

60 hours ago. We jumped off at 2000 that night and we fought until 1300 the following day to get into Galhen. The Jerries were dug into stay and had orders to hold at all costs.

As soon as we had entered the town, where we took better than 100 prisoners, the Germans really started to throw in heavy artillery. We stayed there a couple of days. Everyone sent home "beaucoup" of souvenirs, trophies, and whatever loot they could get Knox to sign his name on!

The best rumors now were that we were getting ready for a 150 mile trip. On Easter morning, April 1st, at 0200, we left Galhen and headed north and east. We traveled about 60 miles that day, stopping at Drensteinfurt. We were trying to catch up with the Second Armored Division. That night we heard that elements of the First Army had made contact with the Ninth. That meant that there was a ring around the Rhur Valley. We departed from that spot at 0030. Company "L" was the rear guard for the regiment. I had a jeep with a SCR 600 radio on it. To start things out right we lost contact with the vehicles ahead of us, and Stan and the company lost contact with us in the rear. It wasn't fun riding through a couple towns by ourselves. Sure, the Second Armored had passed through, but they hadn't left any troops behind and there was still plenty of chance of being ambushed. Finally we regained contact and from thereon the trip was uneventful.

We caught up with the 2nd Armored about noon and were committed that afternoon at 1700. The battalion's mission was to clear the road junction on the Auto Bahn near Bielefeld. Companies "I" and "K" were initially employed but just about dark our company was committed with "K" to finish the job. We jumped off again about 2100. That was a rough trip. We ran into the "do or die" variety of Germans who just wouldn't quit. The Panzer Faust with which they were armed stopped the tanks, and caused five casualties at one time in the second platoon.

The company finally crossed the highway just about daylight that morning. Three men were killed, and we suffered a number of other casualties in crossing that super highway. As soon as we took our objective, we were relieved by the 117th. When we returned, the second platoon and I cleared some road junctions with elements of CCR of the Second Armored. It rained that afternoon. I remember Col. Stewart (he had rec'd a promotion) calling on the telephone that night. When I answered the phone he severely reprimanded me for being awake to answer the phone. He told me I should be getting a rest because we would really be pushing again in a day or so.

On the morning of April 4th we took off on trucks, part of the reserve of Combat Command "R". Things went well that day and we spent the night at Lemgo. CCA and CCB were leading the parade and CCR was following in reserve. Our company then was the reserve for CCR. We were traveling through the best of Germany. The smaller places looked like they hadn't been hit by the war. Of course, any of the large towns had received plenty of bombing. The next night, the 5th of April, we stopped at Hummerbuch.

The night of the 6th, we traveled all night. We had crossed the Wesser River in the afternoon. Most of the night was spent on a side road letting other elements use the main road. We arrived at Nord Stemmen early on the morning of the 7th. We really had a CP at this spot. Sgt. Kirby had given the people a good talk about the Captain needing the very best. He got it.

Just as we were getting very comfortably settled that night, we were alerted to go help CCR take the town of Hildersheim. Upon arriving, we found it too dark, so the Regimental Commander ordered us to go back to Nord Stemmen.

The next morning we left again to help in clearing Hildersheim, a town as large as Aachen. Company "L" led the whole combat command into the town without even the aid of tanks; all we had for support was two jeeps. The town was a wreck. Our bombers had done it in 17 minutes, a Dutch boy told me.

There was no resistance in that town, for which we were all thankful. Stanford got a new German uniform and every one got a new supply of loot. We liberated about 30 British soldiers in this town. They were mighty happy to see us. One austrailian boy wouldn't go back but insisted on going with our troops. They told some mighty rough stories. They mentioned how men who couldn't keep up had been shot by the German guards and how they had been marched 1,000 km. from the Eastern front when the Russians came.

That night we spent in a small town north of Hildersheim. The next morning, the 9th of April, we were assigned to the striking force of CCR and took off at 1430 on tanks. The night we spent at Betheln. CCR was still following which made it nice. The next night was spent at Wartjenstedt. Things were going well. We knew that our work should be over when we reached the Elbe River.

The morning of the 11th, CCR took the lead. That meant we were in the lead too because our men were riding those tanks. Things moved fast that day. I think we covered close to 40 km. We took one prisoner who told me that he could give me the exact spots to bomb in Oslo, Hamburg, and Berlin to get the broadcasting stations. He was a wireless operator and said he wanted to see the war end. He was getting tired of it. That night at Ohrslebert.

The next night, April 12th, we settled in a small place outside of Madgeburg. We found some more loot and were having a good time when we received orders to revert back to the control of Col. Stewart. We were going across the Elbe River as a reserve for CCB. All night we spent in traveling, finally ending up near Schonebeck where we crossed the Elbe just before daylight in Ducks.

