

LIFE OF A SOLDIER FOR ONE YEAR

Lott M. Penrod

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10-26-06



AGI Haircut
in Holland



AT home on leave



Penrod, Lott M. T/5
RFD 1., Ennis, Texas
Apr. 1944
Telephone and Teletype Repairman

From the beaches to Pont Hebert, hap-
 lucky "Pedro" Penrod rarely passed a
 without a song or a whistle until conf-
 elements intervened at a time when the
 were a little "on edge." Penrod was tr-
 across the section's area, chirping merrily
 occasionally whistling sharply, when he
 several buddies hitting the dirt, or dashin-
 those holes. Little did "Pedro" realize th-
 tuneful tones were not "88's", for whe-
 other men took cover, it wasn't time fo-
 T & T repairman to dicker around—he, to
 the turf.



"On the Wagon." "Pedro" Penrod at Sevelen, Ger-



operations.
 It was in England during the days of equip-
 ping the division, that the balance of the per-
 sonnel were acquired. Though slightly strayed
 in locating the already, elusive 30th, these rein-
 forcements made their way to Amersham via
 Chichester. Added to Radio Repair were three
 Kentuckians and an Ohioan, forming an almost
 ready-made working crew. T/5's Edward F.



"Biggen" Hodges finds his 6x6 truck quite stable.

Hicks, Claude B. Howard, Elliott H. Marcus,
 and Louis T. Mollman all had experience in
 the Army's Enlisted Reserve Corps before
 training in their specialty at Camp Crowder,
 Missouri. To the T & T Repair went T/5's
 John M. Klesch and Lott M. "Pedro" Penrod.
 Cpl. Klesch had also attended "Clam Chowder
 in Missery" (more formally known as Camp
 Crowder in Missouri), and later found himself
 stationed in Washington, D. C., possibly in the
 confused situation of replacing a WAC for
 more strenuous duties. Cpl. Penrod emerged
from the Enlisted Reserve at San Antonio,
Texas to train in Signal Corps camps in Cali-
formia. To the Supply unit went PFC Catesby
 R. Hodges, whose laugh measures as great as
 his size. "Biggen" was to become a procure-
 ment driver for the frequent trips to signal
 dumps.

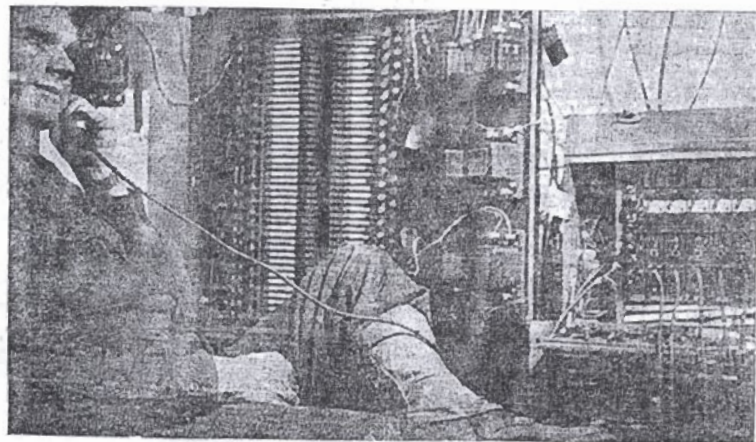
Part played by Teletype

Working in close co-operation with the wire chief is Tech. Sergeant Jeff G. Brown's teletype subsection which transmits and receives a lion's share of the messages that go through message center. Teletype messages constitute ninety per cent of the messages sent and received by electrical means.

While the teletype is at best delicate and rather unadaptable to combat conditions, it must be said that teletype has been found wanting on all too few occasions and this due to line trouble, caused usually by enemy action. Messages of all description were sent and received promptly and accurately by this means.

On the infrequent days that teletype was out due to line trouble Message Center was in a turmoil, not having a substitute other than mounted messenger means which was already taxed beyond its original limitations. So important was teletype in Normandy that G-3 had a special machine for their exclusive use and many times informal conversations were held over the machine to determine vital information.

At the bulge the accent on teletype was so great as to warrant the use of a machine connected with XVIII Airborne Corps and one with V Corps. Many times messages not pertinent to this command were relayed by the division teletypes to facilitate communication between other units.



