

PFC Archie Ross

*Company A, 424th Regiment
106th Infantry Division*

I was a PFC by order of FDR in Europe; that's also the way I received the Good Conduct Medal. We shipped out from Miles Standish on the *Acquitania*. I mention that, because I thought I was going to die on my way "over", and they asked me to box a Navy champion to entertain the troops. I was too sick to move, let alone fight. I had boxed at Ft. Jackson, and [Camp Atterbury](#).

I lost 20 pounds going to Scotland. We were at Banbury (Banbury hot cross buns) for some time; more than a week or two. The weather was nasty. It took us 48 hours from Glasgow to Banbury. Our trip across the channel was uneventful. We landed off LCIs; they bobbed in the Channel like corks. I did not get sick (I had taken Dramamine).

We raced across the continent; I was in the back of one of our 2/12 ton trucks with a supply detail, because there was heavy lifting to be done. It was wet, and chilly. We were welcomed in each French village where we stopped, and people offered us Calvados, and what ever, and the stuff warmed us. Most of the GIs were like me; about 19 years old and unfamiliar with "booze".

We stopped in a village that had a large Catholic church; in the middle of nowhere. It was pitch black, but our small group found the place. We were surprised to see how many GIs were in the place; there wasn't an empty seat to be had! All of us were new, and apprehensive. We wound up in reserve in a wooded area. It was cold, and snowy. We burned everything from twigs to trees to keep warm. We moved to the front at Steinbruck. I was with Hq. Co. 1st Bn. at the time, helping guard the Bn. Ammo. Dump. I was big (6- 210 lbs.), and there was loading, and unloading. We were on constant guard duty; we had a machine gun set up along the road.

There was a large open area to our left front. We billeted in two houses that were hunting lodges. We were in the basement. We had sent reports "back" that there was a lot going on, on the German side of the line. Those reports also came from the front line too. Reports were sent back several times, and appeared to be ignored. There were all kinds of activity; equipment, and personnel. Particularly, up till now the front was peaceful; we didn't bother them, and they didn't bother us.

December 16th our Lt. St. John (who was one hell of a hard working, and good officer) came into the basement, and roused us out of our "sacks". We left all of our belongings, and took off for Vielsalm our Division ammo dump. A German plane crashed in the middle of the dump. The roads to, and from the front were jammed with civilians, GIs, and vehicles going both ways; many were ambulances. Returning to our ammo dump our machine gun post was shot-up, and our 2 machine gunners were killed. That sight hurts to this day.

Our 1st. Sgt. Silver, and his side-kick Ford were in the small out-post with windows all around with Germans firing into the small cabin, and they firing back! I heard much later that they both wound up wounded and shipped back to the states. A miracle! They didn't care for me, and I had little respect for them. The area looked like "show time"; lights were glaring from the German side, loud speakers were playing music, Axis Sally was

talking to us, and everything was exploding from small arms to artillery, plus aircraft! We got into our trucks, and continued to Bn. Hdqtrs. It was a large building at the head of the one street in this village. The street ran into a fast flowing, freezing stream, with a small mountain on the other side. We were surrounded.

The Germans were on the other side of the mountain, and they were in the direction we had come from, and they were firing at us with one of our own 50 cal. machine guns. Earlier they had assaulted our position with drunken SS, and were repulsed. However we were surrounded.

Our Bn. S2 (intelligence), who's name escapes me; he was Italian, and a good baseball player, picked a route off a map, out of there, and we made it! I'm shaky about the chronological sequence. We drove thru a stream, and eventually down a road behind some of our artillery emplacements. They didn't realize what was happening. We got to St. Vith (division headquarters.). It was chaos; the Germans were dropping men with black parachutes. GIs moving from one place to another were falling flat on the ground when they responded to the password.

St. John formed a small convoy of Jeeps to carry supplies to troops still close to what was the front, and with whom there was still some contact. We did this in total darkness, and without "cat's eyes"! Some one ran in front of us and directed us thru those hills! We were routed out of St. Vith. I lost the Jeep that I rescued from the "field". I remember jumping on the back of a truck out of Malmedy ahead of the Germans. I remember being in a town where we found a house, and went in and took a nap in a feather bed!

Not for long; "Jerry" roused us again; this time he was closer. I think Roy Johnson, and Dave Press were still with me. We were on the side of a hill entering Brach, Germany; I think that's only half the name. As usual we were pinned down. We were there for a period of time (more than a day or two). I ate cold C rations there, and my stomach is still screwed up.

