a pass on the even nights, blacks on the odd. Even with the curfew in effect some whites slipped into town anyway to see their women only to find some of them with a black GI and all hell would brake lose.

How, one wonders does a thing like this happen. Both were there for the same purpose. Both wanted to get the war over and return home. But yet, racial tensions flair. I have no urge to go into town. The whole situation is apalling to me so I stay in camp and catch up on my letter writing.

August 26, 1944.

We arrive at South Hampton on the southern coast, once a port of call for TransAtlantic liners before the war, and bivowac in Sherwood Forest, the legondary world of Robin Hood.

I was thrilled of course at being their. It was in itself a fantasy. I wandered about looking over its wonderful scenery. It's babbling brooks, it's wildlife and wonders of nature. I imagined Errol Flynn dressed in his swashbuckling green outfit swinging down out of the great trees. Friar Tuck, Little John and the evil sheriff of Knottingham.

I set up my pup-tent next to a creek where I could get plenty of water for which to bath. War talk was the main topic for we were closer then, than we had been since we first landed at Liverpool. It was exactly two months to the day when we first landed at Liverpool that we shipped out on the troop ship Nieuw

Holland from South Hampton on our treck across the English Channel for the shores of Normandy, August 29, 1944. we were two and one half months behind D-Day.

*

The War

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PART SEVENTEEN

On the evening of August 30th, we went over the side and down the scramble-net into an awaiting LCA. Most of us were incapacitated by sea sickness and when the tiny landing craft moved out our seasickness worsened. For the sea was very rough and picked up the flat bottomed beaching craft driving it back down hard upon the choppy water.

The shore line was still about a quarter of a mile away. As I looked over the side I could see the white sands of Utah Beach. It was an awesome sight. But a sight that I'll never forget. Two and a half months have passed since the 4th Division established a beachhead there under the command of Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, the only General to land with first wave troops on D-Day. But even with this passage of time, an excitement went through me,I can not describe.

Maybe it was the sight of those concrete cones and metal triangles and hedgehogs that still littered the beach. Deadly obsticals placed there and on Omaha Beach by order of Field Marshal Rommel for just such a landing. Maybe it was the silence among us that awakened my pride. A silence that gave mourning for those who died there. Were wounded there, and yes, for those who wept there.

I cannot give testimony for my feeling as we neared the beach. There were no rockets, no gunfire, no screaming aerial bombs falling, no cries of pain, no shouting, no cursing only the whinning of the crafts engines as it cut through the choppy water. There was a granger here unlike anywhere in my life. The salty spray wet my face, stung my eyes, and trickled down my throat. water stood ankle deep at the bottom of the tiny boat, but I did not notice it. I was unaware of it. I was preoccupied as we neared the Cherbourg Peninsula.

The craft slid upon the beach with a grating sound and a shudder of vibrant jolts. Like a wet dog shaking water from his body. The ramp came down and we walked out on the wet sands. We were the first to reach the beach. The rest of the 430th was strung out between ship and shore. We were met by MP's and told that we would be led through a live mine field above the beach to a position of safety beyond the beach area.

Rommell's men had buried over five million of these mines up and down the coastal beaches. The General hoped to have another six million buried before the expected invasion came. He intended to infest the beaches with sixty million mines by the time D-Day arrived hoping to blow the invaders out of the water with the aid of the shore batteries from the slopes above. "The war will be won or lost on the beaches." he said, and he was right.

I stood upon the sands trying to invision the battles fought here. I might be standing on the very spot where a man died. I saw empty brass cartridge cases, some sticking out of the sand, others littered the beach. I reached down picking up one of these spent casings and shoved it into my pocket, a symbol of freedom. What happened to the man who fired it. Is he dead, wounded somewhere or is he with the armies pushing back the Germans.

When all the 430th had reached the beach, we assembled in formation. Roll call was taken, orders shouted, and we moved in a column of two's off the beach area. We walked up a sandy bluff that led to a pathway. On either side of this walkway were signs saying, "LIVE MINES" and without further adeau we follow the man in front of us knowing all the while death rides on both shoulders. Don't stumble, or stagger, don't even sneeze, just walk along following the man wearing the purple and white arm band of the MP. For he knew the way to safety.

And would you believe it, as we emerge from the bowels of death, there stand those damned trucks, all lined up in single file with their drivers standing along side waiting for us. This is one time I'm glad to see them. My stomach must have turned a thousand times since we left England.

We load up and move out. Everywhere you look one sees a vast devastation. Deep craters and uprooted trees indicate a fierce shelling from more than five thousand ships off the coast of Normandy on D-Day. Stilled bunkers which were manned by highly trained troops lay in silent splendor as we pass. A mocking, mute reminder of what lay ahead.

The trucks rumble down a rock strewen road. After a while we pass through what is left of the village of Foucarville. I can see women standing in gutted doorways, arms folded under massive breasts; at what is left of a second story upstairs window, two

young girls wave hand-kerchiefs calling out in French something I do not understand. Children run out to meet the slow moving trucks with arms raised, palms extended, an excited look on their dirty faces shouting, “chocolate,--gum chum?”

As we pass the shambles of what is war, I can feel something inside me of which I have never realized. before. Its these children. These waifs, who are after all the innocent victims of war. They are the ones who suffer the most. The ones who suffer a greater loss.

I wish I had some candy or a slip of gum. I wished I could offer them clothes, shoes, in place of those rags and bare feet. For I am by nature a tender hearted person brought up in a world of tender hearted people, a world of fantasies, family and loved ones. Not one of war, destruction and death.

As we move on I see more destruction. More devastation. Villa’s destroyed, gray stone buildings, there red roofs lay in broken heaps upon the earth. Vehicles of war stand in silent repose. Some lay feebly on their sides, others upside down, gutted by fire. Power poles stand like silent sentinels, their wires hang swaying with the winds coming in from the sea. Some are splintered, others broken, some are only ugly stumps. Dogs trot alongside the trucks barking at the rolling wheels, chickens scratch the earth for food. All this I can see as we move on. All this and much more long forgoten

It’s as if we are on some kind of sight seeing excursion. The trucks move along slowly; dreamly; with the drivers taking careful attention not to overlook anything. For in the days yet to come, I’ll be seeing more destruction, more devastation and even death.

It was dark when we finally reached our destination. It was Cherbourg. We pitched our pup-tents in an area assigned to us and broke open the K-rations. Sleep came easy on that first night in France. I awoke at five in the morning with someone blowing on a whistle and crawled out of my tent. I came face to face with my first hedgerow. I’d pitched my tent within ten feet of it. It looked like a big earthen wall with trees and underbrush growing out of it. Some were head high and gave the armored outfits hell on D-Day.

Hedgerows have been natural fortifications since the days of the Romans, and now, hundreds of years later, they acted as a defence against another invader, the Allies. We were on the outskirts of one of the largest POW camps in France. The compound seemed to sprawl out everywhere. It was divided up in two sections criss crossing fences separating the POWs. German officers lived in their own compounds within the camps perimeter and

remained aloof from the enlisted men at all times, a privilege guaranteed them by the Geneva Convention.

Down the center of the compound there were forty foot hallways. Trucks could be driven down these and the POWs loaded or unloaded whichever the case. Each section of the compound was comprised of various buildings. The usual Mess Hall, Latrines, and sleeping quarters. Some of the men were housed in shacks or tents while we still lived out of our pup-tents. It turns out that this camp is the embarcation point from which the POWs are shipped out to stockades in other countries including the US.

I was anxious to see the rest of our camp and to see Cherbourg. Al, Mac, Chris and myself decided to have a look at our new surroundings. We went to the compound and talked with some of the guards. Most of the inmates were captured in France. Some had been brought in from Marville and off the Belgium front.

These were not the type of POWs we were used to dealing with. Some in fact were only a few days off the battle line. As the German prisoners poured in from the battlefields, wounded, disoriented, and in shock their initial stages of processing consisted of little more than a thorough search for weapons. Few American soldiers on the front lines spoke German. The pushing and shoving and the menacing jab of rifle muzzles in ones chest or back spoke for itself. And even if there were German translators available, they found that many of the POWs were recruited from Poland, Hungary, France, Finland, Belgium and the Ukraine spoke little German themselves. The best thing to do was to simply disarm the long lines of men and move them back out of the combat zone. They were quartered in a section of the compound by themselves until they could be interrogated.

We learned that the Black Market was very active among the POWs and the guards. A pack of American cigaretts went for twenty dollars or an Iron Cross or some other souvenir of equal value, while a carton went for a hundred. Five dollars bought a can of GI hash, an entire K-ration unit brought fifty dollars. C rations brought the same price. A chocolete bar was worth a hundred dollars on the market, but in town, a GI could swap it in for a weekend of tail. I could not picture myself selling anything to the enemy, but then, I'd only been in the war zone one day.

The four of us walked on down to the cliff overlooking the English Channel. The Pointe du hoc, the one time command post of German General Erwin Rommel, and one hundred foot high cliffs scaled by the US 2nd Ranger Battalion on D-Day. The sea that separates me from a land of civilized people to one ravished by war looks innocent enough in the early morning light. A divider that separates love and hate. A land absorbed in blood. Ripped and

torn. Looking about us we see no grass growing on the fertile land only scars imbedded in the earth.

Silent coastal guns look out to sea as if in wonderment like prehistoric monsters with their snouts pointing skyward obliviuos of time and destiny. We wander about fearful of booby traps, for we have seen several with their thin wires connected to destructive plungers and explosives. We go down into the concrete bunkers. Look out the ports at the sea as did the Germans on D-Day. There were no guns here, nothing but concrete and dust. This was a section of unfinished bunkers. The instillations were called the "Atlantic Wall," a fortification which reached roughly from Le Hevre to the beaches of Holland.

A massive undertaking indeed. But Hitler insisted the Wall be constructed. He said it would hold back any invaders, for he feared an invasion. The Third Reich could not survive such a defeat. But here the bunkers were unarmed. No big shore batteries bristled the Normandy coast. In place of the big guns were morters, machine guns and rifle-men to protect the coast. But in spite of the small arms, they were very effective. They looked down into the throats of the invaders as they came ashore.

It must have been like a shooting gallery. For if the big guns had been installed, and in use on D-Day, the Atlantic Wall. would have been just that. A Wall representing the gates of hell, when infact, the doors of a hell flung open anyway as the troops swarmed ashore.

The Atlantic wall became an obsession with Hitler. He thought with such a wall, no invader could penatrate any coastal beaches. They would be slaughtered. Annihilated by the big guns he planned to install there. Thousands of slave laborers worked around the clock seven days a week to build this fortification. It will prove to be invincable. To hold back any invaders coming from the sea. For behind these concrete barriers he planned to enslave its people. Build his own empire. But on the morning of June 6, 1944 all this changed.

We wandered around oblivious of the pain and suffering inflicted here. For it was peaceful now. The old apple trees stood against the wind. Most were still standing, their forbidden fruit gone. For I was more intent on my historic surroundings. For now and then people appeared carrying there bundles of sticks and straw, going about their business. Unseemly unaware of our presence.

They did not pay any attention to the masses of stilled guns, piles of ammunition, or the dangers of booby traps that infested the area. For the demolition engineers had not the time to clear the area yet, only to erect signs warning of the dangers in both

English and French. These were after all a people who were in bondage for four years at the mercy of the Nazis.

And most of these Frenchmen I was unaware of at the time, had been fighting with the underground. They were responsible to for the success of D-Day, for it was a day of liberation for all Frenchmen, for all free people, for all of Europe.

Everywhere we walked we saw the effects of war. Great masses of concrete intended to man the coastal guns were bulging from the earth. Shattered bits of military equipment lay everywhere. I even saw the bottom half of a German soldiers boot laying in the underbrush. Nowhere has there been such a devistation. On Omaha beach alone D-Day cost the Americans 2,500 dead, wounded or missing. Utah beach only 197, a bitter price for freedom. A few weeks after his performance at Utah beach, General Theodore Roosevelt died in his sleep of a heart attack.

I felt a pride well up inside me as we walked back to camp. In a small way I was a part of this war. And as we pass the compound I could feel no emotion for those who watched us from behind the wire. And in the days to come there will be more death, more destruction, more hardships and a change in our very attitude towards the enemy.

Coming down the long corridor between the compound I see the Greek talking with one of the guards. The Greek as we call him (real name Angelo Maheras) is a member of the 430th. He comes from New York and braggs that he'll be a millionaire after the war. He is always handy on pay day before and after the gambling in the Mess Tent. It was his practice to act as a lender of money with a small percentage rate for his service. Half the outfit was on his books. The very sight of him standing at the compound gate talking to the guard suggested more than passing the time of day. There was a profit there somewhere.

We reached camp just as mail call was getting underway. I received two letters from home and one from Joan. After reading my letters from home, I opened the one from Joan. The postmark indicated that it had beem mailed three days ago. In her letter, accompanied by two photographs, she said her and her mother were going to visit her aunt in London, I looked at the Postmark again, she was their now and they would be their for two weeks.

I stuffed the letter into the envelope looking at her photos again with fond loneliness. She was indeed a very beautifil young woman.

PART EIGHTEEN

Our first week at the Cherbourg camp was one of getting familier with the camps routine. All the camps had their little perculiarities, this camp was no different. For the most part all the inmates confined there were still very cocky. And standing in my guntower looking down at them I could feel the air of superiorty that seemed to hover over them.

For instance, I could see some of the German officers quartered in seperate sections of the camp walking with hands clasp behind their backs, plotting, scheming, very aware of their confinement and hating every moment of it. They strutted about like stiff sticks, whirling about, their long overcoats nearly sweeping the ground.

Now and then they would look up at us as if they had noticed us for the first time, their faces unchanged, sober, calculating, some were vicious, icy, almost murderous, it gave me the chills. Prisoners were required by the Geneva Convention to salute all American officers, though German officers had to salute only American officers of equal or higher rank.

There were times when I walked fence patrol that some of them would call out to me in very good English waving French franks attempting to buy cigarettes, candy, bits of food, anything that I might have to sell them. I witnessed the Greek selling a kraut a jar of water for five dollars.

On our nights off we would go to the nearby village of Tourlaville and drink Cognac or Calvadose. The cafe was adjacent to another building with a sign over it saying "JULLEN HARREL." The cafe with its sloping roof was a favorite meeting place for members of the 430th. It had also been a favorite hangout for members of the German 7th Wehrmacht garrison stationed there to.

After two weeks at Cherbourg the letters from Joan no longer

came. Maybe the mail was being held up for one reason or another. Mail call was as regular as always, there were no delay in my letters from home. Or packages either. The Greek gets a box of home made cookies from home and what does he do with then, he goes down to the compound and sells them to the krauts for a dollar each.

What would his mother, wife, or who ever baked them cookies think if they knew they were baking them for the enemy. Times were hard in the states. Everything was rationed including ingredients for baking cookies. Everyone in camp knew what he was doing and told him what they thought about it. But that didn't bother the Greek, he'd just write home for more cookies, candy, cigarettes or what ever else he thought he could make a buck on telling them at home how his buddies enjoyed them and to keep them coming.