Switches differ from Routine

While the foregoing describes the normal method of operations in the T and T Section, there were necessary deviations from this and many times telephone was so widely used and the lines so extended as to make it necessary to augment the regular board with an advanced switchboard, or "switch" as it is called in the vernacular. One of the more important switches was one established just prior to the Rhine River crossing.

At the bulge, precedent was shattered by the institution of a "rear-forward" in the event a retreat was deemed advisable. Fortunately for the wellbeing of the individual soldier and for the dignity of the U. S. army the white-covered doughs of the Thirtieth precluded the necessity of with-drawing.

My first two years, 1942 and 1943, in the service were spent in tech schools. The army rules were rigid and automatic. In February 1944 I was sent to a replacement center in northern England. From there, four of us were sent to the 30th Infantry Division Signal Company. Three were sent to radio repair and I to telephone, teletype and whatever repair.

I would like to say a little about my boss, T/Sgt. (5 stripes) Max Rogers, T & T Repair Chief. Rogers had been in the company since 1940, had been in many maneuvers and was well known and liked from the top brass to the non-coms.

About the middle of April, 1944, on a Wednesday, I arrived at Cheshorn near London. There I was introduced to Sgt. Rogers and the truck that was to be our work shop for the duration. We had co-workers that I had not met, John Klesch and Aron Berger (100% Jew). The first three days I was there Sgt. Rogers was the only person I knew. He would come and go.

Sunday afternoon about 3:00 I walked from the PX to the barracks. I could see a person laying on the ground about forty feet from the barracks. This was Sgt. Rogers laying there silly drunk. A group of four were standing on the barracks porch laughing and making fun of Sgt. Rogers. This was not the first time for them to see this, neither was it the last time for me. I got Sgt. Rogers up, got the grass out of his hair, and dusted off his clothes. As we walked into the barracks, I really got the nasty talk. After I got Rogers on his bunk and started to leave, two big fellows had me blocked and said "This was none of your business." I said, "If this had been you, I would have done the same thing" and ducked and ran out. These two fellows were regular army and they were our two big 6 x 6 truck drivers. I worked with them off and on for the next year and a half. I shut their fun so they had a little fun out there.

I found a table model radio in England. The cabinet was gone and other things but it powered off a 45 volt dry cell battery and we stocked the battery and every tube it used. I didn't have time to look at this radio, but I put it in my truck for later.

On June 9th, 1944 we got our orders to leave Cheshorn, England to go to South Hampton, England. Little did I know how long it would be before I'd see anything that resembled a bed or bunk.

We were not very well organized before June 9th, 1944. I was told I was going to drive a jeep and we didn't have a jeep. Later a big Dodge truck showed up. This was my vehicle. I was given Ed Hicks of radio as a truck partner but not a foxhole partner. His partner was still in radio. Sgt. Rogers drove the shop truck and I didn't know who his partner was.

On June 13th we were all loaded. On the fifteenth about 9:30 a.m. we left south Hampton and reached Omaha at 9:30 p.m. about twelve hours later. A good size fleet was anchored there and about twelve helium balloons were up. We were told the best way to protect an area from the air was to throw a cone of fire over it and dare the enemy to fly through it. We spent the night on this Liberty Ship. We put out bedding on the floor. Then the Germans came in with flares and bombs, strafing us within our cone of fire. We were introduced to the war. This went on and off all night. Morning came and I walked out on deck and asked the guard if we shot anything down. He pointed to three or four of those helium balloons at half-mast.

I had hoped to get off that crate that day and we did about mid-afternoon. We drove onto a barge a little way out and then in the water, which was about a foot deep, up to the bank. We moved on to our assigned area and washed the salt water off and did other things vital to the vehicle. We were probably five hundred yards from the beach. By sundown or so we got our bedding and layed it on the grass which was somewhat tall. Soon after dark, here came the Germans, just as the night before, but this time we were

outside. We hoped we were still under the cone of fire. With each new attack we would crawl a little further under the grass. Morning finally came and our three radios and three vehicles were not hurt.

