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It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, the 20th of August. My name was called and I would leave that night for the Thirtieth Division. I was no longer a member of a replacement pool. I rolled up my bed roll, and drew ammunition for the first time. Of course the number of the division did not mean too much to me at that time, but I was on my way, with ammunition. We all said, "This is it," the phrase we had been hearing since we boarded the ship in New York.

I spent the next four nights sleeping in my pup tent in an open field. It rained most of the time. This was the spot called "division rear." We straightened our records, heard lots of wild rumors about combat, and received a welcome talk from a colonel. The division we were with broke the Hindenberg Line in the last war and had a good record in this one. At Mortain it had stopped the German counter-offensive to split the First and Third Armies. We were in an outfit of which to be proud, and we must maintain that record.

During this time we first heard of the landings in Southern France and the liberation of Paris. We even heard a rumor that was "straight dope" --- The war would be over tomorrow. Like every replacement, we still had hopes that the war would be over before we ever saw combat.

On the morning of the 24th, division rear moved about sixty miles. We moved with them. That afternoon they sent us to regimental forward. We were delivered in due style. Someone said, "Here are six replacement officers." A captain looked out the door of the mansion they were in and said, "Oh, Hell!". I suppose we were a nuisance at that time of the day, but we couldn't help it. "I guess you are all rifle platoon leaders," he said, and in five minutes he told us which battalion we would join. Lt. Carrico and I were to go to the Third Battalion. Lt. Hughes, the battalion liason officer, took us to the

battalion Command Post. He led us up a winding stairway to Col. Brown's room. Col. Brown, the battalion commander, was busy on the telephone talking to someone at regiment about the order for the following day. A member of the Free French was trying to tell him in broken English what he knew about the situation.

Col. Brown was very pleasant to us when we were introduced to him. He wasted no time in asking us what we had done in the army. He introduced us to Major Rogerson, the battalion executive officer, and Captain Schlegel, the battalion surgeon. A few minutes later he assigned us. I was to go to Co. "L", and Lt. Carrico to "I" Co. Col. Brown pulled a notebook out of his pocket and told us the exact strength of each company and the names of all the platoon leaders. Thinks I, "These people are really on the ball."

It was finally about ten o'clock when I arrived at "L" Co. I found Capt. Stanford and introduced myself as a new officer. He was leaving for battalion to get the order for the next day. He introduced me to Lt. Rhodes, the heavy machine-gun platoon leader from "M" Company, and told me to make myself at home. Stan, as I soon found out he was called, was Lt. Stanford at that time. I visited an hour or so and Stan returned from receiving the order. He told me that each platoon had an officer except the fourth platoon; Sgt. Hendricks was platoon leader of that platoon, and a very able one. I would stay with company headquarters as executive officer. He told me to travel with the CP group the next day, and try to get some rest because breakfast would be at five o'clock. I did.

The next morning I managed to find the chow line and get my bed roll ready. I knew I had better get some rations so I found one of the cooks and told him that I needed some. I later found out that it was "Stonewall Jackson" that took care of me that morning. He gave me the usual three K rations and three D rations. Thinks I, "They must expect us to be a long way from the kitchen by

night. My training says D rations are used only in emergency when regular rations can not be delivered". I put them all in my pockets and proceeded to see what was going on.

I soon spotted a short sergeant who worked with Lt. Stanford and seemed to know what was going on. I nicknamed him at that time "Little Caeser" and the name stuck with him. This was Dick Linehan, the communications sergeant. The company pulled out. I found that I could be sure I was in the right place by watching the radio aerial.

We walked about twelve miles that day; it was a real breaking in for a desk soldier. As we went through the small towns, the French people came out into the streets with wine, cider, and anything that they might have, to give us as welcome gifts.

The company set up for the night. Sgt. Linehan found a house to use as a company CP, and Stan said we could even get our bed rolls and figure on getting some rest. I met the other officers, Lt. Tullbane, Lt. Hager, and Lt. Kelly. There was a little restaurant across from the CP that attracted everyone's attention. Some of the men bought cold drinks there. About five o'clock that evening the Free French came into town. They looked like a bunch of thugs or gangsters, shooting and yelling. I finally found out that they were rounding up collaborators. A girl that worked at the restaurant had catered too much to the Germans. The Free French leader had the manager really sweating. He was a fat old fellow and looked like a real collaborator. The old man, with whom we were staying, was quite happy to see the French haul him and the daughter away. They put swastikas all over the cafe and wrote the following note on the window, "Those who dine with the Nazis must pay with their head." They shaved the heads of such people and marked them with a swastika, --- after a proper trial, of course.