I made up my mind the next time I'm on duty and the Greek comes nosing around the compound with the intentions of making a dishonest buck, I'd run him off. In the first place he has no business there unless he's on duty. And in the second place, consorting with the enemy is against regulations. Anyway, what decent man would do such a thing. What must the enemy think about its captors. They must have a very low opinion of us because of people like the Greek.

September 12, 1944

Its after midnight and I'm on my guntower overlooking the compound. I can hear soft voices, sometimes laughter. But there is always that fear of an escape. Looking down the fence I see Pfc. Lloyd Larson walking his post. Everything is quiet. Almost to quiet. Suddenly from over head I hear an old familiar sound. I look up and see streaking across the sky two buzz bombs moving along in a steady course bound for some target in Fngland.

They seemed to appear quite frequently. Sometimes in twos, with a frightening premonition trailing them. I remembered my first contact with the buzz bomb at Henly. Something about that rocket clung to me. It was a strange sensation. As if something or someone were trying to tell me something. As I watched those two disappear out over the channel, that same fear returns.

It was an eerie sight and left me quite shaken. For I knew that someone somewhere would die because of those two messengers of death. I'm relieved at four in the morning by Pfc. Archie Snider only to return at twelve noon that next day. It's Sunday. From my perch in the guntower overlooking the compound I can see a few POW's milling about in the afternoon sun. I wondered how many saw the flying bombs the night before. They no doubt felt

overjoyed that someone would die.

Coming down the lane I see an officer, I can't make out his rank but hes limping and wearing an overcoat. He stops suddenly and looks at the compound. I have no reason to suspect anything because someone is always looking at the POW's and I figure he is one of the men from the nearby 167th field hospital out for a Sunday stroll. I was half right in my thoughts. What I did not know was that he was a patient suffering from combat fatigue.

Slowly I see him open his overcoat and bring out a sub-machine gun and began spraying the compound with live machine gun fire. I stand in my guntower transfixed. I watch helplessly as he turned the gun on those defencless POW's. They scattered in a screaming frenzy. Some dropping to the ground others running trying to get away.

I shout to the officer but he can not hear me. I had no idea what to do. I called for the corporal of the guard, but its to late. I see several figures laying on the ground. Some are moving trying to get up. I saw one get to his feet, stumble, then lay quiet. It was a mess, I have never felt so useless in my entire life. There was nothing I could do. The screaming continued. Blood ran everywhere. The officer who did the shooting just stood there with the gun up turning it as if it were still firing. The clip was empty at last.

In what seemed a very long time, Corporal Barrow came running down the lane. He stopped when he saw the carnage. Trying to evaluate the situation he looks up at me and says excitedly; "What the hell's happened here?"

I point down to the officer standing with his bowed head, the gun at his feet. "I don't know Corporal, he just ups and shoots."

The corporal walks up slowly to the officer. About the same time he's joined by other noncoms. The man walking fence patrol was the Greek. I learn later that the officer is a 1st Lieutenant. He was returned to the field hospital and later sent to England.

In all, seven POWs are dead. Nine wounded. From that moment on no one was allowed near the compound unless on special orders otherwise they would be moved off the compound area. This elated me with great joy for that meant no one could bargain with the POWs. I can imagine the frustration the Greek must have felt, for he'll have to find another way to build that million.

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PART NINETEEN

I had come a long way from a boy of seventeen who at a very tender age thought of war as a great adventure. Most of my; week-end entertainment was spent at the local movie house soaking up all that glamour. I never once thought of death. Death was something unnoticed. For I saw the players in the movies going through monumental moments of agony, torment, even death, but never once did I associate it with real life.

As I recall witnessing Helen going into a sleep like death the night her brother, Claud, shot her accidently did I look at it then as a terrifying thing. That was my first experience at seeing someone killed. And as I recall I was not shocked. Frightened maybe, or even moved by that experience, but not shocked.

And as I watched the Lieutenant cutting down those POW's in the compound I felt no outward emotion either. Shocked? I think not. Maybe a little disturbed because it happened during my tour of duty and I would have to fill out a report in triplicate, but no shock, no pity. All this was part of our mental training. For I was after all in a war, an occupational hazzard.

I think most of us felt somewhat the same because I was not the only youngster in the outfit. Most of us were in our teens. The noncoms, officers, and a few of the privates were a little older, but in general we were mostly young men. The incident at the compound was looked upon as something very exciting. My pals came to me wanting me to relate to them all the gory details.

To stand by and see men slaughtered was not exactly what I expected in this man's army. The very fact that I felt nothing for the incident told me that I was toughening up. Maybe it was those training films we saw that had something to do with it. Men

ramming bayonets into one another. Tanks running over the dead you had to have a strong stomach to keep from spilling your cookies viewing that mess.

I suppose I was some kind of hero in their eyes. But I was by far a hero. The real heros were up on the line not walking fence patrol at some isolated prison camp. It was that damned report I dreaded, and I wasn't. looking forward to writing it either.

By the first of October I was about out of my mind as to what had happened to Joan. All my letters went unanswered and I could not understand it. Was she after all like all the others I've known? Had she tired of our relationship? Had she found someone else? I pondered these questions for a long time, and the answer was always the same ---- no.

I wanted to think that it was the mail in England that caused my fears to run amuck. Maybe she hadn't got any of mine either. Maybe she was wondering why I haven't written. I tried telling myself that this was the answer but deep inside something nagged at me. A great big emptiness was building. I'd wait another week. If no letter came by then I would ask for a pass to England.

The cold winds came in from the sea. The Allies had smashed the Siegfried Line and were sweeping across the German border. The powerful First Airborne carried by skytrain of more than one thousand planes landed behind the German lines in Holland seizing a bridgehead across the Rhine. The war goes on while we prepare to burrow in at Cherbourg for the winter and still no letter from Joan.

I hesitate to confront the CO about a pass because already he has refused several. But I intend to go one way or another. Pass or no pass. Then we're ordered to escourt a boat load of POW's to England. This was the chance I've been waiting for. I go see the captain about my pass. I figure as long as I'm in England anyway, I can go to New Castle and see Joan. when I confide in him about my plans he refuses. "We need every man we've got." he tells me.

I tell him the situation and he listened showing no sympathy what so ever. He's been nipping the bottle quite heavily in the past few months and I have the feeling he's suffering some kind of problem of his own. When I'm through explaining to him that I'm worried about Joan, he tells me to go see the chaplain or to contact the Red Cross at Cherbourg, but he can't spare a man, "Not even for one day," he's sorry.

We take a boat load to England but there is no way of geting leave. We are confined aboard the LST until departure time the next day. And on that night I look out over the dark city of South

Hampton with a nagging frustration. I want to get off that ship and board a train for New Castle. I want to see Joan and at that very moment I felt so helpless, so Goddamned lonely, so useless.

Another week and still no word from Joan. I decide to go to Cherbourg and talk with someone at the Red Cross. We had been at that camp for over a month and a half and I had had only two letters from her. She gave no indication in any of her letters that there was something wrong with our relationship. We were in love and on that last night in New Castle at her apartment we made plans for our future. We were both grasping at life, hoping to catch the brass ring on the merry-go-round.

We were two young people comitted to eachother in a time of war and nothing short of death would change that. I realize that this sounds melodramatic but that is the way it was. I had fantasies of Joan and I going to my home in California after the war and settling down to married life together. It seemed at the time the thing to do. We lived fast and loved hard in those days because tomorrow seemed a generation away.

Maybe that's it. Maybe she has thought about that and it frightened her. Maybe she has no intentions of leaving England. For I did not understand the workings of the mind. Especially a woman's. For I thought that once a commitment was settled between two people it was final. The relationship Dorothy and I shared was something else. We were to young to know the difference between true love and one found in the back seat of a car. I thought we were commited to each other then because of our sexual activities, for we had gone over the line commited to each other only because of sex. Not a lasting love.

We checked a truck out at the Motor pool and went into Cherbourg. Sergeant O'Hara was in charge of the detail. We were going down to the beach area at a point along the Atlantic Wall with intentions of salvaging some lumber for constructing dugouts for us to live in through the coming winter.

At the Wall, we began to tear down the wooden forms placed there by slave labor. We were on the west side of the Wall, the uncompleted side. Portions of construction stood incomplete. Twisted steel tied and ready for the pouring of concrete had rusted. Steel was in such short supply because of the great demand for it in the construction of the Wall, that portions of the old French Maginot Line had been used.

Throughout the entire Wall, millions of tons of concrete were poured, so many tons in fact, that it was almost next to impossible to get concrete for anything else. The section we worked on was said to be, when finished, a rocket launching pad for a highly developed buzz bomb with the capabilities and range of reach-

ing the coastal ayes of the United .States. It was called the V-2.

Rail track had already been imbedded in the concrete floor. At the rear of the installation were racks to store the big rockets. The entire bunker was cold and clammy. An eerie place, an evil place. A place haunted by the ghost of German Wehrmacht lurking in every passagway.

We worked most of that morning tearing down the wooden forms. When we had a load I told the sergeant I wanted to stop at the Red Cross on our way out of town. I gave no reason, and he asked none. Most of us had been there before for some of their coffee and doughnuts, so they decided to stop. I wanted to talk with someone in private. Reaching the old yellow stone building, I climbed out of the truck and was the first inside.

The sweet small of fresh perked coffee was one of a homey feeling. A rosy cheeked woman of about fifty came out of a back room when she heard us enter. She was all smiles. A real friendly greeting. We sat at a long table eating and I was wondering how I was going to talk with someone about my problem in the presence of the others. Another woman came out of that back room and joined the one who served us.

I get up and went over to where she was standing, and in a low voice asked her who I could talk with about my problem. Immediately she tells me to come into her office. I see right off that she is an American and that eases me some. I tell her about Joan and that I'm worried about her. She in turn tries to comfort me by saying, "Things like this always happen in times like these." I guess she saw the look on my face when she tells me this because she suddenly asked what she can do to help.

"Is there any way the Red Cross in New Castle can go see Joan and find out what is wrong?" I ask.

"Yes, we can do that I suppose, if thats what you want."

"That's what I want." I tell her.

She gave out a little sigh. "Very well, give me the girls full name and address and I will contact our office in New Castle---how long will you be in Cherbourg?"

"I don't know. I'm stationed at the POW camp here. I can come back in a day or two."

She shook her head. "No, it may take longer than that, say, in about a week?"

I filled out the necessary forms giving my name rank and serial number and the outfit I'm with. She tells me to come back in a week. If I'm shipped out before then to notify the Red Cross and the information they have will be sent on to me. I feel kind of foolish as I leave the Red Cross building. That if Joan had

decided not to continue our relationship. What if she sends word for me to leave her alone. I shut these thoughts out of my mind as we load up and head back to camp.

The fog is so thick at night that one can barely see the compound. There is no sound; no lights; only the heavy fog. It's been two days since I'd went to the Red Cross and no word. We were going back to the Wall again in the morning for more lumber. Maybe we'll go by the Red Cross again for more more coffee and doughnuts. At the Red Cross I see the same woman I talked with. She was standing off to one side talking with an English sailor. When she sees me she says, "We have no word yet." I try to smile attempting to conceal my dissappointment then join the others at the table.

During that following week we take another boat load of POW's to England. The sea is rough and the entire guard detail comes down with seasickness. Including most of the POWs. The hold of that LST smelled so bad it was almost unbearable to be down there. On this trip we are given passes into town since were to lay over for some kind of repairs.

There is a little Pub along the waterfront and we go there. Everybody gets a little high and after a while a fight between some English sailors and a couple of American GI's gets undervray. Archie Snider decides to get into the scrape to, and the next thing we know the place is swarming with English Bobbies. We haul freight out of there, all but Archie, he's challenged the Bobbies and grabs an umbrella one of them is carrying since its been raining, and hits him over the head with it. Whistles are blowing and the next thing I see is Archie being dragged off kicking and cussing at the Bobbies.

We set sail the next morning without Archie. He's locked safely in the town jail cooling his heels and nursing a big hangover. During the crossing we run into rough seas again and my stomach begans to act up. Someone on the public address system is calling for volunteers to go down into the hold to secure a railroad freight car that broke loose and is running unchecked on its track.

They wanted someone to go down there and try stopping that freight by welding it to the track before it goes crashing through the ramp. I could hear it slamming back and forth as the flat bottom LST rides on top of the big waves. The ship shutters and shakes, my stomach churns and rolls, I gasp, but nothing comes up. We return to camp and there is a message awaiting me to go to the Red Cross. I'm almost afraid to go. For I knew in my heart that whatever it was that has caused Joan not to write will effect my life in some way.

I go down to the Motor pool and check out a Jeep. Its a long ride down into Cherbourg and the cool November breeze helps to ease the anxiety thats welled up inside me. Speeding through the darkened night and over the cobblestone streets I hardly seem to notice anything. Its as if something is driving me on. The streets are crowded with GI's. Women stand on the street corners hoping to make a sale. I pass a six-by-six loaded with troops. Across from the square I pull to a stop infront of the Red Cross building.

At first I just sit there. I take out a cigarette and light up, exhaling deeply, then slowly, arm extended holding on to the windshield frame, I get out walking through the door I'm confronted with a mass of uniformed people from all branches of the military. There's loud talking, some laughter, and the small of fresh coffee.

I see the woman who I asked to check on Joan. Walking in her direction I feel a sudden weakness come over me. I do not understand it at first, only that it was there. She sees me and excuses herself from the GI she's talking with and motiones me into her office. I walk in and she closes the door after me. I watch her as she goes behind her ddsk. She picks up a paper, and reading it quietly to herself, looks up at me troubled, and disturbed.

"We have some information for you from our office at New Castle,----it's not very good news."

I feel my heart pound in my throat. "What kind of news?"

"I'm afraid it's not good,--I'm sorry."

"What kind of news?" I repeat, my voice echoing in that tiny room.

She adjusts her horn rimmed glasses rather nervously. "Our people in New Castle went to the address you gave and they enquired about your friend, Joan Rial,---it seems---" she hesitates and without looking up at me she says, "It seems that she along with her mother and an aunt...were killed on or about September, 12, in London." Her voice trails off slightly, then she looks at me for the first time.

"Dead?" I muttered.

She drops the paper on her desk letting out a long sigh of indignation. "I'm sorry young man, if there's anything we can do to help..."

"How,---how was she killed?"

"Well, I'm not quite sure actually, the report only says they were casualties of a bombing." She picks up the report and hands it to me. I read it with shaky hands. Two words in that report come up at me with a mocking anger, "FLYIING BOMB."

PART TWENTY

I left that building shaken and completly oblivious of everything around me. I still clutched that report unaware that it was beginning to rain. Standing on the street I stare at the paper again shocked by what's written there and telling myself over and over again that it's not true.

How can anything like this happen I ask myself. I'm the one in the combat zone facing the risks, not Joan. I cannot for the life of me convince myself that she is gone.

The whole nightmare seems unreal. There must be some mistake. This is not happening to me. This is not the way it's suppose to happen. In the movies it's the hero who's killed. The woman is the one left behind to grieve, left behind to miss him.