We left that same day, June 25th, 1944 and went about fifteen miles to a little French town called Isigny. Boy was I glad to get away from Omaha. After arriving at Isigny and getting settled, the foxholes were next. John and Aron paired up, my truck partner Hicks went back to radio. That left Sgt. Rogers and I. You guessed it, I dug his foxhole and mine for the duration. The foxholes were foot to foot. Each night Bedcheck Charlie and his pals would visit us and we would be in our foxholes but the attacks wouldn't last all night.

About June 20, 1944 I visited Will (my brother) who had a wrist watch that wouldn't run. His outfit had no watch repair shop and mine did. I took it and got it fixed, thinking we would meet again but we didn't. I wore this watch every day until I finally gave it back to Will late in August 1945 at our old home near Bristol, Texas. The watch never missed a tick. Late in the war a German pilot probably committed suicide and I got his watch and gave it to my dad.

We stayed at Isigny about three weeks and this gave me a chance to look at the radio I had found in England. The case was gone and the two coils of wire were gone. I'd had schooling in the number of turns and spacing of these coils. I rigged this radio up, put tubes in it, turned it on and it played better than it ever had because I could adjust the coils. B.B.C. News came on at 7:00 p.m. When permissible we would have a big crowd at news time. Change stations and you could hear 15 minutes of big band music, then three or four of Axis Sally. There wasn't much else on the radio in English. We didn't talk much among ourselves so no one knew anything.

I don't know why I'm writing about this incident but it will give me an opportunity to introduce some of our weapons. Using this formula, 1 inch = approx. 25 millimeters, you can figure out the diameter of the projectiles delivered by these artillery pieces. Before we were ever in combat all of the signal company and maybe more were taken to a large field or pasture just after dark. We were not told any thing before or after. Without warning, artillery began firing behind us and the projectiles were going over our heads. We were sure it was friendly because it was behind us. After listening for an hour or so, we could tell there were three different sizes of projectiles going over our heads. We learned later there was a 105mm, 155mm, and a 205mm. The Germans had that much feared 88mm. They were mounted on their tanks with long barrels. Our Sherman tanks had a 75mm with short barrels. They were no match head to head. Our big guns, 105mm, etc. were vehicle drawn. The idea in these tank battles was to immobilize and destroy.

My son, Bob, fussed at me for not giving more dates. By the middle of July, 1944, we had been in France a month. A buck sergeant, R. J. Allen, was introduced to us. He came and went as he pleased (free-loader). He came home on the same boat I did.

By now, we have moved up pretty close. Entering the work truck from the rear; Aron had the work bench in the left, John on the right, and I in the front. July 21, 1944 was a cloudy and foggy day. After breakfast, Aron, John and I were in the truck going over some phones that had been brought in. We wanted to make sure we were on the same page. About 8:00 that morning: **FLASH-BANG**. An 88 shell fell near our truck on Aron's side. We were startled for a split second. We got our helmet and rifle and started for the door. We got out and there was a small ditch behind the truck and that seemed to be the quickest place. They continued to shell the signal area for some 30 minutes. We had several casualties but only one fatality.

We had been in Normandy six full weeks. We had been shelled, bombed, strafed and other ways to try to kill us.

Well the big day had come, July 27th, 1944. Everything seemed to be in place. The big push was to be proceeded by strategic bombing. T&T Repair and Radio had big trucks, so we didn't go through the apple orchards. We come out on the left side of this dense forest. It was a clear day and we could see a long way. We were out of range of small arms but well in range of 88's. We spaced our vehicles 30 feet or so to keep one 88 from damaging more than one truck at a time. We had work to do to be ready. T&T and Radio repair were all that were there. 14 men in all. Out of nowhere an American soldier showed up. Good looking kid about 20 maybe. You could see "deserter" all over him. No one paid any attention, thinking he would disappear just as he showed up. All of a sudden there was a shot in our work truck. I can't remember how we got him out, but I remember blood on the floor. As soon as we got him out, I pulled his pants down and saw the wound below the right hip and above the right knee. Radio placed a call and medics picked him up. That was all except on thing. Weeks later Allen the Freeloader took his knife and picked that bullet out of that hard wood floor. Sgt. Rogers sat in his driver's seat and watched. Had that happened in my vehicle, that bullet would have gone to the truck grave yard. By the way, that kid had a pistol but it didn't look very G.I.