One night a Recon. Bn. was to our right flank, where they stopped to rest, and they took a direct hit from "screaming Mimi". We helped move the wounded into a barn, and I ran down the hill, and summoned our Bn. doctor. He came up with a Jeep, and stretchers, and help. He was great! I can't remember his name, but he was a skinny, pale looking guy, that appeared anything but strong.

After the usual beating we were over run by tanks. Roy Johnson, and I had a bazooka in our fox hole that we attempted to use once, but every body was retreating, so we got the hell out of there. Prior to that, one night, the foxhole to our right was next to the narrow road, and (Joe Spaniol ?) shouted "Halt who goes there?" three times with no response. He pressed the safety on his weapon, and we could hear his magazine fall to the ground! Turned out these were Hungarians trying to surrender.

I remember being picked up by a half track, and taken to Bastogne. We got into strange chow lines, and received funny looks. We were in a barn behind a stone fence with a bunch of GIs. I don't remember that we were aware of the gravity of the situation. The farmer, and his wife gave each of us one fresh egg. We relished that!

When things were organized I was with Co. A, still in the 424th Reg. We went into 3 Points. A town with a brewery. The guys checked that out; I think even while they were being fired upon. There was a y-shaped railroad bridge leading out of town to Stavelot We

were in 3 Points, and the Germans were on the road coming our way. The 101st Airborne made a drop in the middle of the bridge between the enemy, and us! Another wrong drop!

The air corps caught the German convoy on the road from Stavelot to 3 Points. A narrow road with steep hills, and little cover on their right, and about 100-150 yards on their left with a fast running stream at the end. They had no place to go. When the air corps finished there were dead SS lying in that open field like weeds! That convoy was made up mostly of American vehicles, and American fuel they had captured! Fortunately we were at the tail end of this operation.

We went into Stavelot, and were lucky to be at the tail end. Please remember, I don't remember the sequence. The night 1st Lt. Huddleston was killed, and Mr. Welch was wounded I was under the impression that we had sent out a patrol. I was carrying a BAR, but they allowed me to rest, after a march. My replacement was also killed. That was a clear cold icy night We were in hilly terrain, and the only access to us for food was to hand carry it. Again a patrol was sent out; I was sent out on a refresher with the flame thrower, but I was already experienced with it. My replacement that had only been with us a short time (a week?) was killed.

There were a few days when our company was billeted in a Chateau, but with no food. My little gang of thieves went out, and scrounged enough to feed the company. We had so much canned pineapple that our chef (Mike ?) fed us pineapple pie for days. There was a holiday, and we were in the woods; it was cold, and there was some snow.

Mike canvassed the company for our favorite food. He said he would make it, if possible. We voted for pancakes. He said, "No problem, I have powdered milk, powdered eggs, but no syrup". So he made syrup out of water, and the juice from canned fruit.

When things were in our favor we were in an outpost in front of our front line. We observed for the artillery. Not much happened there, but one of our 155 artillery shells landed about 25 yards in front of our foxhole, and was a "dud". We reported it "back", and were told that was not possible!

We were winning the war at this point; we took a group of prisoners out of a pillbox. Some of our replacements treated the Jerries like lost relatives! I didn't go close although they were a sad looking bunch. We were at Remagen, but my platoon never crossed the bridge. There was little fight left in the enemy at that time. Our first real rest period was in St Quentin. A whole bunch of us went into town the first night (that's against the rules). A replacement was on guard when we returned late that night. He took a shot at US!

Lt. McKay was Officer of the Day. I had been in the aviation cadets with him. He turned us in anyway. Sgt Rifleman said "if anyone asks, tell them you had extra duty". You may recall, Rifleman was written up in Yank for taking Manchau alone. A few of us were with him, but the Germans were going the other way as fast as they could. I was hospitalized with Yellow Jaundice while we were in San. Quentin.

I don't remember, if Jones was still our General, or the other guy, but they called me, and others like me out of the hospital about 2 weeks too early to go to S. Nazaire; where almost nothing happened.

We were on the Rhine River in pup tents. It was muddy and miserable when FDR died. Most of us walked around with tears in our eyes. L also had pneumonia in Frankfurt while in the Army of Occupation. That same great medical officer took care of me. I think it's wrong to shrink from talking about these experiences, and I have been open all these years. I think from my tone, it's obvious I have a low opinion of our officers from then; commissioned, and non-commissioned (better over seas), and now (from what I read).

David Hackworth in particular. I would like to point out that I did not miss one minute of front line duty while we were over there. I'm sure I have over looked more stories

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