I suppose at a time like this one should cry or go off someplace by himself and get drunk. I don't think I did either. For I felt very lonely. Felt cheated in fact. But if the tears came, they came from within. I left that walk and climbed into the Jeep. The rain fell more like a heavy mist and I could hear laughter coming from inside the Red Cross building. There was no laughter in me only sadness.

I crumpled the report and tossed it out to the wet cobblestone street. I started the jeep, leaving an echo of screeching tires pulsating in the dark allays, and sped back to camp.

I let no one know of my dilemma. It stayed locked up inside me and began to build. During my tour of guard I often fantasized myself as foiling an escape by killing a prisoner as he dashed for freedom. On several occasions I even thought of provoking a POW into an escape by saying things like---- "Some American GI is sleeping with your wife while your locked up in here," or, "For enough money I'll see that you escape while I'm on guard."

I was seeking revenge. A childish attempt to quell my wound-

ed pride. I did in fact tell a POW the one about the GI screwing his wife, and his reply to that was, “American swine.” I wanted revenge. I wanted it so badly that I was willing to sacrifice and innocent life to satisfy my grief. I must have changed my attitude towards the men confined in the compound, because I looked upon them as nothing more than human images. They held no identity. Their faces all looked alike to me. I hated them. I was blind towards anything that even suggested they were connected with the human race.

And this of course is exactly what the training films had taught us. The enemy was an animal. Treat him as such and never let them forget it. They were animals. All of them. And there was a big hate building up inside me. A dangerous transition in my character began to bud. I had reached that ultimate low too. I was ready to kill.

There were two more trips to England aboard an LST with more POWs’, but on both occasions there were no more shore leaves. I guess Archie’s confrontation with the local law had something to do with that. In any event I was ready each time to return to France. The weather had already become a burden and the rains were more persistant. Our dugouts were completed before the bad weather set in, four men to a shack. The shanty-town resembled a hodo jungle.

December 16, 1944.

The Battle of the Bulge had began. German General Von Rundstedt had launched a go for broke offensive in the Ardennes the same day Eisenhower became a five star general. More prisoners would be comming in every day. There was a steady flow of POW’s going from the shores of Normandy to the coast of England and the type of prisoners we were getting suggested that the German army was using every available man they could recruit from conquered Nazi countries. Polls, Chez's Russions, even young boys, ages from twelve on up. The Hitler youth gang.

December 24,1944. Christmas Eve.

I was to stand the midnight shift. In our shacks we had a little celebration going but I wasn’t up to any such folly. On this night especially, I was in a very somber mood. Cognac was passed around and even some Champagne the Greek had traded a

Frenchman for a pack of American cigarettes. Snow covered the ground outside and the icy fingers of winter blew in through the many cracks as we sat on our make shift bunks toasting civilization, the war and its speedy end. Very quietly I lifted my glass to a girl called Joan Rial.

Standing in my tower hours later, I can see them walking about the compound. Overhead, the sky is clear and brisk. I can see the stars glittering. I can smell the ugliness coming from the compound. The same old ugliness that follows the men who live there. Small fires flicker; men stand with their backs to its warmth oblivious of my hate for them. The wind whistles in my ears, it numbs my cheeks and my eyes water with the cold. It's a brisk night. A cold night. A night of many moods. Sounds carry in the stillness surrounding me. I see Pfc. Anderson walking his post below me.

Everywhere there is an enchantment. It's Christmas Eve, a time to be with family, with loved ones. To rejoice in the birth of out Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a time of peace for all mankind when in fact a war is raging not so very far away and the instruments of that war huddle before the fires below me.

I wonder, do they realize the significance of this night too? Are they aware of the meaning of Christmas? I'm sure they do. For inspite of my thoughts towards these men, they must have famlies. They must miss them as I do mine. There must be among them men of religion. Who before the war understood the meaning of christianity. Who in a time of peace and the days before Adolf Hitler stood in the chapels of Europe confessing their sins to God, surely they are not all animals.

From down in the compound someone begans to sing. Softly at first, a single solitary voice. Then it is joined by more voices until the night is filled by a chorus of German singers. It's a German war Ballad called "LILY MARLENE."

UNDERNEATH THE LAMP LIGHT
BY THE BARRACK GATE
DARLING I REMEMBER, THE WAY
YOU USED TO WAIT.
T'WAS THERE THAT YOU WHISPERED
TENDERLY, THAT YOU LOVED ME,
WOULD ALWAYS BE,
MY LILY OF THE LAMP LIGHT
NY OWN LILY MARLEEN.
ORDERS CAME FOR SAILING
SOMEWHERE OVER THERE
ALL CONFINED TO BARRACKS

T'WAS MORE THAN I COULD BARE
I KNEW YOU WERE WAITING IN
THE STREET, I HEARD YOUR FEET
BUT COULD NOT MEET,
MY LILY OF THE LAMPLIGHT,
MY OWN LILY MARLEEN.

That song lifted over the compound like a spiritual hymn. It kindled a flame of loneliness within me bringing back fond memories of Joan. I was living my own "GREAT AMERICAN TRAGEDY," and I did not know how to cope with it. All I could do was hate. I imagined that they were responsible for her death. They were the murders; they were the instruments that took away my dream; shattered my hopes; destroyed my future. It was that song. That God-forsaken song, and I wanted to go out their and play a tune for them on my sub-machine gun. I want to wipe away their dreams, their hopes. I wanted to kill----for I realized then what that Lieutenant must have felt the day he shot down those men in the compound. He harbored some kind of hate too. He sought revenge and found it.

December 27, 1944.

We left Cherbourg enroute to Marville. From out of the back of a six-by-six I watched the French landscape flash by. Now and then people riding bicycles appeared on the road with their little bundles strapped behind them. We passed bombed out buildings. Trees bent and broken. The earth was scared and bruised. This was a wounded land. Torn, ripped, and savagely raped by war.

We arrived at Marville on the 29th, the temperature ten degrees above zero and was attached to the 3rd Army. Up until then we worked as an independant unit transporting POW's brought in from other outfits. We would stay with the 3rd until the end of the war.

Our function at the Marville camp was to interrogate the prisoners brought there then they were sent on to the Cherbourg facillity for shipment to England, Scotland or the States. The compound was a small one. Probably because the POW's were sent out almost immediately after their interrogation and the general flow of humanity never became congested.

Marville was the site of four big coastal guns implaced in heavy concrete bunkers overlooking the British invasion site, code name, Sword Beach. For it was here in the pre-dawn morning of June 6th, before the initial attack, Brittons 6th Airborne 9th Battalian pre-invasion team were to knock out the Marville bat-

tery and a German garrison of 200 men that would literely look down into the throats of the British landing forces on D-Day.

The 9th, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Terence Otway, silenced the battery after sustaining terrible losses to his men during and after the planned drop during the taking of the installation.

The area aurrounding the Battery was heavily defended by mine fields, 15 foot-thick hedge like barbwire and anti-tank ditches combined with a solid wall of machine gun fire coming in from the German filled trenches. The Marville battery had to be taken; its fangs pulled if the Sword Beach invasion was to be a success. It was the toughest, most urgent mission of the night. The success of the invasion depended on Otway and his men.

But the guns are silent now. D-Day plus six months and the land is covered with a clean white blanket of fresh snow cleansing the earth. Washing away the stains of blood and footprints of a couquering army. The winter campaign was on.

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PART TWENTY ONE

On the predawn hours of the morning of January 2, 1945, we loaded up in the back of those olive drab camoufleged trucks headed for Belgium. Snow was falling and the cold worked its way into our bones as we huddled amid our equipment. Knit caps were pulled down over our ears, wide heavy overcoatcollars protected our necks and our faces from that worst enemy of the GI, frostbite.

As we traveled along I noticed that the country was beginning to show less evidence of the war. Great pines and giant furs covered with layers of snow stood in solumn silence watching us pass. The countryside became beautiful and enchanting tending to ease ones mind. To comfort ones soul. And as we climbed higher in altitude, the air around us became more brisk, thin, and mysterious.

We traveled all that day taking a break now and them to eat or ease our bladders. There was still alot of daylight when we wound down a long snow covered road barely wide enough for two vehicles to pass and came to a stop in the little village of Moyen nestled innocently in the bosom of surrounding mountains.

We unloaded in the falling snow, some daylight sifting through overcast clouds, and stood at attention as old burr-head called out rollcall. After being dismissed we entered what turned out to be the towns schoolhouse. This was to be our headquarters. The school yard the POW compound. Heat came from a big potbellied stove standing in the center of the room. There was a villager there stoking the fire as we went inside. He'd been the school master and would take care of the janitorial services during our occupation. A highly educated man who spoke four languages fluently. One being English. The school masters office was selected to be the captains quarters. An adjoining room designated for the

office personal.

All the classroom desks had been taken out. We learned later that the building had been the headquarters of a small detachment of German Wehrmacht before the breakthrough at the Ardennes. So the Captains quarters, and the operational space taken up by the office personal, had been used by the enemy in only a matter of weeks. And since there was no other buildings, the classroom floor was to be our sleeping quarters.

After chow I was assigned to stand guard around the company area. No POW's were there yet. The compound was empty. It was a small enclosure consisting of barb and net wire with no shelter from the elements. My shift was a four hour walk patrolling the company area. My relief man was the Greek. No money deals would be made here. No get rich scheems, no nothing. So much money was being sent home by the GI, that an order was issued that no military personal could send any money home above his pay. This was a great shock to the Greek and men like him I'm sure.

On the morning next we were gathered together and the CO began briefing us on our duties at Moyen. This would be our first personal encounter with the POW's. By personal, meaning that when they were brought in we would have to search them for hidden weapons or anything else they might be concealing.

Some of us were chosen to stand while Lieutenant Cromer demostrated the method in which we were to frisk the krauts. To actually touch them seemed a little frightful. I could not imagine myself running my hands over them. Touching them. I could not stand them in the first place and those old fears and hatred I carried inside me only added to my concern.

I would actually have to put my hands on them. I knew all along that this was part of my duties as a POW guard and when the time came I would act accordingly. And now that time has come. I will not know untill the time of personal contact arrives how I will conduct myself. For I was still living under the influence of Joan's memory. And each time I see one of those krauts the fires of hate kindles within me.

We walked around the village taking in all its natural beauty. Quaint little houses built of native stone traverse the cobblestone road. A beautiful lake partly frozen centers the community. I marval at the beauty of this place because its something from out of a fairy tale and vow one day after the war to return to Europe and places like Moyen. The villagers seem friendly enough. For they have been under German rule for four years and are still uncertain of their new found freedom by the Allies.

I visited a local tavern and even as the innkeeper tried to be pleasant I felt something in his attitude that made me believe

that they were not quite ready to trust our friendship. Who can blame them. For years the Belgian patriots resisted the German occupation with sabotage. Disrupting communications, destroying supply depots, and in Retaliation the Nazis deported more than 400,000 Belgians to Germany as prisoners and forced labor camp workers. Many of them died as a result of their captivity. So we must be patient. Especially in regards to the women.

On the third day two truck loads came in from the battle fields of Bastogne. They were a frosty looking bunch, half frozen standing in the back of those trucks without any shelter over them. They got down stiffly swinging their arms flexing their muscles standing in long lines awaiting their fate. As I recall I felt shaky and uncertain when I walked out into the courtyard and those awaiting POW's.

They stood in that cold, eyes straight ahead with runny noses, backs pulled back, not a twitch of muscle. At first I stood there watching the others going through the searching exercise flawlessly. Orders were given for them to pull off their boots and empty their pockets on the ground in front of them. They stood in that snow in their stocking feet showing no effects from the cold. I don't know if they were numb or forcing therselves to look brave. I didn't much care, I'd been sitting by that potbellied stove when they rolled in and now I was out in the cold to.

I confronted my first man. one never forgets that. He just stands there looking past me as if I weren't there and that suited me fine. Gingerly at first I run my hands over his chast, under the armpits and down his sides. I made him spread his legs by slapping the inside of his thighs with my hands clasping each leg separatly running them up and down each leg until I was satisfied he was clean of concealed weapons and moved on to the next man. This of course was not the first time these POW's had been searched. Upon capture and then again before they were sent on down the line but it was good practice in case something was missed.

This continued for about a half hour then they were ordered to pull on their boots, pick up their belongings, then we moved them into the holding pen. Since we were in the war zone there would be no fires at night. In fact there was no kind of shelter either. They would be at the mercy of the cold. And we were at their mercy for survival. For I was certain that when the mercury began to drop we would have trouble with them. Some may even freeze, or sustain serious frostbite. For it would certainly go below zero as it did that previous night.

Luckily I was off duty that first night. But Al, Chris, and Noland were to stand the first watch. Pfc. Will Gallardo and pri-

vate Lou Garbett, who we called "Pappy" because of his age, had asked me if I wanted to go with them to some friends house they had became aquainted with the day before. They said they had a few rations and some GI clothes for them and that there were two young girls living in the house.

I told them no thanks but Pappy insisted. He said that the old woman of the house invited them to supper and to bring along a companion. Now Pappy could speak a little French, just enough to keep us out of trouble, or to get us into it, so he was going to be the interpreter, the woman folk he'd leave to us. He had a wife waiting for him at home in Queens, New York.

I shouldered my Tommygun and followed them down the street complaining of the cold and that I wasn't interested in going to a strangers house. He handed me a sack of rations and told me in a polite way to, "Shut up, kid," and laughed as the three of us walked along.

I wasn't ready for any female companionship and I think Pappy knew about Joan. He'd been one of the men who went to the Wall in the tearing down of the forms back at Cherbourg. He went to the Red Cross with us to and I think he knew about that report. Somehow, Pappy always seemed to know everything that went on in camp and I suspected he knew about me.

We trudged along in the snow and finally came to a stone cottage near the lake. Pappy, he went to the door and knocked. A womans voice said "Entree." so we go in. It was a warm room lighted by an oil lamp. At the table sat two girls and a man about twenty five or so. I felt somewhat uncomfortable and I guess the woman felt it to for she ushered me to a chair beside a rosey cheeked girl of about fifteen or sixteen.

Pappy said something to her in French, I caught my name mentioned and it sounded kind of strange being spoken in French. I noticed the girl next to me is smiling at me and I'm uncomfortable as hell. I ask Pappy what he said to the woman and he says grinning, with that gold tooth of his shining, "I told her your name and said you were looking for a girlfriend."

"What the hell did you tell her that for?"

He laughed. "Ah, Eddie, come on, she won't bite." I was uncomfortable for sure then. I wasn't looking for a girlfriend as Pappy implied, and if I were, I'd choose my own girl and my own time. We ate the rations we'd brought talking through Pappy and his translations. I learned that the husband had been sent off to a German labor camp and they feared him dead. The man sitting at the table had worked with the French resistance and was the brother of the girls and the womans only son.

The next morning, like Joan so long ago, I'm told that there

is a young girl outside asking for me or someone called Pappy. It's Susan. The youngest of the two girls we met last night. When I go outside I see Pappy talking with her. She is all smiles when she sees me come out of the schoolhouse. I dont know if she's blushing or her cheeks are red from the cold.

"Hey, kid," Pappy said, "look who's come to see you."

"What does she want."

"She want's to go for a walk."

I held up my hand in self defence. "Oh. no."