After disposing of the kid, we got in position to look for the bombers. They showed and we could see about three planes. They were very low and we could see the bombs. The second wave sounded about the same but we could no see for the smoke caused by the first wave.

Operation Cobra Fails

You may or may not know the bombing that kicked off Operation Cobra mostly fell short, killing and wounding many of our own soldiers. At this time Field-Marshal, the British General Bernard L. Montgomery was over all the ground forces but he wasn't functioning so Lt. General Omar Bradley, 1st Army Commander, was calling the shots.

I'm inserting this memento of Operation Cobra. You wont find this much information anywhere else. The Air Force was ashamed of this and kept it hush-hush. In the memento each time the 2nd Armored is mentioned, it should be the 3rd Armored Division. **I was there.**

You will notice in the memento that Gen. Rose's name appears a couple of times. He was the leader of the 3rd Armored Division and was killed in action later and I will talk about it.

The first thing I knew about A Corps, we had the 29th and 30th Infantry Divisions and the 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions. I don't remember any 2nd Armored vehicles until after Mortain.

It began to rain and we got our trucks out but when the smaller vehicles started across the apple orchard they had trouble. The vehicles had winches but the apple trees had no roots. We got them out the old fashioned way, we pushed them out. This was low ebb. We were expecting so much.

About this time the German General Rommel and other high ranking officers revolted and this got our hopes up, but you know the result. Hitler offered them a choice: firing squad or pill.

Well, we moved on and the Sherman tanks equipped with blades like bull dozers got us through the hedgerows.

On August 6th, 1944 we moved into the vicinity of Mortain. Before we start the Battle for Mortain, let's review a little. I have a Signal Company book and I refer to it for dates and numbers. First let's talk about the wire dump. The wire dump served several divisions and was an over night trip. We had two drivers and that is all they did. Some time we would need two trucks of wire, then they would have to recruit two of us. You had

to load your own truck and those reels weighed fifty pounds each. We put 200 reels on those trucks. The heart and soul of the Signal Company was to keep division in touch with the three regiments: 117th, 119th, and 120th. Each one of these regiments contained five thousand rifleman. My Signal Company book shows the wire team ran 1,266 miles of wire during the month of July. Three officers and fourteen enlisted men received Bronze Star citations for the month. I should know, I think there was one mile of wire to the reel. The reel stands were mounted on jeeps or small trucks. The wire teams had aluminum poles with three prongs on the end so they could run two wires if need be. The driver of the vehicle would get as far off the main road as possible and the man with the pole would push the wire off the road as far as possible. This was paired with steel strands for strength. The wires were well insulated from each other and has a good outside covering. T&T had a shop truck and two other trucks along with Radio repair truck and two extra trucks. Each truck carried at least twenty five reels of wire making one hundred miles of wire available at all times for the wire teams. Entering or cross roads or any thing that gets this wire where tanks, trucks etc. and it didn't last long. Teletypes were good, but a 105 volt power supply was required. Telephones: All you had to do was connect them across the line, if the wire was intact. Radio could be monitored or jammed. If all else failed, I was the messenger. I'll give a few accounts as we move along.

On August 6, we moved in the vicinity of Mortain. I must have gone on one of there over night trips to get wire. When we left we heard nothing of a German attack. When we returned late the next day the cooks had been informed. There will be no retreat. In a day or so the day was dark and had the smell of war. We could tell the difference between our 105mm guns and their 88mm guns. Then we were informed our 120th regiment had been surrounded; 1/3 of our fighting force. What happened was the 120th regt. was on two high hills, number 314 & 315. The German tanks surrounded those hills. Our 105mm guns, P-47's and P-51's planes, and their 88's were pounding those hills day and night. This went on for three or four days. The Germans found a time and place to retreat and that is what they did. The German tanks didn't run us over this time. We were on our own, but Germany ran over Europe with foot soldiers following those tanks. We were told to watch for that from our fox holes. All we had was rifles. The 30th Infantry division and 3rd Armored divisions and many special service groups were credited with turning this attack around. Lt. General George S. Patton, Jr. and his 3rd Army was on our left and going through France. If the Germans had been successful at Mortain it could have been disastrous. It would have split the 1st and 3rd Armies.