That night "Jerry" planes circled over the house and had us thinking that

we had done the wrong thing to choose a CP in the upstairs. The company was assembled after dark and left that little town of Surville at 0600 hours the next morning. We "back-tracked" our march of the previous day to the little settlement of LeBoulay. It was from here that Sgt. Linehan had to return to our previous spot to try to find a pair of false teeth that one of the men had left behind. (They were never found!)

We departed from LeBoulay at 1145, and ended up in an assembly area not too far from the Seine River. We pitched shelter-halves in a small patch of woods, and I wrote a few letters. This was the 26th of August.

We were alerted late that night to move out the first thing in the morning. We crossed the Seine River near Mantes-Gassicourt. It had been a hot march. Three hours intervened before we received the order to attack at 1600. Some of the men took advantage of the situation and took a bath in the river.

This day, Sunday, August the 27th, was my first taste of combat. The Third Battalion was initially in reserve; but "K" Co. was committed about 1900 and our company "tied in" with them for the night. It was in the afternoon about 1800 that I experienced being under my first enemy mortar and artillery fire. That night it rained hard. The CP group spent the night in a small watering shed. I would sleep about fifteen minutes and then wake up. There was not room to lie down; we were crowded to find space to sit up.

The next morning, August 28, we continued with the fight, and advanced against sparse resistance. I had my first chance to see abandoned German positions, and see us take some prisoners. We were held up about dusk that evening by machine-gun fire, and spent the night in a quarry. That afternoon, company headquarters group took sixteen prisoners that the company had by-passed. Langlois, our French interpreter (a real character if I have ever met one!), talked to one of them in French. He was an adjutant who told Frenchy that the war would be over in six months and it would be tough on the Allies. The Germans

were going to come out with some secret weapons, rockets and such things, that would make us sorry we ever set our feet in Europe.

As usual, in such situations as this one, the "Krauts" had pulled out in the night, but not without accomplishing their mission. They had killed one of our men and wounded another. On the 29th it rained some more. About noon we arrived at a little town called Freemanville. Practically the whole population of the town was assembled in a large chateau. Langlois, who always impressed the French people as being at least a colonel with his moustache and beard, was soon approached by the "head man" of the place. Frenchy never did anything that might change the people's impression; so before we knew it, he was sitting in a big dining room all by himself. The French "big boy" had the maids delivering him a good meal with ham and plenty of champagne and cognac.

He also turned over four German prisoners to us for which he wanted a receipt. (Later we found out that he was a collaborator.) He asked Langlois if he could take a trip to Paris to see DeGaulle. Frenchy impressed him with the importance of the roads to the armed forces, and told him to stay where he was. The collaborator thought surely that he was so-ordered by at least a regimental commander.

One other thing which happened at this spot I shall remember for a long time. Artillery and mortar rounds were coming in with regularity. Dick Linehan was upstairs playing the piano because he didn't have any duties at the minute. Outside it was raining. Everybody was wet, and they were bringing in two men that had been badly wounded. It presented a real contrast.

Later that day our company followed "K" Co. into a small town where an orphanage was located. That was the first afternoon I heard, and was under, the "Jerry" weapon called the "screaming meemie." The company broke contact in a woods and we found ourselves in a bad place to be under such "stuff". Stan went back to find the rest of the unit, and I moved what was left back a little so we would

not be under it. About this time, "K" Co. sent back about sixty prisoners.

After we passed through the town, we were stopped by machine-guns. It was Lt. Tullbane's second platoon that took the beating that night. The first battalion was firing tanks at our men by mistake. Stan got the situation straightened out and we "ground-hogged" for the night. The CP located in a room about fifteen by fifteen feet. It seemed that everyone had business there that night. We had two or three badly wounded men to whom we were trying to give some hot coffee and fried eggs. I finally went outside for a couple of hours just to relieve the congestion.

The next morning, August 30, we returned to an assembly area, and the regiment went into division reserve. The next day we walked from 1000 until 1600. The company was situated for the night in pretty good time and we were able to get some sleep. This was at Le Petit Crouy. We had two cottages here which had been used by German officers only a few days before. Langlois completed a "deal" and we had fried chicken and fried eggs the next day.

At 1830 we mounted trucks. Lt. Stanford said we were going to Hollain, Belgium. That sounded like the land of wooden shoes and windmills. We had at first loaded up at 1230, but something had changed things. It always does in the army. We were loaded nine to a 3/4 ton truck. This was the trip that none of us shall ever forget. It was part of the breakthrough. In each French town the people would crowd the streets. It was practically impossible to get through many of the towns. They would shower us with flowers, wine, apples, plums, cognac, and anything else they had to give.

Langlois was in his glory on this trip. Everyone thought he was the commanding officer of at least a battalion. The supply of drinks kept him pretty happy. Many times he would wait for all the people to gather 'round and then he would get them started singing "La Marseillaise," the French national anthem, which of course had not been sung in public, until we arrived, for four years.