"Go ahead, kid, she's a fine little girl."

The girl is smiling nodding her head, "Your go'n with us." I told him.

"No, no, you two go, I'd only be in the way. Besides, she has something she want's to show you."

"Yea, I bet," I said suspiciously, "What?"

"Damned if I know kid, I didn't ask."

"I don't speek French, you know that----you'll have to come along."

Damn funny thing walking with a girl and having someone doing your talking for you. I'm talking to her and Pappy is repeating everything I say in French. After a while we come to a place that was once a cultivated field but is now covered with snow and a crashed B-17 bomber. I'm surprised to say the least. Why would she bring me here. Pappy asked her and she tells us that the airmen who landed here were led to safety by her brother and men of the resistance.

At the downed aircraft we enter and explore its interior. The guns and all the instruments and motors have been taken out of the aircraft. I can see holes in the fuselage, probably by flack or bullets. As far as I can tell the aircraft made a crashed landing. The wings were intact as well as the tail section.

Walking back to town, Pappy gives some excuse that he has to get back to camp and that I should walk the girl home. I have no idea what to say to her. It's like talking to a mute person. She jabbers and I listen. That's all there was to it. Reaching her house I'm at a dissadvantage when she suddenly reaches up and kisses me on the cheek then hurries into the house. I'm angry as I walk back to camp. Mad at myself and mad at Pappy. I'm not wanting to get involved with anyone.

Pappy is walking guard when I return and he smiles as I walk past him saying nothing. One thing for sure, I'll not see that girl again. I'll not get involved. I'm to walk guard from eight till midnight. There was a curfew over the town. All residences are to be inside after six. If anyone is out after that hour they will be subject to arrest by the military. The entire area is

under military control and everyone of us is aware of the password and the countersign of that evening. Both will be changed at midnight.

From inside the compound I can hear the stomping of many feet as the POW's try to keep their blood circulation going. They are not allowed fires because we are in the war zone and no light or fire is permitted. I'm sure some of them are freezing because its below zero every night and even with all my clothes on I'm half frozen myself.

The sky is so black that the stars look like tiny lights blinking down at me. I'm thinking of home and that those very stars and big moon are looking down at my house back in the States. I wonder if mama is looking to. With all the snow the night seems very bright. Strange how this happens at times. I guess with the moon reflecting off the whitness of the snow it makes everything seem lighter. I'm glad of this because I can see the POW's clearly.

While I'm thinking about this I see movement coming down the road. I know its no civilian because of the curfew and decide it's one of our men. When he is in hearing distance I'll challenge him. I watch as the figure draws near and to my horror I see its Susan. How the hell did she get here without being challenged. How did she know that I'd be on guard duty. Suddenly I smelled a rat, Pappy--Pappy told her. I didn't want to get involved and I'll get my butt in trouble if she is discovered.

I can see her clearly. She is wearing a blue coat with a hood fringed in white fur. Her face is red from the cold and mine from anger. I can't talk with her because I can't speak French. And if we are caught, there will be hell to pay and no time off Corporal Barrow will see to that. She stops a few feet away and smiles at me sayng something in French looking so damned innocent. She sees the look on my face and the smile is gone. She realizes now that she has done something that displeases me. I'm wondering if she is aware of the curfew and the cirumstances involved if she is caught.

Corporal Barrow will relish in reading me the riot act if we were caught. He's harboured somekind of personal vendetta towards me ever since that POW transfer at Haltwhistle and whenever he gets the opportunity he express it. I'm flattered that she has come to see me but frightened to. She begans to talk and I place my finger to my lips attempting to quiet her. She understands and comes up very close. I am as jumpy as hell knowing someone will see us. For its time for the Corporal of the Guard to make his rounds of the guard detail. For the next hour we walk together in the cold.

Just before my relief she suddenly disappears. It all happened so quickly that I barely see her leave. But then I'm sure her family is used to cloa.k and dagger activities. Afterall, this is her town and she knows her way around. We are the intruders their liberators.

Maybe there is a tunnel or secret passageway used by the resistance somewhere nearby unknown to the Allies. Maybe they still don't trust us. Maybe they feel that the German Army will occupy them again and they will need all the secrets known only to them in disrupting their occupation.

That's alot of maybes. But these were a people oppressed for four years. They lived in fear of their lives and the lives of their loved ones. I can appreciate their position because my loved ones are safe from the war. Safe from the concentration camps and from the threat of slavery of which tormented these people for so many years. It's a wonderful feeling being a free man.

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PART TWENTY TWO

We packed the krauts in the trucks so tight that only their heads were visible. The seventy five mile trip to Marville would be a cold one and no doubt some of them would suffer frostbite. Five trucks with fifty to sixty POW's standing in a solid mass awaited its guards. It's no wonder upon our arrival we find some of the prisoners unable to speak, or move because of the severe cold.

Each truck is manned with a driver and two guards with one guard stationed out on the runningboard watching the rear of the truck ahead of him. After some miles down the road the convoy is halted and the relief guard riding inside the truck takes his turn out on the runningboard. We continue with this procedure until we reach Marville.

Within a period of seven days we've transported several hundred POW's to Marville in this fashion. Not once is there an attempted escape or death during that time. A little frostbite maybe, but no deaths. Searching the POW's as they come into camp has become a begrudging chore. Over a period of time we've managed to cope with the odors that accompany them.

During some of our searches we've found thin bladed knives taped to their bodies in various places. The arm pit or cavity of the chest were most likely places to find concealed weapons. Once a sharp pointed pencel like object was found in the crack of a krauts butt. The discovery was totally by accident. One of the guards felt something quite bulky behind the knee of one of the prisoners so he made him shed all his clothes while standing buck naked in the snow. After what turned out to be a thick bandage from an old wound, a piece of tape was discovered just above the cleft of his butt. When told to remove it, out popped the needle

pointed object.

Although all the prisoners are searched when taken on the line, it's always a spot check because of the time factor involved and the shortage of qualified man power. In most cases most of the guards are only interested in souvenirs. They would be searched repeatedly for any piece of Nazi equipment until they reached their final destination. And even then searchers continue the process.

In most POW pickups off the line the feeling towards a prisoner is "He's lucky to be alive," attitude by the men who captured them. I've heard the remark many times in our pickups that, "We took fifteen but somewhere along the way, some got lost." When in fact, only six survived. Death was very much alive on the line, something these men learn to cope with.

One morning after daylight I'm rousted out of the sack from a sound sleep. The compound was empty and I had the day off. On this particular morning however, three truck loads of POW's awaited us outside. The guards who brought them in were standing around drinking hot coffee. They are being unloaded as I went out into the cold. They stand in ranks, their boots on the ground and their belongings on the ground in front of them.

Guards stand with carbines resting on hips muzzles pointing skyward and we began our search. I hear a commotion in front of me and see the Greek stuffing what looked like a wad of money in his coat pocket. The kraut is protesting like hell but the Greek ingores him. Suddenly, the Greek stands up, gathers the mans overcoat in his fist at the throat shouting, "Shutup bastard, shutup," and the POW withdraws solemly.

It was the practice of most of us to keep any money we found on the POW's. Usually the coins, most were from countries other than Germany. Only once did I find American. It was a five dollar bill and the POW I took it from insisted that he found it. I'm sure he did, in the pocket of the GI he killed.

But on this morning I came face to face with a short, rather slight built prisoner. I can see in his features that he's not very old. Sixteen or seventeen at the least. I go through his belongings on the ground and then turn his boots up running my hand around the insides. I stood facing him and began to frisk him. I run my hands up his legs, around his waist then up under the arm pits. Bringing my hand across his chest I feel something under his coat. I began to open the coat and he says something I don't understand. I'm sure there is something taped to his chest.

I think about calling the Corporal but decided against that because the Corporal on duty is Barrow. So I continue unfastening the coat buttons then under the coat, and finally the shirt.

It’s the shirt that sparkes his attention because he brings up a hand to hold it closed. I should have guessed at first, instead I get mad and ram my hand inside the shirt. What I feel is no object taped to his body, but a soft breast.

I’m astounded. I look at the POW with surprise and she stares gloomely back at me. I’m still not sure of what I feel and pull the shirt open. And low and behold, there they are, two under developed mounds. At this point I’m at a loss as what to do. I motion for her to button her coat while amazed at how she passed through the line check without revealing her true sex. Some GI was more interested in souvenirs for if she had been discovered I’m sure she would have been dealt with differently.

I knew there were German WAC's in their army but I never dreamed I’d ever find one. This one did not look like a woman. She had the traditional crewcut hair style wearing the same uniform as the other POW’s. The only thing that might suggest her sex was her slight build and even here she could loose herself and her identity in the ranks of her fellow comrads.

I take her arm and lead her out of ranks. Marching her towards the office brings a lot of attention and as I pass one of the guards that brought them in he remarks “found yourself a real bad customer, eh?”

“No” I replied, “a girl.”

He almost choked on his coffee. “A what?” I told him again but I didn’t think he was paying any attention to me. Looking at the figure dressed in that uniform hardly suggested that a female body was hidden there.

“Damn, wait till I tell my buddies about this. We had us a real German whore and let her get away.”

I turned the prisoner over to Sergeant Stremer who spoke German fluently and went back to my searching duties. The implication that the girl was a German whore aroused me some. I wondered what her fate would have been if the men who captured her found out that they had a women on their hands. In back of my mind I knew the answer. She would be passed around until they tired of her and then killed.

Even here she may be thinking the same fate awaited her when in fact she would receive special handling and join other captured women in England. News spread that I had found a woman in the ranks and questions were asked if I touched her vitals. I laughed that one off. But one thing for sure, from then on, searching POW’s would not be such a boresom task. From then on most of us looked forward to the next load of arrivals with that thought in mind.

Will, Pappy and myself spent alot of evenings down the road visiting the girls. Will and Susan's sister had been seeing each other alot. And Will said I should get into Susan's bloomers because both girls expected it. Now I was quite aware that Susan had notions along that line but I wasn't ready yet for that kind of relationship. I still thought alot about Joan and I wanted to cherish what we once had together that last night in New Castle. Pappy, he knew what was troubling me and told me so.

It seems that he and that Red Cross woman at Cherbourg had something going and when she discovered that we were both from the same outfit, she told him about my problem. Now he was trying to get something going with me and Susan. The barriers were still up in my mind and I did not know if they would ever come down.

"Boy, take her to bed---she want's you to."

"In her house, with her mother there?"

"Sure, Will spends the night with her sister, they both expect it."

Running my hand up in that German WAC's shirt cupping her tiny breast had sparked something in me. It had been a long time since Joan. Since any woman for that matter and there was that threat of catching VD. Who knows how many German soldiers they might have slept with before are arrival in Moyen. If only I could let them barriers down. Forget about the past.

I walk alone with my thoughts. The night is cold and a million stars blink down at me. My thoughts are of home. I think of home quite often lately. My mother, my dad and my sister. It has been such a long time since I have seen any of them. So much has happened since I left home. I had such ambitions when I left for the army. Fantasies of life. I had no idea how terrible growing, up was. Its all such a big nightmare. The whole thing is a big farce, payment for reaching manhood.

The next day the three of us go to the girls house for a bath. Will had agreed to a case of K-rations in exchange for a bath in a real tub. I had no idea that taking a bath was such a community thing. When we reached the house the tub was ready with steaming hot water. The "doush" was accompanied by the girls scrubbing our back and pouring warm water over us. I felt a little embarrased because I was still a private person and having my back scrubbed by strange woman was a real sensation.

Pappy went first. He sat in that tub smoking a big, cigar singing something in Italian while the girls scrubbed his back and the old woman poured warm water over him. He was having a hell of a good time. Will and Susan's sister were in the barn tasting the fruits of sexual bliss. Strange thing about those French farm houses the barn is built on to the house.

When Will and the girl returned from the barn, Susan takes my arm and leads me there. It was a smelly place with all the different odors that accompany farm life. I began to feel uneasy. A feeling comes over me suggesting I have no business there. She is just a kid. Maybe a woman before her time but still a kid. I wonder then if she is still a virgin. Would I be her first. I will never know if I keep avoiding her. For in wartime there are no virgins. Only lonely women. Greatful, accommodating women. All of a sudden I get to my feet. Susan looked up at me startled and I reach down and take her arm and we leave the barn. Pappy looked up and smiled, "How was it Kid?"

"Shut-up pappy." I snapped then I shucked my clothes and climbed into the hot tub oblivious of the women.

*

PART TWENTY THREE

The snow fell all night. The temperature dropped and the weather intensified into a young blizzard. The compound is empty and we were packing our gear for the move come the next morning. This was to be our last night at Moyen. As the wind howled outside whisking about the snow drifts, Will, Pappy and myself contemplated seeing the girls and the family one more time before we left.

We could not tell them where we were going only that we were leaving the next morning. Our destination was Rosiere, near the once beseiged town of Bastogne. Intelligence from the high command reported that the Germans were planning a counter offenensive to gain control of the fuel depots. It was warm in that little farm house but there was an atmosphere of forlorn there too. I caught only a few words in French I understood during our conversations. I noticed to, that there was an awarness in Susan's, eyes. She talked with me in her tiny voice, now and then I'd catch a word in French I understood.

It was known to them that we were leaving long before we said anything. What ever happened in Moyen was known to them. Even some of the military movements. They had there own intelligence sources left over from the German occupation and were able to piece bits of information together from years of habit.

Everyone was talking at the table. There was a genuine feeling of friendship among us inspite of the fact that when we left we'd never see each other again. It was a kind of painful experience. For in wartime every day may be your last.

Susan sat across from me and at times I caught a little smile from her suggesting that she wanted to be with me also. It was a very painful evening to say the least. We all knew that after that night we'd be gone. Suddenly Will and Susan's sister get up. Will excuses himself and the two of them go to the barn. Pappy elbowed

me turning my attention to Susan.

"Don't sit there like a dummy Kid."

"I know."

"Take her upstairs, I'll keep the old woman busy, if I were younger, me and that little gal would be in the sack do'n the horizonal rumba,---go on---go"

It was nine thirty when we left. Just before going outside Pappy says, "Hey, kid, Sussan has something she wants to say to you in English."

"What?"

"Ah, it's a little something I've been teaching her." He looks over at her then, nodding and saying something to her in French. I could see a faint whisp of a smile on her lips as she tried to form the words. When they came out I felt a flush of anger well up inside me towards pappy.

"I 1-o-v-e you Ed-d-ee."

I could have kicked that old mans ass up over his collar for putting her up to that.

"You old bastard!"

"Alright already, she's been trying to tell you all along but you didn't understand her, so I taught her to say it in English.?"

"And what am I supposed to say, I love you back?"

"Say nothing, say nothing,---hell,--let's go."

She took my arm then and there were tears in her eyes. I guess she understood what I had said and that it was directed to her. She helped me bring down the barriers and I thanked her for that. And deep down I felt a sense of loneliness come over me. I am still the romantic. Still searching for that certain something we all look for in life. I am slowly, bitterly, becoming a man.