I inquired from several sources including Sgt. Ray Halley who was caught up in all of this. Halley was also on one of our wire teams. The assumption was the Germans didn't have the foot soldiers to storm those hills. Hitler didn't like this so the German general took the pill (suicide).

Guess I'm like my daddy, I like to whistle while I work. Any thing that sounds like an 88, people hit the deck. I remember doing this twice in the work shop, but the way its written up in the Signal book, it was an every day occurrence. I whistled and caused alarm until I was told to stop it.

My title always showed up as Telephone and Teletype Repairman. The word messenger never appeared. I've often wondered if this messenger service was on the books or originated out of necessity. I didn't ask, I'll never know. Most of my messenger trips were divisional clerk to regimental clerks and vice-versa. Messages were sent in sealed envelopes.

The Battle for Mortain started August 6 and ended August 18, 1944. At this time some changes were made. The 29th and 30 Infantry divisions and the 2nd Armored formed a new corps, the VII (7th) Corps with Maj. General Lawton Collins as our com-

mander. We remained thus until the end of the war. We left the 3rd Armored division at Mortain still in the XIX (19th) Corps. We were still in the First Army under Bradley.

We left Mortain on the 18th of August and reached Bruyelle, Belgium; 125 miles in about 14 days. Along the way the Germans would set up road blocks to delay us and they were good at it. The foot soldiers had to clear these blocks. I visited one of the regiments, delivered my message to the clerk and being from division I could always find some one to talk too. A few doors down I found one that was open. A man was laying on a cot in his shorts. He asked point blank who I was. I told him I was a messenger from division and he invited me in. I didn't have to look long to tell he was a major. We discussed the war in general and the division and a few other things. He was in his early thirties and easy to talk to. A shrapnel wound is shaped like the metal that cuts it. I noticed the major had two or three cuts that needed attention but I was informed that he was a battalion commander and was going to lead his troops over the hill the next morning and he was going in to be at the point, the lead off team in an attack. If it be X number of companies, battalion or what ever was called the point. I mentioned the fact that I had not seen ground troops in action. He invited me to spend the night and he would take care of me. We both got a big laugh out of that, but he did say after this, he would go in and get sewed up.

Another incident happened along the way. Before Mortain, a red headed fellow showed up at our work truck. To my surprise I found out I was his replacement. Now we had three workers and three sitters. I had been with the Signal Company about three months. Red didn't politic for his job back, nor did I politic to keep it. Things rocked along just as they were. I kinda liked him. He was my age and we could communicate. Red was there about six weeks. When he didn't show up one day I inquired about him. I was told that he wouldn't be back. That was the only answer I got.

The deserter, the major, and the red head. I never heard from any of them again.

Now let's go back to September 2nd. We had reached Bruyelle, Belgium. I mentioned in part one how friendly the people in Bruyelle were. A little girl about twelve reached me first. I gave her a little girl hug. Others arrived and they wanted to cling to you. Two or three at a time. We survived this ordeal. It was getting kind of late, the crowd was thinning out and this little girl was still there. I got my helmet and rifle, got her by the hand and took off in the direction she came from. She pointed to her street and the third house on the left. I kinda stood back. I didn't know what mama and daddy might think I was doing to their little girl. There was a couple sitting on the front porch. They could have been seventy in age and didn't come out when we entered the city. They recognized me as an American soldier and through their clinging act. They were well educated and could speak some English. They were offended when I told them I had to go, but I told them I'd be back the next day if possible. I've never had anything hurt me as bad, but I lucked out. The next morning I got there early. They asked every question about me: Texas, America, etc. Nothing was ever said about the war or about the parents of the little girl. I was afraid I would offend them if I asked. We spent a couple of hours visiting and when I told them I was leaving in the morning, we spent another hour goodbyeing. I'll meet this family again, stay tuned.

On the 4th of September we left Bruyelle, Belgium. On the 10th of September we had traveled a hundred miles, and that brought us to Liege, Belgium. I think my brother, Will, was hurt in this area but I know nothing of the date. I'll have something to say about Liege later.