We dug-in in a woods just across the river and waited for developments. Plenty of stuff fell in that woods all day but we didn't have any casualties. That night our battalion received orders to move south about 5,000 yards, and then attack east and take and hold the town of Elbenau. The plan didn't appeal

to any of us. The bridge had been knocked out just as soon as the engineers finished it by mortar and artillery rounds. I still think someone on the West Bank of the river was communicating to the Germans to tell them where to throw the stuff.

The battalion commander of our outfit and the one in CCB had objected to the plan, but the order was to do it so we started out.

Capt. Mann told us that he had heard President Roosevelt had died. We were too busy to think any more about it. How we made the trip south that night without running into anything, I will never be sure. There were plenty of dug-in positions and German equipment around, but no sign of Jerry.

We by-passed a small town and headed on the way for Elbenau. It was a dark night and hard to maintain contact, but we finally arrived in the edge of town and started to clear it out. At first there was mass confusion between the two companies because no prior plan had been worked out as to how the town should be cleared. Soon it was settled and we started in. The first platoon headed down the street toward the church.

The third started down another street. Everything was working out fine when Lt. Tullbane called and told us that he was being over-run by tanks. That wasn't good. A minute later the tanks passed us. We quickly put out all the lights in the house and remained quiet. German soldiers were walking down the street, that was certain, because we could hear their boots against the pavement. That wasn't a good feeling. Every minute we expected them to come in and we would be "kaput".

Many things were done in a hurry. Everyone got rid of any German equipment that he had on his person. Watches, pistols, knives, map cases, and anything else that had ever been captured was quickly discarded. Stan burned his map and prepared the radio for destroying. Many things went thru our minds. The main concern, or course, was what it would mean to our wives and mothers to

hear that we were missing in action.

We radioed our situation to the Col. who said he would be up to get us out. That was about the last communications we had with him. Stan heard Col. Stewart tell the other company commanders that we have got to get back in there and get Stan. It was fine and good but Col. Stewart received orders about that time to withdraw the bridgehead. We did not know anything about this. We were living in hopes that troops would soon be in town with armor. Little did we know that all hopes had been given up to build a bridge across at this time.

The Germans were taking American prisoners by our house. We heard them yelling, "Come out 30th Division." We stayed and didn't make a sound. Stan said, "What a way to end the war."

About noon, Zorena and I got up some courage and went upstairs. We went up in the attic and carefully looked out of a window. The artillery that Stan had told the Col. to go ahead and throw had really kept everyone inside. That was the reason we had not been taken prisoners. Now they were starting to come out. We could see a couple Germans carrying away a dead comarade.

What an afternoon! The civilians started to come in to look at us. We would nab them and throw them in the cellar so they wouldn't tell the German soldiers, and then some more would come. The situation was getting hard to control. The German soldiers were beginning to walk up and down the streets now. Some rode by on horses. The only plan we could think of now was to wait until night and then try to get out.

About four o'clock the FO with us tried his radio once more. He thought he had destroyed it but it still worked. He contacted a cub plane and told them the situation. They relayed the situation to the rear. A plan was made, smoke would be thrown in the town and we would try to leave under the concealment of it.

In the meantime, three men had volunteered to go on a patrol to find a

way out of town. They sneaked from house to house dodging the Germans and located the positions of two halftracks, a tank, and a 20 mm Ack Ack gun. At least they knew where we shouldn't go and they recommended a route that might work. It was worth trying.

The smoke started coming into town. We started out, running at top speed. There were about 50 members of the company that joined in the column. We ran smack into a German officer whom we quickly told to come with us, and he did! The tank started to fire and we really traveled. One of the men was hurt in the leg. I helped carry him out. It was 3,000 yards back to the river. We spread out and really traveled through that woods.

As we neared the river, P47 planes were hovering over us. They started to strafe the town we had just left. We later found out that the artillery commander had arranged to have them cover our withdrawal. They got the tank that had fired at us.

As we neared the river we all gathered a bunch of German equipment and threw it in the river. A "Duck" saw us coming and came across and took us back to the west bank of the Elbe. Boy that was a great feeling to get back where there were American troops. Everyone was mighty glad to see us. Col. Stewart almost cried, Stan said, when he found out that we were safely back.

A few of the men had lost contact. One man volunteered to go back across and get them, two more went with him and just at dark they came out with ten more of our men. Sgt. Hendricks and Lt. Tullbane with Estervig had gotten out earlier. A check indicated that we had 47 men missing across that river. First reports had been that Company "L" had seven men left that crossed the river. Our escape had made a big difference in that report. So ended the 14th of April 1945. It had been a big day. In the mail that night was a poem that Dad sent me written about the 30th Division. I could have given him some good information for another verse!