It was a bright brisk morning. The blizzard had moved off somewhere and the snow covered the earth with a new white blanket. We loaded, I was at the rear of the convoy sitting near the tail gate. Old burr-head blew that whistle and we moved out of that school yard and down the road towards the girls' house. I saw her then, running down the street trying to catch a last glimpse of me. Now I'd seen similar sceens in the movies but I never thought I'd ever be a part of one. She came closer, the trucks were moving kind of slow because of the deep drifts, and before I realize it Susan is clinging to the back of the tailgate chanting-- "Edee--Edee." Pappy he's in the truck to and he's saying nothing. Because he's the cause of this unforgetable experience in my life and I feel like a damn fool with that girl mak-

ing such a big thing out of our leaving.

She's wearing that same blue coat with the hood flung back on her shoulder and hair flying. I'm afraid she'll get hurt if the truck picks up speed and I reach out and pull her up into the truck and instantly she plants her cold lips on mine crying and saying something in French and those English words pappy taught her,----"I 1-o-v-e---yo-u--Edd-ee."

I remember saying to Pappy, "This is all your fault old man, now bang on the cab and stop the truck."

There was laughter everywhere. I was embarrased and Susan was frightened. She realized then that she had done something foolish and tried to get out of the truck. We stop and she climbs out hurridly and stands on the snow covered road until we were out of sight. All Pappy could say was, "I'm sorry kid."

We stopped for chow, twice for piss call. By that afternoon we come in sight of Bastogne. Once again the war with its destruction lay before us. As we travel I saw smoke blackened German Tiger Tanks, their black swastika smeared with mud, their turret tops flung open, tracks ripped loose, some with smoke still coiling out of the open hatches. It was a devastating sceen. There must have been hundreds of disabled vehicles both American and German standing quietly in the afternoon sunlight. Patches of snow and rivers of mud were everywhere. Bulldozers were busy pushing the stalled tanks off the road opening the way into Bastogne. Now and then airplanes flew over the battlefield like buzzards seeking a kill.

I saw my first dead man of the war. A victim of the battle that raged there several weeks ago, lay frozen in the snow. Probably one of the infantrymen who followed the panzer outfits stalled for lack of fuel, left there because the Germans had a habit of boobtrapping some of their dead. A nasty job for the demolition paople. A bitter prize for a American souvenir hunter.

It was here that General McAuliffe penned those immortal words, "NUTS" to the German commander demanding his surrender on December 22, 1944. McAuliffe commanded his own 101st Airborne Division and an assortment of tank and Artillery outfits consisting of the 969th and 755th Field Artillery Battalions, both mainly composed of negro troops manning the powerful 155mm howitzers and the 9th and 10th Armored Divisions and a Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 705th and an assortment of Infantry Divisions of the 4th and 80th.

Even as the afternoon sunlight spread over the battlefield

one could sense an atmosphere that always seemed to hang over an area ravished by war. Nothing was left standing. As we moved on down the road, MP's directed the traffic. Whistles blew, voices raised in high and low tones and passing an MP I saw the "Screaming Eagle" patch on his field jacket shoulder.

We moved on, arms waving, whistles blowing, someone shouting, "This way Goddamit," and the trucks groaned and moaned their way through the turbulance of smow and mud, the same road occupied by those silent Tiger Tanks not so long ago. Strange, after the intensity of the shelling by both sides at Bastogne, some of the buildings were still standing.

Some are raked by machine gun fire, rifle and shrapnel but for the most part, the outskirts of the city are still intact. The city itself was in shambles. As we drove through it I can see gutted buildings and foundations where buildings once stood. Members of the 101st Airborne and other units walk the rubbled streets. The city was besieged for ten days. Reduced to a pile of stone and brick and chared timbers. A magnificent monument of war.

Our trucks move slowly through the doomed city then out onto the open road again. For the night we stopped at Morhet.

January 18, 1945.

The next morning we continued on to the village of Rosiere to pick up a load of POW's left over from the Bastogne campaign. Rosiere was the site of a quartermaster supply depot. And a small Pow compound. Upon reaching Rosiere detail was posted and members of our unit were to patrol both the POW camp and supply depot. The krauts were in retreat everywhere and the moping up was still underway in some areas. After three days the compound began to swell with POW's. It was decided to shuttle out three or four truck loads and take them back to Merville. A long trip. The night before the shuttle I wrote a letter home. As I was about to get some sack time I hear an explosion. The ground shakes and the windows in the house rattle, someone mutters "The depot." The Germans had dropped English speaking paratroopers dressed as American MPs behind our lines to disrupt communications and commit sabotage and confusion within the Allied forces. We were warned to keep a watchful eye on anyone wearing the armband of the MP.

Pappy and I were selected along with six others as a guard detail. We escourted the POW's to Merville and on our way back stopped at Moyen. The driver saying he wanted to see someone. I said nothing about Susan. For I would rather continue on to Rosiere then go through another experience like before. We arrive in the middle of the night. I think it was about 1:30 in the morn-

ing. Pappy say's he's going to go to Susan's house and stay the night instead of sleeping in the cold schoolhouse. It's decided to lay over until the next morning.

"Come on kid, that Belgin gal will be happy as hell to see you."

"You know Pappy, your a damned agitator." I tell him while trudging through the snow and he gives me that silly laugh of his. I can tell he's pleased, it wouldn't suprise me none if he had something to do with my being on that guard detail. When we arrive at the house its dark. Not a light anywhere. Pappy he goes brazingly up to the door and knocks. Now in the old days back in the states its not such a good idea to go pounding on someones door in the middle of the night. But Pappy. he keeps pounding.

Pretty soon I see a light moving inside and someone calls out in French. Pappy shouts, "It's me, Pappy, I've got Eddie with me." Chains rattle from within and the slide bolts are released and as soon as the door opens out rushes Susan in her nightgown. I'm glad to see her. She sees me and before I knew it she's in my arms.

We go inside and Pappy is making arrangements for our sleeping quarters. Susan's sister must have asked about Will because Pappy mentioned his name in their conversation.

"I made a deal with the old woman for us to stay the night."

I'm suspicious and ask, "What kind of deal."

"Never mind kid, just take Sussan and go to bed."

"Just like that, eh, what kind of a deal, Pappy?"

"Oh, shit. You got to know everything. Well, if you must know--I'm sleeping with her." Indicating the old woman.

"You old bastard you," I said, "you've been screwing her all along, haven't you?"

"Go to bed kid."

Susan starts up the stairs, looking back she motions for me to follow her. All three women are accommodating. Including the mother. Old pappy is a coniving old devil. Will must have known. Being without a man for so many years Susan's mother had needs to. I guess the reason I never suspected Pappy having an affair with her was because the older woman could not let her real feelings be known. Somewhere her husband may still be alive. She had barriers to in a sense and for the moment she let them down for Pappy.

Our goodbyes the next morning were nothing like they were before, but they were our last. We loaded up, Susan standing outside the schoolyard, and as we drove off I turned to Pappy saying, "You're a sly old bastard, you know it?"

"So I've been told."

*

PART TWENTY FOUR

Arlon, Belgium. February 8, 1945

It was dark when we rolled into the city but even in the darkness one could tell that the war had reached this ancient tourist attraction five miles off the border of Luxembourg. But on this date there were no tourist on the streets. No gay laughter or tooting of car horns. For in this capital city there was only desolation, destruction and stillness which followed in the wake of battle.

Moving through the streets the moaning and rumbling of our truck echoed back and forth from its high buildings which stood defeated, ready to crumble upon a given command. We passed fallen statues, bits of beautiful architecture, riddled by bullets and artillary shells, built centuries ago. Destroyed in a matter of days, lost in a world of madness.

We wound through the street like a slow moving serpent seeking some medieval prey. It had been a long ride and we were ready to unload when we reached the "Rue de La," a castle like building designated to be our headquarters, once a monastary before the war, was now a POW camp confining the men responsible for its partial destruction.

Someone once said that everything always looked better in the morning. But when morning came, the pity of war confronted us. We have witnessed no destruction until Arlon. I recall this city very clearly because up to that date it was the largest city we had entered and lived in for one solid month. For on our off duty hours we'd go up town and wander through its ruins.

All the stores had been looted when the 4th Armored and 26th and 80th Divisions swept through the city but we could tell by

the furnishings left behind what they catered to before the holocaust befell them. Jewelry trays were scattered in one, its safe standing open, the door blasted off its hinges. Glass and bits of plaster were under foot and as you walked the crunching sounds touched the nerves in your back sending chills up the spine.

If one has visions as I do, its easy to imagine what a beautiful city Arlon must have been. There was a park of sorts across the street from a building that still had letters on it saying BACK-KLEIN. Around this sidewalk park was evidence of iron rails, probably a fence. There was a pool there to, half filled with water and ice, with bits of paper and wood floating about. At one edge of this pond, a monument, or bust, sculptured in marble, lays face down in the water. The area is riddled with bullets. The street heaped with rubble. It's an ugly place, it's beauty gone up in smoke. Its dreams blown away by the winds.

One afternoon, Al, Chris and myself entered what was once an apartment building. It was amazing because in these apartments were all types of clothing. Even some furniture. I opened the door to one room and looked out over the street. Half the room had been blown away, but a bed with a mattress were still intact. We went through dresser drawers still containing clothing. In a closet clothes still hung on handers. Shoes neatly placed on the floor.

In one dresser I found a pouch filled with Belgium coins and currency. In another a set of culflinks. It gave me the creeps going through someones belongings. It never occured to me that the people who once lived there might return one day seeking what ever was over looked by the invaders of their property. We were in a sense looters, although late, looters never the less.

That night I'm on duty at the compound walking fence patrol. It's a cold night. I can hear voices coming from the POW's. I see the dark shapes of men huddled in conversation. Overhead a V1 hissed flying west. I'm haunted by sad memories of a life that might have been.

To date not a single prisoner has escaped the 430th. As we draw nearer into Germany, I'm sure that danger will increase. I have often wondered what I'd do if one did go over the wire. Could I kill him. Could I shoot him down? Just how much influence had Joan's death have on me.

Its been three months since her death. I'm still not sure how I would react during an escape. I look through the darkness at those huddled there knowing that the answer lies with them. Maybe I'm getting bored again or looking for an excuse to get even. Maybe one day I will know.

We were a complete guard unit responsible for another man's captives. But it didn't bother me anymore. The 430th had gained

a reputation up and down the line as an efficient, responsible outfit capable of handling hundreds of POW'S during transfers, and by the thousands in the stockades. And since our escape record was zero, that boosted our reputation even more.

Feeding two or three thousand POW's twice a day was no easy chore either. Supplies had to be trucked in daily to feed those bastards. They ate cooked rations, not like those back in the states who had food soometimes better than we did. The kitchen help was the same bunch of hoodlums that fed us. Sergeant Brown and his mess staff. We transported the food to the compound in back of a six-by-six truck in garbage cans the largest thing we had to carry it in. Each can had a number painted on it indicating the section of camp the food had been sent. Each section was numbered.

KP was no pleasurable duty. Not when it was in regards to the POW chow. We could use but a few POW's as KP workers because we didn't have them long enough to pick reliable prisoners for kitchen help so our men were chosen for KP duties and that scalded most of them. Pfc. Delbert Magart, Archie Snider and myself worked one detail. Magart had a hell of a cold and at intervals as Archie was stirring the cooked food, Magart would caugh up a green slime, then spit it into the pot. Archie laughed saying, "If I could piss, I'd thin it down." Well one day, while the Greek was on KP duty, he had to piss, and in the pot it went. You'd think we'd feel quilty watching them slurp that food down, but we didn't.

How could you feel quilty about anything concerning those POW's when information came in telling us of the concentration camp liberated by the Allies. The horrors which those people suffered at the hands of those madmen. Deliberate starvation. Death in all its violent fury. I think each and every one of us realized this. For in a very morbid way we were getting back at them. A POW guard back in the states viewed a training film on this very subject showing the Jews being butchered by the Germans. He took up his machine gun, went down to the compound and killed eight and wounded more than a score. Almost the same situation as back at Cherbourg. Something snapped within him as it did the Lieutenant this is something that could happen to any of us.

March 9, 1945. Oos Germany.

The women we slept with tonight might have slept with the enemy the night before. That's how close to the war we were. Oos was a lay over. A shuttle camp with a very small compound. There were about a hundred POW's there captured just a day earlier. One

was an SS Major. A cocky bastard, strutting around stiff legged, his uniform black with polished black boots suggesting that he was captured while on leave or attending some social event requiring the black uniform. I'll never forget the way he looked at me. He hated my guts.

We were to stay at Oos until the POW's were picked up and taken to the rear. Our quarters were in a private home. It was a nice house belonging to a doctor and his wife. It was slightly furnished and the woman came in daily and cleaned up just like she still lived there. Pappy had his eye on her and give him time he'd score foxy old devil. He payed no attention to the "No fraternizing" rule when it came to the women.

Although the area showed signs of heavy fighting several farm houses seemed untouched. There was always that feeling in the air which follows the aftermath of war. A stillness which hovers over the land. As if time had stood still. Its never known by the people who are caught up in a take over just how their new conquerors will look upon them. And in Germany an enemy had battered down their barriers.

That first afternoon at Oos we settled in. The house in which we were quartered was in excellent condition. Adjacent to the main house was a garage and we were detailed to clean out everything to make room for the captains vehicle. It was a dusty job. In one corner there was a stack of empty boxes and newspapers. Junk that accumulates in everyones home. But in this garage there was a trap door under that stack of boxes. There was a big iron ring and with a great deal of care we pulled up slowly.

Someone called for a flashlight. With the door flung back we cautiously went down into the cellar. Now it was a certainity that this cellar had been overlooked by the advancing armys and at a time like this all kinds of visions went through our minds. What was down there? Was someone hiding in the darkness----what?

The beam of that flashlight moved slowly over stacked cartons. Furniture, oil paintings and mysterious crates. The people who lived here had hidden their most precious possessions in that cellar from the enemy---us. And here we are right in the middle of all that loot.

In a trunk we found photographs. Clothing, pieces of someone else's life. Mothballs stung our nostrils. The musty odor of woodrot. In a crate we found medical books. In another we found medical instraments, a micorscope a metal box containing two stethescopes. It was an eerie place. I could see the Greek's mouth watering as he held up that microscope, "There's no tell'n how much this is worth," and he stuffed it under his overcoat.

On our way out of that cellar just under the stair well we

found two woodwn crates. With a bayonet someone pried off the lid. It was filled with straw. Under the straw were bottles of French champagne. Pappy held up one and shouted "How much am I bid" Everyone whooped and hollered and the champagne was taken upstairs. The woman of the house was in the kitchen when we came in carrying that champagne but didn't seem to realize it came from her cellar.

Glasses were passed around. The cork blew off and we stood in a circle holding them up. Pappy, he noticed that the woman was watching us, and reaching for a glass, filled it and handed it to her. At first she refused but Pappy, in that overbearing manner of his, shoved it at her saying in English, "Tonight old woman, we'll pop another cork, yours, just you and me in the sack." The woman held her glass up high and chanted, "Heil Roosevelt" that sure brought a laugh from everyone. It sounded strange to say the least. But a natural reaction I'm sure from her.