We by passed Liege, Belgium on the 10th of September and reached Heerlen, Holland the 15th of September. The division command post set up in Heerlen and the Signal Company nearby. It was nice for a while. We were given one day a week off. We slept in an old factory building. I rigged me up something that resembled a bed.

By the 2nd of October our regiments were nearing the Siegfried line. The motor, artillery and armored vehicles cut the telephone wires (see picture at the end). This was the second time I was call a mounted messenger. Well, I was not riding a horse. I had a medium sized Dodge pickup truck. It got me there and back many times. We had heard that the Siegfried line was obsolete and not fully manned. The Dragon's Teeth were full intact and so were some of the pillboxes. The engineers were in the process of destroying all of them. Although the Germans didn't use the Siegfried line, this was their land and they put up a tough fight.

On the 17th of October, things calmed down and we got a little rest.

On October 22nd, 1944 we were transferred from the 1st to the 9th Army. It was moved up to the 9th because the British had an 8th Army. Up until now we were under Lt. General Hodges who was assisting Bradley in the 1st Army. October 22nd, we were in a new Army with a new general, Lt. Gen. William Hood Simpson.

By the end of October 1944 the Siegfried line was destroyed. We had other units that had crossed the German border. Since it gets cold we were making plans to spend the winter. The British General Montgomery suggested we consolidated all our forces and head for Berlin (Operation Blade - 450 miles). Our leaders realized the Germans had a considerable build up in the Scandinavian countries and preferred to deal with that in the spring, but the Germans had another idea. The showdown was going to be now. The Germans moved their forces out of Scandinavia under darkness and bad weather. Our people that were observers had excuses like Pearl Harbor for not seeing what was going on.

Now the Germans have this huge build up in secret. The question was where did they want to strike. Some of Hitler's advisors said the Aachen area. I was just across the border in Heerlen, Holland. Others said no and Hitler agreed. The old route that had been successful so many times, through the Ardennes, Belgium, Luxemburg and on to Paris is what they took.

I learned of the attack at Mortain from the cooks. We were still in Heerlen, Holland. An old fellow that lived there came through the grounds about every day and told us what was happening. The Germans started the attack early in the 16th of December, 1944. On the 17th the old fellow came early, telling us the Germans had launched a major attack in the Ardennes and entering Belgium. We didn't know anything, but at 8:00 in the evening we were leaving. The roads were bad, German planes were dropping flares, strafing and bombing. At midnight we gave it up. We might have covered ten miles. The next morning, the 18th of December, we reached our destination (Spa, Belgium) about 8:30 that evening. 1st Army hospital had been located at Spa and leaving in a hurry they left some beds and I had my name on one. I still had my clothes on and some officer walked by and said he was looking for a guard and I was it. He showed me a tree and walked around that tree until daylight. They respected technicians so we didn't do guard or K.P. duty.

We had our three regiments set up to defend this German onslaught that was to hit the city of Malmedy, Belgium

Now, commissioned officers did not drive vehicles, they had drivers.

We had a message to be delivered to the British; they chose the right vehicle for the job, a 6x6 GMC with ten tires on the ice. They also chose the right driver: Hodges, nicknamed "Biggin." He needed a partner and we took off, over a 100 miles of solid ice to the British to deliver the messages and maps in regard to a major breakthrough at Malmedy. In about two days we were on our way back with their reply, stopping in Bruyelle, Belgium. We spent the night there to get out of the cold. The family was very happy to see us and took us in with open arms. We didn't get much sleep but Mamma of the family came and got me alone and took me to the kitchen shortly before time to leave. She had prepared

breakfast from the best she had, a sausage in animal skin. Having to leave early, there wasn't time for much goodbyeing, just a "Big Boy, Big Boy" kiss and one more hug from the little girl. As we were leaving, an unknown, well dressed lady asked us for a ride to the next town. "Biggin" and I talked it over and agreed she could hitch a ride between us in the truck. We never heard anything else from her or anyone else. We continued on to Spa, Belgium, back where we had started.