The next day, the 15th of April, the company pulled back to Rodensleben. Niles, the supply sergeant, had lots of stuff to get. Most of us had come back across the river with a weapon and nothing else.

The 17th we left this spot and the division jumped off at 1515 for the town of Magdegurg with elements of the Second Armoured on our right. Company "L" was in reserve on this move. Our job was to protect the right flank of the battalion. The planes did their damage and we jumped off. Company "K" ran into some 88's which were finally knocked out by mortar fire. We held up for the night just short of the objective. Our company pulled back to establish some road blocks.

The morning of the 18th we finished the job and set up in an apartment house. Rumors were beginning to fly about being through with combat. It sounded good, but we had heard such stories so often that we brushed them off. As far back as Wurslen we had heard that the 30th Division was going to become MP's, and other such rumors. We stayed in the same spot on the 19th. We took showers and got clean clothes.

The 20th, Stan was called back to battalion to get an order. I had heard that the 83rd Division had been counter-attacked. We all expected to have to go help them. Stan came back from battalion. We exchanged glances as we always did when he came back from one of those meetings, and I tried to guess where we were going this time. Stan looked at me and said, "KNOX, OUR DAYS OF FIGHTING ARE OVER". We drew back to the town of Welsleben and relaxed for a few days.

I turned my old dirty pair of fatigue pants in with a lot of meaning on the 20th of April. I was ready and willing to be the best garrison soldier in this man's army, and so was every one else in the company. I settled back, wrote letters, washed my face every morning, and began to feel like a civilized man once more.

On the 27th of April, the company CP moved to Westeregeln and the platoons set up in the following named towns: the first platoon was located in Botmersdorf and Blumeberg, the second in Westeregeln, the third in Etgersleben, and the fourth in Bleckendorf. Later, the first platoon moved to Egelin and elements of the first and third took over Hakeborn. So began our trials and tribulations as masters of military government. The Poles were stealing the pigs, the Russians were stealing the motor bikes, and the Italians were stealing accordians. Yes, this life presented its problems, but if things got too much for a man he could look up at the people with their problems, smile, and say, "You brought these people here, now you take care of them."

Of course, the Poles and Russians had their troubles too. They claimed everyone was an SS trooper or a war criminal of the highest degree. It sounded good, but usually when you tried to pin the story down they could not produce sufficient evidence.

While we were at Westeregeln, Lt. Hand of "M" Company visited us one night. He had just returned from a prison camp near Berlin. Lt. Hand had been captured with our men east of the Elbe. He had a real story to tell of how a British Major forced the commander of the prison he was in to evacuate the prisoners through the German lines back to our lines. The Major had been dropped by parachute by SHAEF to investigate the conditions at the prison when he was captured. The fact that Lt. Hand was back meant that some of our men were probably back also. Lt. Hand told of the lack of food in the prisons. He told of the Russians fighting among themselves for potato peelings. He had not received any food for three days.

A few days later, S-Sgt. Klingerman visited us. He had just been evacuated from another prison. The Russians had liberated him. He told us that a number of other men of the company had been liberated. It was sure good to hear that they were all well.



Lt. Hand and Klingerman had told us what came into that town of Elbenau. Lt. Hand had been captured by the Herman Goering Regiment. Two divisions had pulled that counter-attack. Tanks had later passed through Elbenau for two hours. The Germans were sure fighting until the last.

Finally came the week of good news. Mussolini was captured and killed. Hitler was dead. The armies in Italy surrendered. The armies in Holland and Denmark surrendered. A couple armies in Czechoslovakia surrendered. And at last we heard that the war was over. The final surrender terms were being signed at the same time that I was starting to write this story. Yes, I was up at 0241 on the morning of May 7th starting this story!

VE day was, of course, an anti-climax, in a way, for us because we had been off the line about a week; but, it still had a big meaning which was really hard to fully appreciate. For nine months I had been dodging bullets of all kinds in the ETO. It was over officially at 0001 the morning of May 9th, but we celebrated VE day May 8th. I suppose Historians will be trying to figure it out for years to come.

The Germans continued to fight for a couple days against Russia, but, well, it showed what "dunkofs" they were. They could have quit a long time ago, but didn't.

Today is May 19th. It's a great day in Germany, but I guess it is better in the United States. Capt. Stanford leaves tomorrow to find out. I hope he has a good trip home, and I hope I never have to meet him in the Southwest Pacific.