That evening Will, he came in carrying a squawking hen under one arm and a sack of eggs. "The farmer down the road raised all kinds of hell," he said, "We'll eat first class tonight." I was scheduled to stand watch over that SS officer.

As it turned out the SS Major had been involved somehow in the Malmedy massacure of 86 American GI's. He was confined in an area by himself. It seemed that the other POW's were not in sympathy with any member of the SS and for their own sefety were always separated. I watched him sitting on a box, his back as straight as a rod, immaculent in uniform. He appeared to be posing for a portriat. Suddenly he stood, both hands clutching the lapels of his coat, and walked over to me.

"Do you have a cigarette?"

He spoke good English. Such good English infact that I thought someone was behind me. He noticed the startled look on my face and a gold tooth winked under a thin grin.

"I speak English fluently, I was born in Minnesota before the war."

I didn't trust him. And the fact that he spoke such good English made me trust him even less. What kind of a man was this. He was handsome, about thirty with fair complection. His uniform was something out of the pages of a magazine. on the lapels were the skull and cross bones insigna representing everything he stood for.

The SS were feared by everyone. The order was founded in 1923 by Hitler to act as his personal bodyguards. Later it came under the leadership of Heindrich Himmler. They were a hated and dreaded branch of the military. And whenever the chance presented itself, other POW's were known to kill any member of the SS con-

fined with them.

"How about that cigarette?"

"I don't smoke."

"I can understand your concern, but I assure you, I mean you no harm."

It was strange talking with someone in another uniform who spoke the same language as I did, especially one I hate. He was a marked man and he knew it. How he ever got this far alive I'll never know.

"I don't care what you think, just get back over on that box and sit."

"I happen to be of a superior rank and according to the Geneva Convention I'm to be treated as such."

The arrogance of the man welled up inside me. "Is that what you offered at Malmedy, good treatment?"

He gave me that wicked smile of his and walked stiffly back to the boX. He attempted to keep the conversation going from that distance.

"I would like to talk,if you will listen."

"Alright, talk."

"When I was a boy before the war," he began, "I lived in Minnesota on a farm with my father and mother. My father was from Germany and one summer in 1939, he brought us here to meet my grandparents. The war broke out during our visit and we were detained. I was put in a youth camp, my father was brought into the army, I've never seen either of them since."

It was a sad story, but one I would hear frequently as we moved deeper into Germany. But there was one question I wanted to ask him. "Then how come you joined the SS if your such an unfortunate man?"

"I did not choose the SS, it was forced on me."

About two thirty I returned to my quarters, just as I was about to go to sleep I hear something in the next room. I lay there listening. I hear Pappy say in a low voice, "Hold still." I get up, picked up my flashlight and went into the next room. I shined the light around the room. There lay Pappy yoked up with the woman of the house on the floor. I don't think he missed a stroke. He says to me, "cop-a-broady, kid, I'm busy."

PART TWENTY FIVE

Patton's Third Army continued its drive deep into German territory and we were right up there with the best of them. Taking prisoners fresh off the battlefield was like handling a stick of TNT with a short fuse. You never knew what to expect and the men who captured them wanted to be rid of them as quickly as possible.

Old Blood and Guts was forever pushing. He had the krauts on the run. And those who didn't run were stacked like cord wood awaiting burial. Serving under Patton was a real hell. I think every man under his command felt this way. But there was a pride for the man to. He got things done at the risk of his men. He was a forceful bastard who never feared death. I don't think he even respected it. For when it came, and I don't think he ever thought of dying because he believed in reincarnation, I imagine he'd try to make some kind of deal with death in order to carry out his mission in life.

This mission of course was war. He loved it. He bathed in it. It was his destiny to become a great leader of men. He was after all reincarnated as Alexander the Great to defeat the "Hunn" fight the Germans and send Hitler like a whipped dog to his bunker. He had an uncanny gift of rallying men into doing things he would not do himself if he though it impossible. He loved the fight and in his own strange way, he loved his men too. I don't think we loved him. We cussed him every day of the week and the near mention of his name brought up a barrage of gutter words that could be heard all the way to Berlin.

Pattons appetite for combat and the smell of gunpowder I guess came from his family background. His grandfather was killed in action as a Colonel at the Battle of Cedar Creek. Seven uncles

had served as officers in the Confederate Army. He was born in 1885, his father a wealthy rancher in San Plarino, on the outskirts of Pasadena, California, and in growing up he and his father would visit the Civil War battle fields; they were proud of their heritage and military traditions, for the blood of the Virginian flowed deep in their veins.

With a background of this magnitude its easy then to understand why the man was a known "Jew hater." This fortunately was the only thing he and Hitler had in common. This racist influence might have emerged from his southern ancestry. Of course, there were American Jews in the United States Military some of which were under his command, but I don't think he thought of them in terms of Jews as Hitler did. I for one respected the man as a Great military Genious even if I did cuss him daily. For inspite of the man, his men would follow him into hell with water pistols.

Kulmbach Germany, March 11, 1945

POWs were coming in so fast that we had a time keeping them shuttled to awaiting compounds at the rear. Kulmbach housed some of the freshest troops of the German captives. Some were only days off the front. Some only hours. In this mess were men sickened by war. Ready to surrender, ready to go home. And for some, home was Kulmbach.

Snow was deep and the cold unbarable. The nights were long and feared by everyone. The compound was a large one. We were over capacity, 15,000 detaines with gun towers conviently located about the compound. Chow was as always cooked by our Mess crews. Only now we had DPs as kitchen help. Polish refugees quartered away from the camp and off limits to us. The "No fratenization" law was in force here to. We were not to consort with the women with threat of court partial if caught.

We all screwed their women inspite of the law. After all they were the conquered and they expected it. Not one German woman as I recall, at least not in our outfit, shouted rape. It may have happened elswhere, but not in the 430th. We didn't have to rape them. All we had to do was wave a pack of American cigarettes at them or a chocolate bar and up came the skirts. It's remarkable what a pack of cigarettes will do.

On our off nights we would go visit the DP quarters like the Greeks baring gifts of food, candy bars and those magical cigarettes. No man was deprived of a woman. They all were beautiful no matter how ugly they were. And for the price of something to eat, they would do anything for you.

As non-combatants we were in a position to enjoy the favors of most women. For when the war passed through their small villages the non-combatant units moved in setting up operational headquarters. Medics, quarter master and AP units. And as the villagers returned to what was left of their homes, it was the non-combatant GI they expressed their gratitude. The women especially were gratifying. Some had orphaned children to feed, others found themselves widowed and alone. Their only commodity for barter was their bodies. A fair exchange in any war.

Not all the women however were this generous. There were those who waited for their men to return. Hoping against hope that they were still alive. After all, when the war was over the Allies would return to their homeland and the women they serviced would be left behind. Some left with extra mouths to feed, an unexpected addition in the houehold for the returning soldiers who fought for the fatherland. Women in wartime find themselves innocent victims beneath a GI, watching their very lives and morals shamed by war.

Seldom does a man in combat find love and sex as portrayed in the movies. For he is fighting for his life and has no time for love making. After the battle, yes. For it is then that the women emerge. Accommodating women who throw open their legs to their liberators. It's a fair estimate to assure that the average GI while in Europe during wartime went to bed with at least a dozen women of different nationalities. Many of these relationships blossomed into real love affairs with happy endings. These women become known as, "American War Brides."

I was relieved at midnight at the morgue. There were seven krauts there awaiting burial the next morning. Now I never did like watching over the dead. They were not going anyplace but it was part of our duties. On this night I was relieved by the Greek. He told me that he had smuggled a DP woman into his tent dressed as a GI and that she was clean and ready for action.

I wasn't shocked I only became irritated when he said I could have her for a night for a hundred dollars. She will do anything, he said. I told him that I wasn't interested because I knew if I was caught with her in my tent I'd be court martialed because the DP camp was off limits to us. Looking to make a fast hundred the Greek says, "You won't be caught."

Never the less I said no. But he continued to push her at me. He said she was young, fifteen, sixteen, and a real spitfire. "She's worth more than a hundred." he added. The Greek was never caught with that girl in his tent and I often wondered if the CO didn't know about her. Afterall, sex was good for the moral. And I don't think he wanted a repeat of boredom like the one back at

Livingston. I Think he turned his head on several occasions for that very reason. How much money the Greek made with his young whore I never knew. But he got none of mine.

March 17, 1945

The temperature had dropped to the zero mark. The POW's in the compound pounded their feet on the frozen ground, in order to keep their circulation in their bodies moving. A fresh load had came in that morning from the line, and during the searching I could sense that they were fed up with all the fighting and at seeing their comrads fall in combat. One English speaking one told me that the war was nearing an end.

On this particular night the weather was fierce. The cold was so cold that you could hear branches on the nearby trees cracking. The POW's had trouble keeping warm because of no fires. We were near the front, you could see flashing in the distance and the sound of working guns in the fight. No fires were allowed. I patrolled an area near the main gate. Corporal Benbo began his rounds of the compound. My post was between tower one and eight. A lonely vigil at any hour.

At the fence prisoners asked for cigarettes. Some asked for a match. I could see pinpoints of light coming from inhaling cigarettes in the midst of huddled figures seeking some warmth from each other. I could hear them moaning from the cold. Some were probably freezing. Some may have already died from exposure. More bodies for the burial details in the morning.

Corporal Benbo continued his inspection of the guard. At times I could see the beam of his flashlight coming along the fence. In places the snow was very deep. So deep that at times it took great effort to move. The POW's were milling about the compound, moaning, sometimes crying out from the sting of the night. All we could do was pray that at sunrise the moaning would stop. That the warmth of another day would ease the suffering in the compound.

I could feel the sting to, as snow mixed with sleet began to fall. It began slowly at first then came at a punishing force that numbed the face. The wind picked up and the POW movement worsened in the compound. I saw the Corporal coming down the fence about to complete his rounds. Just as he cleared tower one I saw a figure sprint from the shadows and attack the Corporal. Benbo went down. The POW fell upon him and wrestled with him in the deep snowdrifts and I hear Benbo call out for help, and at a run, I hurried to his side. My submachine gun swinging at my side.

By the time I reached the Corporal the POW had him down in

the snow and was grapling for his holstered service pistol. Benbo shouted, “Get him off me.” I brought up my gun in an attempt to scare off the attacker but saw that it was useless without hitting the corporal. I don’t think the POW saw me at first. He was to intent in trying to free Corporal Benbo's pistol.

I’d been carrying one of those SS daggers and on that night I had it strapped on. I pulled the knife and went in after that kraut with the intention of burrying it in him if I couldn’t free the Corporal. He saw me and rolled off the corporal bringing up a leg deflecting the dagger and I saw it disappearing in the snow. I became frightened then because I realized that I would have to fight this man unless I could get to use the gun at my side. All Benbo could do was hold his head in his hands.

He was as scared as hell. Then I remembered that extra clip I carried stuffed under my belt. I pulled it out and as the attacker came at me, I threw out my hand and hit him across the bridge of the nose. He slipped trying to ward off the blow and that gave me the opening I needed.

I brought up the clip again using it as a club and began to club my attacker over the head. He tried to fend off my blows but I was stronger. I was under some kind of strange power. I was reliving my training. Doing what I was trained to do. I was trying to kill a man. Repeatedly I brought down that steel clip filled with heavy lead loads on the mens head. Blood was everywhere. His blood, my blood, for later I discovered I had a nasty cut on the palm of my hand where the corner of the clip penetrated the skin.

All the while I pounded that man, Corporal Benbo chanted, “kill him, kill him.” each time I heard that I pounded even harder. I struck again and again, with such a force that the bullets from my clip flew in all directions. That clip literaly fell apart.

The snow turned a crimson red and I continued to strike out the Corporal shouting, “kill him, kill him,” then all of a sudden I was aware of someone catching me under the arm pits and fearing I was being attacked from the rear, I lashed out coming face to face with Lieutenant Cromer clutching my wrist. I stood there looking down at the frozen ground. My body shook from fear more that from the cold. There was no movement from the beaten man. Only sounds of pain, uttered in feeble surrender.

I was relieved of my post and taken to the medics. Blood was all over my hand and overcoat and I felt a sickness well up inside me. For it was then I realized what had happened. I tried to kill a man. And his blood was on my hands. I threw up and the lieutenant patted me on the back congratulating, me on what a fine

job I'd done in saving Corporal Benbo's life. I might even be awarded the Bronz Star for my actions (one never came).

I wanted no medal. I wanted nothing but to be left alone. Well that time had finally came when I would have to choose between life or death. In this case I'd accomplished both. I had saved the Corporal's life and probably mine at the same time taking the life of another. It's one thing, to shoot a man in combat but an entire different matter using your hands. A defensless POW who was probably freezing and not knowing what he was doing. Only that he wanted to feel the heat of a fire.

By morning the incident was all over camp. Corporal Benbo didn't even as much as thank me. I guess he was more embarassed than thankful. I was only doing my job. For this I was given two days off and a report to fill out. What about the dead POW? What about the man I'd murdered does he not count for something? Who was he. Did he have a family was he someone's father, brother, someones sweetheart husband or who? I felt no pride at all. Had I avenged Joan's death? Can I feel repayed for what that man's people had taken from me----No.

I sat in my quarters feeling sorry for myself. I had done something of which I thought I could never do. I had taken a life. Killing in combat is for survival. It's either you or the enemy. But this kind of killing I was subjected to held no glory. I could feel no pride only misery. For payment the Greek offered that girl to me for free, "Keep her as long as you like," he tells me. This made me mad. I told him to go to hell and take her with him.

For many nights there after I carried that burden of death inside me. And as I walk alone doing my job the best way I knew how, that ordeal at Kulmbach lived in side me. I was no longer that young boy of seventeen so eager for combat at the beginning of the war but a young warrior in an unknown land becoming a man.

PART TWENTY-SIX

We left Kulmbach March 21, 1945, leaving behind some bitter memories. I took an oath to protect my country with my life even if it meant trading ones life for mine. For after all this was war. And in wartime one does things of which he is not so proud of for the sake of liberty.

I certainly was not proud of what I'd done at Kulmbach. My friends thought I'd done a noble thing protecting the life of Corporal Benbo. But I wonder if the man who attacked him really was trying to escape. Why did he wait for that particular moment when the Corporal happened to be at that spot. If he wanted to escape why didn't he just go over the wire and melt into the near-by woods. Chances were that he would get away anyway. I'm sure the man must have lived nearby, afterall, he was confined in his own country with people of his own race willing to help him.

I thought at the time that the man was out of his mind because of the bitter cold. It's reasonable because they were exposed to all kinds of weather awaiting transfer to the rear where they would get shelter and heat. Our guard units were under-staffed for such emergencies that existed at the Kulmbach camp. The conditions their called for immediate action and when that action failed to materialize, we did our job the best way we could. And for years after the Kulmbach ordeal I payed the price. I had trouble sleeping. Feared going on duty with the threat of anothler escape attempt where I would be a participant. To be blunt, I was just plain scared.

It was reasonable too, to assume that he might have been a man accustomed to the heardships of combat. He may have thought he was up on the line and seeing Corporal Benbo set off something inside his head. This I'll never know. For this is only specula-

tion. Because the man was dead when he was brought into the infirmary. There was no glory in his dying. No heroics in combat, only a shameful waste.