Things began to happen fast. The Germans got through and captured a number of our soldiers as their prisoners, killing them in a big massacre. After the massacre at Malmedy, the saying going around was, "We will take no prisoner." This was a nasty battle fought on ice in sub-degree temperatures. Thinking that the Germans had captured Malmedy, our own troops were bombed by our own fighters twice, but we held onto the city.

Around the first of 1945 on a clear day our troops could be seen leaving Malmedy attacking the Germans. This was my first actual ground battle to witness.

On January 12, 1945 we moved out from Malmedy pushing the Germans back towards Germany. It wasn't long until we came upon two Germans at a camp fire that were left for others to take; what a surprise.

When we reached St. Vith, Belgium, there were alot of German prisoners milling around outside with fires for warmth. We went on through St. Vith, capturing the town.

The end of January 1945 we approached Liege, Belgium and a snow storm blew in so severe we had to stop for three days.

V-1 buzz bombs were being dropped by the Germans close by and we could get our first good look at them and the feel of a thousand pound bomb being dropped.

On February 2, 1945 we were back in Aachen, Germany where my future brother-in-law, Tom Floyd joined us. When we left Aachen on our way to the Rhine River, we were escorted all the way by Piper Cub planes flying about 150 feet over us and to our right.

Two days before crossing the Rhine River all Germans in the area were forced to stay in doors. I spent these two days a prisoner guard, sleeping in my foxhole. At "H" hour, 0330 of the 23rd of March the attack began. It was preceded by the heaviest artillery barrage ever witnessed. The crossing was a complete success and work was immediately begun by the engineers. They worked at great speed and efficiency.

From there to the Elbe River, very little action was seen - just long lines of German soldier prisoners following their leaders with white flags surrendering to the Americans.

The war ended on May 9, 1945. At this time approximately 20,00 Russian slave laborers were imported to work in the German factories over a four year period. All these slave laborers had to be fed and tended to, so the U. S. was quick to return them to their native lands through Russia since 99% were Russians.

A couple of days later, Ed Hicks and I were selected to go and pick up Lt. Duncan, who had just arrived from the states. He was sent over at this time because he spoke and understood Russian very well. After delivering him to his destination he told us why and where to pick him up the next morning. From then on we knew we were in the operation for the long haul.

Since Lt. Duncan arrived early, he wanted to go to see a staging area where the Russian slave laborers were put out to wait for a train to pick them up. One of their people took it upon himself to slap and push them around causing a disturbance. In our truck was a P. A. system, which I operated that we could use. I put a Guy Lombardo tape of the "Sweetest Music This Side of Heaven" to play and it really soothed them down for a time. But since that was not their music, they soon grew restless again. Their leader found a big bucket lid and rock and began to beat out a rhythm they knew. Soon all were dancing, singing and having a good time. Between songs, he would paw the ground like to rouse

them up.

The Germans would come down to the area to watch what was going on. They rode their bicycles and if they got too close, the Russians would jump them, taking their bicycles and their jewelry.

After watching a while, we took Lt. Duncan to the Officer's Quarters and we returned to the Enlisted Quarters for the night. The next morning we started back, stopping at one other staging area so the Lieutenant could observe for a time.

The Lieutenant's quarters were close to the pontoon bridge crossing the Elbe river, while the Signal Company quarters were about 25 to 30 miles down the river near the stockade where the prisoners were brought in by train on flat bed railcars. The stockade covered area would hold about 500 people, while the fenced in area was about an acre in size. With the stockade area close enough for me to walk from our quarters, I would go down to the fence and watch them and visit some. As they were getting ready to cross the bridge, I was with Lt. Duncan and my P. A. system. That was how they recognized me and waved goodbye.

All communications were between Lt. Duncan and the Russian major. We always took Lieutenant over to the Russian side where they went inside a small building, leaving Ed and I waiting outside. The Russian major's companion took advantage of the time by bringing her book out and talking with us; she was trying to learn all the English she could. We made five or six trips over there and she was always out with her book for another "lesson." The Russian major could not speak any English, but he came out and thanked us for being nice to her and helping her with her English.