We arrived at Mayen on the same day still in Germany. The town like all the others was in shambles. Only a name on a map a victim of war in all its savage fury. Left in its wake were piles of rubble and ashes. Some of these piles still smoking. For the war was somewhere up ahead and we could hear the rumble of working guns in the distance.

We drove through a village once inhabited by people living and working in their own private dreams. Like many tiny villages in Germany, they were picturesque. Objects of picture postcards a symbol of the old way of life. All that was gone in this town, all that and much more. I could see only a few buildings standing. We moved on as if in a dream. In all these months I have never seen any town intact. Only Moyen in Belgium.

We geared down to a crawl then stopped. We had come to a place occupied by a small detachment of men who seemed glad to see us. There was a small compound housing about two hundred POWs. There were no gun towers only a wire fence holding them back. Also confined in a stone and brick building were three German WAC's. One of the guards said that when captured all three were, "drunk as hell, and in no way given a damn."

The presence of these women reminded me of my Moyen experience. The day I found one in the ranks of the male POW's. I had no aspirations of standing guard over them. This was one time I wished to be off the duty roster. But somewhere down the line of command some bastardly noncom included my name on the guard sheet. Watching over these women was something I was not looking forward to. The only advantage of this duty was that it was indoors. Away from the cold. Away from all the memories of Kulmbach.

The camp was set up in a field. Probably someone's potato patch before the war. Nearby stood the smoking remains of an American Jeep. Down the road a German halftrack with the letters "KILROY WAS HERE" painted on it by some enterprising GI, was still smoking. Not far from where the kitchen was set up, lay a dead kraut, frozen, bloated and booby trapped. Death was only something we thought of rarely. Because in our business death was on the other side of the fence. And as surely as they stepped over that boundary, they would meet it head on.

There were GI's from a nearby field hospital searching the ruins for the dead or wounded. Down the road a German civilian stood looking on. Somehow he was caught up in the take over, somehow he surived. It was dark when I climbed the stairs leading to the second floor of the building housing the three women. Pfc.

Anderson was standing outside a doorway which had a glass window in it.

"What are the orders?" I asked.

"Just watch them bitches, the door is locked, Corporal Crawford has the key."

I looked inside. "Ok."

"Alot of stuff goin' to waste in there."

All three were laying down on the floor. There was no furniture in the room, only mats on the floor for them to lay on and a stool. One blonde and two brunettes.

"The blonde is a real bitch. No sooner had I come on duty she comes to the door shouting something in German at me, then opens her coat showing me her tits, and spits on the glass."

"No shit?"

"Yea, she does her damndest to get you in there. I guess she thinks we have the key. The guard I relieved from that other outfit, said she'd do that. She does it to every one who comes on duty,---she'll do it for you."

Anderson left and I settled down on a chair provided for the guards. Now and then I'd get up and look in. Once I saw one get up and go use the pot provided for them. The moonlight outside was casting some shadows in through a broken window. Then I see the blonde raise up stretching like a cat coming out of a sound sleep. She didn't see me at first. All three began talking. Suddenly, the blonde looks my way. I feel threatened. She says something to her compannions then gets to her feet. All at once she comes to the door. Her hands on her wide hips, legs spread, spouting something at me in German. Then she spits on the window her white teeth gleaming. I have no idea what to expect. Then turning, away, she returns to her friends. I'm spared the burlesque show Anderson warned me of.

Or so I thought. All three began laughing and pointing at me. I thought I'd shrink. Then they came to the door blondie leading the pack. She begans slowly to unbutton her coat. I just stood there, probably with my tongue hanging out as she unbuttons her shirt. One reached down and rattled the doorknob, her finger waving me in. Blondie had the shirt open and I see her take out one breast, cupping it in the palm of her hand bouncing it up and down.

I feel the blood rush to me head, and I guess they saw it to because they began to laugh. The blonde spit on the glass and eased her breast back into her shirt spouting something at me---real bitches those three---real bitches. One of the brunettes went over to the pot, lifting her skirt, raising it higher than necessary so I could see the thick matt of black hair, then she sat

down laughing like hell.

Corporal Crawford and a DP carrying food arrived. The Corporal opened the door, drew his revolver with me standing behind him with my gun up, and the DP sat the food on the floor.

"They give you a show yet?"

"Yea."

"They do everybody the same way hoping to get you in there, damn bitches ain't worth a court martial."

The next morning a dead kraut was found in the compound. He'd been stabbed in the back. The weapon was still in the compound with the killer. Somehow he managed to get it by the searchers. That was always a threat we lived with. Most of the killings in the compound were sparked by men who carried a big hate. Usually a noncom fron their own outfit or a private they disliked. Where else could they find a better place to settle personal vendettas than a POW compound.

One afternoon as I was coming off duty I see a POW running away from the compound. He was about two hundred yards from the wire before anyone opened up on him. Bullets from pistols, machine guns and carbines chasing him. I don't think anyone was really wanting to hit him. I think they were trying to scare him into surrendering. But he kept on running, zig-zaging as he went. Then there comes a loud crack of an MI and the man goes down.

Half a dozen men rush to the fallen man. He's only wounded and tries to sit up holding his leg. He was taken to the medics and placed on a table and told to take off his coats. As he undressed something is hitting the floor. It's lead from the forty fives hitting the ground like hail. The forty five caliber was designed for close range. It was used as a shock projectal rather than a kill on contact weapon. And with those POW's wearing so many clothes the .45 could not penetrate the skin, only catch up in the clothing like a net.

During the attempted escape, the POW's cheered the man as he made a dash for freedom. After all that is the duty of all POW's to escape so they can return to fight again. I don't think they were aware that the .45's ever penatrated the body. I think in most minds they were witnessing poor marksmanship on our parts, and excellent running skill from the fleeing prisoner until he was brought down with the M1. This show of what one man could accomplish might spark simular attempts in the days to come.

But there were no further attempts. And as for the women up on the second floor, they continued their burlesque activities every time a new man was placed to guard them.

PART TWENTY-SEVEN

Early in March the Russian troops had enlarged its bridghead over the Oder continuing its progress on the far flanks. Patton's Third Army had reached the Rhine near Coblenz after a sixty mile drive of three days. The U.S. First Army found a gap in the German line and burst through taking the bridge at Remagen, near Bonn. The war was coming to a dramatic end and the curtain of the European theater was coming down. It was a "Berlin or Bust" atmosphere throughout the Allied command. This was significant because of the stories we heard from captured POW's. The Russians were closing in, tightening all escape routes and the German soldier was making a mad run for the Allied lines rather than surrender to the Russians.

With this massive exodus, our compounds were full beyond capacity. And with the armies pressing hard for a quick end to the war, a number of captives simply gave up without firing a shot, for they knew the end was near. So why be killed for a cause that was already crumbling. All they had to do was sit and wait until the end came.

We motored into Baumholder March 23, 1945. Our quarters were in a large brick building that was once the headquarters of the German Wehrmacht stationed there. We discovered later that the building was somekind of military academy and the parade ground turned into a POW compound. Life at Baumholder was no different than any other POw camp. But in the weeks to come activities around the camp became less boring. As the war ground down we experienced on several occasions the surrendering of dozens of mixed German soldiers. Infantry, tank outfits, artillary units and even some airforce personal.

On one particular morning while off duty and just milling

around, a big black limo with white flags flying on the front fenders and about two hundred marching German soldiers taking up the rear, came motoring up. Now I had heard of similar occasions about German surrender but never expected to be a part of one. The officer in command, a Major, decked out in his finest Wehrmacht uniform, stepped from that car snapping orders accompanied by a white flag asking for the officer in charge of the GI forces there.

One could not help feel some kind of pride for those men. For they were a beaten people but nevertheless, their pride as a German soldier overshadowed everything else. They snapped about like toy soldiers. Stiff, straight backed, sober faced and surrendering in the finest tradition of the kind of soldiers they were.

The assemblance was met by our Captain accompanied by our officers, and a formal, surrender was executed. There were no weapons surrendered, all firearms had been abaonded long before the surrender took place. Finally, I along with a few other loafers were ordered to escort the prisoners to the compound.

On two other occasions that first week at Baumholder surrendering enemy troops came to our camp. We were overcome with POW's. Overcome and glad of it. Because the surrendering was a signal that the war was drawing to a close. And the general attitude of the captives was one of anxiety. There was singing in the camp at night. Laughter and playfullness during the daylight hours. For these men realized that soon, they would return home to their loved ones. The Axis wheel crushed. A new beginning awaited them. This changed our moods to. We were still at war and the fighting continued on all fronts, but we had our anxieties as well. For there were some men in our outfit who had not seen their sons or daughters. They had only pictures sent them by their wives. They were anxious for a speedy end. Anxious to return home. The attitudes of the POW's only seemed to assure us that victory was near. Listening to "Axis Sally" over the radio one might get a different picture. She insisted that the Allied armies would soon fall under the weight of the Nazi machine. Even as the Russians were driving hard at their flanks slaughtering everything in their wake, raping their women, murdering their children, she insists that Germany will rise up under its present setbacks. That Germany will win the war and drive her invaders off her soil. But radio Berlin would soon be silenced and there would be fighting in its streets. And Hitler would retreat to his bunker at Berlin only to commit suicide on the day after his marriage to Eva Braun, their bodies cremated in the garden in accordance with Hitler's instructions.

April 1, 1945

Five trailer trucks were lined up outside our headquarters. With each driver a guard was assigned. We were going up on the line to pick up prisoners captured that morning. The surrendering of so many enemy soldiers had became a burden and the outfits on the line had no way to cope with such an exodus.

My driver was a thick barrel chested Irishman from the city of New York. He sat impatiently behind the wheel of that big truck like he was going to a funeral. Sitting beside him waiting for the command to "roll out," I caught the odor of booze on his breath. Now I didn't care about the drinking, all I was concerned about was his driving. And when he told me hadn't slept in twenty four hours, I began to worry some. After all, this was April 1st, all fools day.

The sun had already gone down when we finally pulled out. We were the second truck in the convoy and would remain so until we returned to camp. My driver didn't talk much only held on to that steering wheel like he was attached to it. After a while it became dark. There were still patches of snow on the ground along the roadside and the cold of that night had began to set in. A map of the country in which we were traveling was between us along with a cartridge belt and a holstered .45 coiled on it.

Like I said, he didn't talk much. At times I thought he was asleep because of his silence. We passed through small villages torn by the war. After about an hour I saw a freight car still on its track burning out of control telling me that the war was close at hand. Before we left camp we were told that the password of the night was "Batman" the countersign, "Robin," and at midnight it would be changed. Not until then would we know the new password and countersign. So we would have to make the trip and return to camp before midnight in order to still be under the present password should we be separated for some reason of another. A Cinderella type situation.

By ten o'clock we picked up the POW's. I could hear gunfire in the distance. Sporadic firing, like firecrackers on the forth of July. Someone said that it was enemy amunition discharging out of control in a nearby shed set on fire by the retreating Germans. After some hot coffee and some chit-chat from the men on the line, we headed back for our camp.

Lieutenant Cromer was in the Jeep leading the convoy with Sergeant Verchinski and Corporal Barrow. Another jeep took up the rear with two guards. After about an hour on the road back, the truck in which I was stationd began to act up. The driver began cussing and gunning the acclerator and shifting gears. The truck

began to slow down, buck, then stopped.

"I knew the son-of-a-bitch would quit, I knew it." Raged the driver.

"What's wrong?" Asked the Lieutenant.

"I don't know sir," said the driver.

He turned the motor over again and again. Finally he got out of the truck and raised the hood. "Someone turn it over." The Lieutenant got in and ground down on the accelerator. It snorted and bucked, then it started.

"We'll pull in around you, you take up the rear. If you have trouble, we'll have to go on ahead. We'll send someone back for you."

I didn't like the sound of that. I had seventy five very cold POW's in back of that open topped trailer. That told me I'd have to get out on the fender like we did back at Moyen. If that was the case I could only watch one side of the truck leaving the other blind. If a POW get off on the drivers side I'd never see him. And I was responsible for all of them.

Watching those trucks pull in around me gave me the creaps. I began to pray a little that everything would go OK. But the driver, he kept cussing everytime the truck made a little bobble, finally it quit and he pounded the dash with his fist. "I told'm back at the motor pool something was wrong with this bastard, I told'm."

Raising the hood again, the driver and Corporal Barrow worked on something unknowing to me. For I was out on the road watching the POW's. The corporal got in the truck and started it again. I never really knew what was wrong with that truck, only that when it was in a certain gear, something would go wrong and it would choke down. It was decided to travel in second gear since that was the gear the truck seemed to perform the best in, only it would be slow going, and if we stopped, it was a good chance that the truck would choke down again and we'd be stranded.

We were left behind crawling along at a speed that would put a turtle to shame. I was outside on the fender freezing my tail off unable to see much because the tears in my eyes kept blurring everything. But I did watch the rest of the convoy as it was leaving us. Finally after what seemed a long time out on the fender, I managed to get inside that truck as it moved along to warm myself. I realized that if any of those POW's escaped I'd get my butt chew'd out and put on report for a week. But at the time I don't think I really worried about it much.

I thought all along the driver knew where he was going. All he had to do was follow the road. If we came to a cross road, just consult the map. We did this with my flashlight. And whenever we

made a turn I kept my fingers crossed that we were traveling in the right direction. Something bothered me however. Not once did we see any GI's or other American vehicles. And something else bothered me. All of the towns we passed through were intact. Infact the war seemed to have left us.

"Something's wrong, driver, everything looks to quiet. I haven't seen any of our outfits since we left the convoy. I hope the hell we're not lost."

"Lost hell, get out that map, see if you can see any signs along the road that are on the map."

"I don't remember any of this," I said, "besides, we should have been challenged by now."

I played the light over the map trying to figure out if we were on the right road. But I had no idea where we were. And I don't think the driver did either. We were lost. The map slipped to the floor and when I picked it up I was looking at a different map. This could not be. I turned the map over, and sure enough, there was a map on both sides. Only the new side had lines drawn in red indicating the route we had taken.

"There's two map's here." I said.

"What?"

"See, there's a map on both sides only on one side it's marked in red."

"Goddamn, we're lost," cursed the driver, "were behind enemy lines. We're go'n in the wrong direction."

He was right. We were going in the wrong direction and the POW's behind us were as quiet as church mice. The driver made a wide turn at an intersection and headed back down the road from which we came. Its a wonder we hadn't come up on enemy patrols. The Germans in the back might have been mistaken for troops being moved up on the front by anyone who saw us in the dark. Troop movements might well go unnoticed since there have been so many over the past five years. This was something I counted on because I was sure we were lost now and my greatest fears were that the truck would run out of fuel or go dead before we reached our destination. We were still in very serious trouble because neither of us could read German, and by turning back, I wasn't to sure we were on the right road but only going around in circles.

The driver consulted the map every few minutes saying, "Is that sign on the map?" I'd only shake my head no but we'd continue on hoping for the best. Amazing the way the truck performed, like it realized the position we were in and was determined to get us back behind our own lines.

We traveled a long time before I noticed landmarks familiar to me. The driver saw them to. I was pleased to learn that he to

began to remember where he was. I'd just about given up thinking it was hopeless and in the end we would be the prisoners instead of the ones behind us.

Then a reassuring thing happened. We were challenged by an American patrol. Now I don't have to elaborate on what a strange combination we were. There we were. Two GI's in a GI vehicle, with a white star painted on the doors and hood, but in the back were the equivalent of a company of enemy soldiers and a truck, when stopped, might never start again. And to make things more interesting, the password had been changed at midnight.

The krauts had been known to use American vehicles to penatrate our lines. This was done during the breakthrough in the Arbenns and other sectors. American speaking Germans were dropped behind our lines dressed as MP's to disrupt communications, so why not here? The driver stuck his head out the cab window trying to tell the GI challenging us of our perdicament, but no dice. The new password had been changed to " Mickey ", so being an American, the countersign had to be "Mouse" I tell the driver to reply saying, "Mouse," he did and in doing so we had half a dozen rifles leveled at us, wrong guess.

"Stop that truck and get out." Came the challenge.

The driver angered. "I can't stop the son-of-a-bitch, if I do, it won't start again."

All rifles were leveled on the truckload of POW's and as we jerked to a shuttering stop, the driver cussed again. "Goddamn it, now you've done it."

"Get out of the truck" came the challenge again. So we climbed out with our hands in the air, the driver cussing every breath. We had lights shined in our faces, dogtags were checked and the truck searched. Someone came up with the map and I tried to explain that we were enroute to the POW camp with this load of prisoners when we had truck trouble and was left behind to make it on our own. Then a Corporal came up and looked us over. "You may be who you say you are, but you gave the wrong countersign."

After some inspection of the POW's and finding no weapons we were freed with a cup of good hot coffee and told that the new countersign was "Minnie" in case we were challenged by another patrol. The Corporal, he says no kraut can cuss like that driver. I guess that experience impressed the driver because I heard no more profanity for the rest of the trip. That is, until we came to its unbelievable climax.

The truck turned over with the first click of the ingition. Thats the first time it started so well. I'm sure it must have run hot although it never once showed signs of overheating. We traveled over familiar roads all the while I thought we'd meet

some of our outfit coming to help us. But never did. Daylight was beginning to show in the east and everything began to look better as morning came. About mid day as we turned up a hill, I look down and see the compound.

"There's the camp," I shouted.

The driver says, "I'd better turn around."

He slowed down, and making a wide turn, the truck choked down and quit. "Son-of-a-bitch," he barked braking to a stop. The truck jack-knifed in the middle of the road blocking it.

The driver got out. "I'll go for help." He walked off a very disgruntled man. I told the POW's to unload and sit by the roadside. One of them could speak English so I selected him to be my interpeter. There I was with seventy five POW's and my .45, sub-machine gun with only one clip. I was so tired I could sleep standing up. After about two hours I'd began to wonder if the driver would ever return. The POW's didn't mind, most of them were asleep on the grass. I heard a vehicle coming and I see a jeep swing up the hill. When it came to a stop a second Lieutenant lifted himself out. We saluted and he told me what happened.

The driver came to his headquarters. After drinking some coffee they prepared to return to me when the driver slipped off an icy runningboard and broke his leg. The Lieutanant said that a truck would be along to pick up the POW's and escort us to camp so we waited. No truck. The Lieutenant became irritated and said he'd go search for the truck and for me to sit tight.

Well, I was irritated too and tired as hell. I hadn't had any sleep in eighteen hours. After about another hour I told the English speeking one to get them on their feet and we would make the rest of the way on foot.

"Mache schnell, on your feet, let's go." I ordered.

They were strung out in front of me walking down the country lane a ragged looking bunch. We drew alot of attention as we made our way down the road. Not once were we approached by the military.

Finally we walked into the company area. The POW leading the column shouted a command, the POW's stopped in a clicking of snapping heels and we were greated by Lieutenant Cromer. He looked somewhet confused as I turned those POW's over to him. All I wanted was some sleep.

"We sent a truck out to pick you up," he said, "what happened?"

"We got lost."

"Lost?"

"It's a long story. I'll make out a report."

*

PART TWENTY EIGHT

Regensburg, Germany April 7, 1945 our last command. We were located 75 miles from Nurenberg, 30 miles from the Czech border at one of the largest POW camps in Germany. Our quarters was once a military Academy used by the Hitler youth groups as a training camp.

The academy spread out over hundreds of acres of land. With factories manufacturing gun barrels and war material surrounding the camp. In one bombed out factory some of the gun barrels were still locked in their lathes unfinished. I found tools of all sorts scattered everywhere. Uncanny as it might seem, I noticed a workman's apron hanging on a nail near the machinery as if the wearer had hung it there to go to lunch. Nearby the industrial site were the DP's living in small buildings who once were employed in the factories as slave laborers.

There was a grilled iron gate at the entrance of the camp with a guard shack still intact. Inside the academy long halls ran the length of the building with doorways leading into the classrooms. These hallways were unique. On the walls were painted beautiful murals depicting scenes from German literature. Military battles, with iron fisted men wearing the German uniform, the red and black swastika on their helmets.

They represented the future youth of Germany. The master race invisioned by Hitler of whom would rule the world. I saw great eagles, wings spread, the red and black swastika clutched in their talons painted over the doorways in the hallways. Magnificent works of art wasted on plastered walls symbolizing a lost cause. One can imagine the activities that might have transpired in that building. The teachings of war drilled into young minds. The teaching of war and a glory and pride to serve the fatherland.

Walking those hallways every day I might have traced the footsteps of Nazi leaders. Maybe some of the more important ones like Goring, Goebbels, Himmler, even Hitler himself there to inspect his future military leaders. It was a magnificent edifice situated in a setting marred by war. For this building once housed the conquerors of Hitlers dream while out on the parade ground were the remnants of which had turned the wheels of that dream, the POW's. The remnants of a black legion which had spread throughout Europes continents. Confined now awaiting the end. An end to six years of terror all for the sake of one man, Adolf Hitler.

Over the BBC came the news that president Roosevelt was dead. It was a shocking news that came at a time when the Allied armies were putting together the finishing touches for the collapse of Berlin. Everywhere the krauts were throwing up their hands. They were giving up. We were packing them in as fast as they came to us. So many infact, that we had to construct holding pens for the new arrivals.

Escape was more previlant now than ever before. Some of our captives were from Regensburg and small towns surrounding the city. So keeping a tight rein on more than a thousand men who wanted to go home was a real chore. The weather began to ease up some and fires were permitted at night in the compounds. I'm sure there was a great deal of anxiety in their ranks knowing the war was about over. But with us guards, up till the last shot was fired we'd continue doing our job.

Everyday and during the night thay came. Great tides of jubilant men surrendering. The compound was packed but the POW's didn't seem to mind. They had escaped the Russians, a fate worse than death. One night while writing a letter home I noticed something moving on my shirt hanging over my bunk. I watched it for sometime before I decided to investigate. Taking down the shirt I picked off a little white thing that wiggled in my fingers. I had no idea what it was. I looked closer at that shirt and found more little white things wiggling. That shirt was crawling with body lice.

I stripped down and found the rest of my clothes infected with those little white parasites. Of course I was a bit embarassed, but what the hell, I couldn't go around feeding those damn things for the rest of my life, so I reported it that evening.

The whole outfit was considered infected with the lice and all our clothes were confiscated and our heads shaved because of them. It was evident where they came from. The POW's. They were transfered to us on contact while we were going through the

searching procedures. Now I don't have to tell anyone how we felt searching those bastards knowing that we might come down with their crop of lice.

Twice a week we were transported by truck to the Danube River for our annual scrub down. All our clothes were washed daily with GI soap to rid ourselves of those pesky lice. From then on I watched my clothes religiously to see if I was infested again. Everytime a load of POW's came in off the line I could feel my skin crawling.

The compound was filling fast and so very few POW's were sent to the rear echelant, that we could barely keep enough rations on hand to feed them. There was a time when he had to cut back to feeding once a day, lunch. All of our food stuff was brought in by truck. Over one hundred truck out-fits of the so called "Red Ball Express" consisting of mostly negro drivers, moved over 10,000 tons of supplies to Patton's armies. Some of these supplies came into camp to feed these POW's, a rather ironic twist for those gallant drivers who risked life and death to get those supplies through only to have some of them fed to the very men who caused their dangerous plight.

Well into April and the war was grinding down. The men who came into the compound brought with them stories of desertion in the German ranks. They knew the war was finished; Germany was finished, their beloved fatherland would never be the same again. Russian troops were poised on the outskirts of Berlin awaiting the command to enter the city and quench their blood thirst on the diehard Nazi officials who remained there. The city was beseiged and Hitler made arrangements for his final trip into destiny and history.

There were escape attempts almost daily. On several occasions three young girls came to the compound attempting to see their brother who was a POW. Of course permission to see him was denied. After all we were still at war. But nevertheless, they continued to visit the compound trying to see and talk with their brother.

Once while I was on duty they came and one of them spoke broken English, but enough English so I could understand her. She wanted to give her brother some food and a change of clothing. I refused and sent them away. There brother shouted to them through the wire and they talked from a distance about something I did not understand so I had the girls removed after reporting them to the Corporal of the Guard.

For several days they came in spite of the warning to stay away from the camp. Each time they came they were ejected from the compound wire. I discovered later that there were two men in the compound related to the girls. The other man was a cousin.

And every time they came they were escourted away from the compound. Then one evening as it was nearing dark I see the girl walking up the road carrying something in her hand.

When she came within talking distance I stop her. It was the English speaking one. She said she had some fresh baked cookies for her brother and if I wouldn't mind giving them to him. When I said I couldn't she became angry and spouted something in German at me. I told her that she would have to leave the compound area. All the while her brother is on the otherside of that wire watching. I feel like a damn fool not allowing her to give that sack of cookies to her brother. I waved her away but she will not leave. I knew then I'd have to call for the Corporal of the Guard and have her taken away again. She must have read my mind because she says she will go but will return in the morning to visit her family.

I report it to my relief guard suggesting he keep an eye out for her and the other girl. There may be something in the wind like an escape. At the closing days of the war the POW's are given some liberties with the permission of our Captain. So I go to the CO and tell him about the girls. He said it was alright for them to give their brother and cousin something to eat as long as it was inspected by us first.

I get up at eight, dress, and go relieve Pfc. Grossman on the gate patrol. Its a chilly night but a clear one. As I walk alone I'm thinking of that German girl. If she brings something for her brother I'll be able to give it to him now that the CO had permitted it. I can hear the POW's talking in the compound and now that we have some lights on in the area I could see several standing around the flickering fires. All the while I'm on guard I expect to see the girl but she never comes.

Just as I was about to complete my tour of duty I see someone go over the wire and drop to the ground. He lays quiet not. moving suddenly he springs up and I bring up the German mauser I'd been walking guard with and callout, "HALT---HALT---HALT" but the shadow dashes into the darkness. The mauser I'm using was a Model .43 semiautomatic 9mm. It was not axactly regulation military hardware but I just happen to be carrying it that night. I'd been kind of dubious of my .45 sub machine gun since I saw how it performed on fleeing POW's in the past. The mausers clip was loaded with tracers and as I called out again with my finger on the trigger, the shadow in my sights, I pull.

The tracer streaks through the night. First one, them another I see nothing more. I call for the Corporal of the Guard.

"CORPORAL OF THE GUARD, POST NUMBER ONE," and corporal Crawford appears.

"What's all the shoot'n about?"

"Someone jumped the wire, corporal."

Lieutenant Cromer comes up. "What's happened?"

I tell him and a search party is ordered to go looking for the escapee. I have about fifteen minutes left of my gate patrol. In a few minutes the search party comes back.

"Your shoot'n at shadows, we found nothing."

"Well, somebody jumped the fence." I said.

My relief came and as we were about to go back to head-quarters, a jeep comes driving up with two MP's in it. In the back there's a man laying half on the seat and half on the floor. His shoulder soaked with blood.

"Is this one of your's, we found him in a ditch."

We walked over to the Jeep and I looked at the wounded man. It was a boy, the brother of the girl who came visiting daily. That was why she never came to the camp that night. They had planned the escape. He looked at me. The most pitiful expression I've ever seen. It was his eyes. They looked right through me and another sickness welled up inside me like back at Kulmbach. Everything happened so quickly. So automatically. I don't remember the gun in my hand. I don't remember pulling the trigger. The next morning I filled out another report. I asked about the man I'd shot. He died before daylight. He'd been shot twice in the back. An awful way to die. A coward way to kill.

May 6, 1945

We received a special load of prisoners. They were German scientist caught up in "Operation Paper Clip" men responsible for the development of the V rocket or, flying bomb. And a new weapon, the Jet aircraft. They would one day become our nations leaders in space techinology. But at that time they only represented one thing to me. The men responsible for Joan's death.

After the arrival of these civilians we had a special visitor. Old "Blood'n Gut's" himself. Ivory handled pistols and all. When General Patton came to camp all the noncoms began jumping through their butts. You'd think he was Jesus Christ himself. Some did call him the "Warrior God" because of his belief in reincarnation, but he was just another GI to us.

He came up in his Jeep with his driver and our Captain. I gave him my best military salute when he passed. He didn't bat an eye at me. Not even a return salute. Those stars on his shoulder gave him that right. That was the first and last time I saw General Patton probably five seconds worth on my part. I still have that image of the general sitting in that jeep ignoring my

best regulation salute. He seen me, the man had eyes in back of his head.

On the morning of May 8, word came over the BBC that the war was officially over. Actually it had been over for several days. On May 2, all fighting had ceased on the southern front of Italy. On May 4, a surrender was signed at Montgomery's headquarters by the representives of the German forces in North-West Europe. On May 7, the remaining German forces officially surrendered at Eisenhower's headquarters in Reims.

The boy shot during the escape died for nothing while his countrymen were surrendering to the Allies. So bitter is the price of victory. So bitter and useless. We left Regensburg June 12, crossed the Rhine river at Mainz, Germany and traveled by rail to Camp Lucky Strike La Harve, France arriving 0230 hrs on June 17.

After a brief layover and much needed rest from the rigor of guard duty the unit departed Camp Lucky Strike, France by truck. We arrived at Le Harve, boarded the Dutch ship M.S. JAPARA and at 2030 hrs. June 22, 1945 set, sail for home.

On July 3, 1945 we returned to the United States and docked at Newport News Harbor, Virginia. The next morning we left the ship at 0845 hrs. at Hampton Road and proceeded to Camp Patrick Henery by rail. This was one great Fourth of July celebration. Three days later we were sent home for some R&R (rest and recouperation) for the next thirty days then on to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana for more training preparing us for the invasion of Japan.

August 6,19L5 while on our way back from leave the Atomic Bomb as dropped on Hiroshima Japan. August 9th a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki bringing an end to four years of hostilities. I shall always remember my war years. Past friends and comrads. Remember too the good times, regretting the bad.

Approximately 40,750 POW's were escourted by this unit since arriving in the ETO. Out of this number thirteen were either killed or wounded attempting escape all of which occured while in Germany.

Source: National Archives
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