After setting up Lt. Duncan with my P. A. system near the entrance of the bridge on the Elbe River. We were ready for our first experimental load of 500 laborers. We had lots of visitors and sight seers including a Russian General. We trucked the first load of 500 people from the stockade to the bridge to walk over to the Russian side. These people were all lined up to start the walk. The Russian General inspected them saying they were of no good to them, but they were their people so they had to be accepted. Lt. Duncan instructed all to line up in columns of four to cross the bridge with four Russians leading them across. As they reached Russian land, four more men went down each column getting their names and what information they could. After crossing the bridge, they went over a hill and we lost sight of them. Both sides soon discovered that 500 at a time was too many so Lt. Duncan and the Russian Major worked out a system that worked well and after three weeks the operation was complete. We had processed about 20,000 slave laborers, which would be a modest estimate.

Ed and I had sort of been treated as prisoners ourselves. While most of the other Signal Company personnel were having a good time playing cards or ball while we were on duty. By this time I had been told I was going to the Pacific area, while most of the others were going home. Boy was I feeling sorry for myself.

Around the last of July we started near the Elbe River and headed out for LeHarve, France which was about 700 miles. As luck would have it the motor pool needed a truck driver. This is where Ed Hicks and I got separated. I had gone down to the motor pool to check out what I could. I was shown the vehicle I would be driving to LeHarve, France. This was a brand new 6 x 6 GMC truck. I was thrilled until they told me it had a leaking radiator. I let them talk me into keeping it with 2 five gallon water cans to take. It took less than two hours for the heat gauge to begin moving but we continued to drive on keeping up with the convoy as best I could. I was driving down the highway on the left side as fast as I could, passing everything. When I passed an officer's vehicle, he yelled out, "What are you doing?". I yelled back, "Leaking radiator" so he waved me on. When the indicator began to reach the danger mark, I pulled over to where there was a house and immedi-

ately loosened the caps to release the pressure and filled up the radiator with the five gallon can. We spotted a big overhead cistern, so we got our guns and empty cans and proceeded to fill it up. Everything had turned out good that day so we did the same thing for the next two days getting to LeHarve, France. We parked the truck and walked off, not even getting a "Good Job" or "Thank You." If the motor pool had driven the truck and burned it up, they would have had to suffer the consequences, but if I had burned it up - so what!

In just a day or two we got on a boat and crossed the English Channel. After spending a few days in England, we were on our way to South Hampton, England to the great ship, the Queen Mary. There were about 4,000 of us crowded in on our way to New York. On August 12, 1945 we landed in New York after dark, but who cared, we were on U. S. soil.

From the Queen Mary we were ferried across the channel to Camp Killman, New Jersey. Then on the slow troop train across the country to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. The next day, I was on a slow bus (35 m.p.h.) to Ennis, Texas arriving about 4:00 a.m. war time.

No one to greet me and no phone to call my mom. I started walking up Crisp Pike Road, leaving my duffle bag at the bus station. About two miles out I passed a Czech house that had two big, red shepherd dogs that were as vicious as I had ever encountered. (As protective as I had been about dogs all the way across Europe, I almost got ate up here at home.) I grabbed a handful of gravel and threw it in one dog's face. I left them stunned and with two handfuls of gravel I walked off. When I got to the next tree I broke off a big limb about three feet long and felt fully secure. But I didn't need it any more on my eleven mile walk.

Our little home was between Crisp and Bristol and I arrived between 9:30 and 10:00 a.m., the end of August and it was still hot. I cut across the corner of the pasture between the two tanks - as I had done so many times. I walked up to the porch where I could hear mama and Virgie (sister) talking. I called here between them talking and got no response. When it got quite again I called, "Mama" again and she told Virgie to listen. Then I called pretty loud the third time and mama came running out saying "My baby boy." After our hugging, kissing and greeting, mama called out to the barn and that our baby boy was home. Daddy came running in, throwing his hat up in the air. The first thing I did was give daddy the watch I had brought him.

On our way home on the boat the two big atomic bombs were dropped on Japan and that ended the war in the Pacific. I still had my orders for a 30 day delay in route, then to the Pacific. A few days after being home, I received word to take another 30 day leave. *I reported back to San Antonio where I received my official discharge.*

AND NOW YOU KNOW THE REST OF THE STORY.