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German Hospitals

Am enclosing a picture of Spainhour, Riley and myself taken last spring in Florida, at Riley's home so you can see what 3 old ex Sgts look like, maybe give you a laugh or two. We sure had a good time discussing everyone we could think of. I had not seen Riley (Top Sgt) since June, 1945 when he visited me at Wakeman General Hospital at Camp Atterbury. He was a career man, stayed in 26 years. He was in Korea (combat) and in Germany. Went back to the "Hill" twice while in Germany. Spainhour and I have kept in loose contact through the years. We have visited his home in N. Carolina and they have been at our home here and in Fla.

I have kept (barely) in touch with Joe Laux. Used to hunt pheasants with him in the thumb area of Michigan, but then much to my surprise he moved to Sun City, Ariz. I tracked him down again last spring. Talked to him on the phone, doing well, is a food broker (own business). He was wounded, was on 100% disability.

As I remember you were the runner for the section, Laux had one squad, Springer the other. The other guys were Kosciow, Baldwin, Melaick (the creep) Matezewski, Wares, Mussen and Tex Goertz. One name escapes my memory.

I had been sent back by Capt. Huyett on the late afternoon of Dec. 18th to bring up the rifle platoon that was in reserve, also the mortar section. When I got back to them I told Lt. Banes and Lt. Burr that we had made contact at the road. One of them suggested that we try and get on the German's flank at the road and told me to show them where they were at. I got almost there when I looked behind and there was only 2 men near me. The rest were about 200 yards back. I spotted the Germans, went back and told Lt Bailes and Burr. By that time it was getting dark. Bailes told me to go report to Capt. Huyett where they were. I did and Capt. Huyett said O.K. About 1:00 AM, Dec. 19th, Capt. Huyett decided that he wanted the other platoon closer to us. He told me to take one other man (a big guy from Ala.) and go down in those woods and get them up there. We contacted K Co. on our right and told them we would be bringing men through their fire area and I would be calling "Co. K" (whispering) as we had no password, I got separated from the guy from Ala. and finally after being on the road, woods and everywhere found out where they were.

I contacted Sgt. Savineso finally got them back with the Co. except two squads of the mortar section. That left Lt. Burr, Herbacync, Rotbermel and Schauer and two squads down in the woods with no mortars.

By the time I got back about 6:00AM and I was so damned tired, I didn't even try to dig in knowing we were going on the attack. It was before the attack about daylight when I hit that weapons carrier with the Germans driving it and split my lip all to hell with the recoil, there was no fire. The one you are thinking about is when the bazooka squad hit the gas truck up on our left on that little side trail. That is what they used as a aiming point.

We then started down across that open field. Someone hollered here comes tanks, the Q.M. Sgt. and Capt. Huyett both said they're ours. But like you, when that first one

opened up and that shell hit right in our midst, I wondered what in the hell was going on. I managed to get about half way to the road and the shells were falling so thick and the Mach. gun slugs flying that I hit the ground. That's when I started getting hit. I got it on the nose, face, left shoulder, right arm, back. (Cut my cartridge belt off of me), both legs and feet. All were flesh wounds except left shoulder. I managed to get up and start back. I thought I had bought the farm. It's a damned wonder I didn't get killed on the way back because the Germans were doing a replay by then. I walked back by Capt. Huyett and he said "Henderson, you are shot all to hell, get back to the aid station."

I also passed Spainhour who was on the 80 mortar. He later took a direct hit on it from an 88. it blew the tube all to hell and knocked him about 20 feet. He was temporarily blinded by it (about 4 days) but Norton (2nd platoon) stayed with him and they took turns caring for one another. Norton was wounded in the leg.

I got screwed up in the direction on the way to the aid station. Ran into John Frien, he was also hit (arm & leg). He told me to lay down and he would try and get me some water. He never returned, he got captured before he could get back.

In the late afternoon Lt. Harrison and his runner (Elund or Edlund) came through with white armbands on, said the Germans were allowing them to check for wounded, also what was left of the Co. had thrown in the towel, Lt. Harrison gave me morphine left the runner with me and went to get a litter. I passed out and when I woke up it was dark. I think that Erlund thought I had died because of the morphine knocking me out. (I often wonder if he made it). I sure hope so. Early the next A.M. the Germans shelled the hill again. I crawled off in the bushes and laid there 2 more days and nights. Germans were walking within 10 to 15 ft. of me. Finally, I decided to crawl out, when I did I ran into one of their patrols. They promptly opened up on me. They must have thought the whole American army was in those bushes the way I was thrashing around, but luckily no more hits.

I spent a night in a German field hospital and then was sent to Koblenz. (My feet had froze when I laid out), got there Christmas eve and was in a German Hospital until New Years eve then sent by train (boxcar) through Frankfort where I got strafed and bombed, to a town called Bad Sodum until January 19th. This hospital was run by what was left of the few Catholic nuns in Germany. Quite a few allied captives were there either as aid men or patients especially blind and burned.

On Jan. 19th, I was sent to Obermasafeld (30 mi. from Bad Orb.) This was a hospital run by English doctors under German control. They operated on toe, took out the shrapnel which had completely taken out my shoulder socket, put one in a body cast until March 26th, I was liberated on April 2nd by 11th armored. I got back to Paris about April 8th, and state side on May 1st. I weighed in at 129 when I got to Paris, but was a hell of a lot better off than you guys were. They flew me back to Thayer General Hospital at Nashville, I was there until Oct. 1st and then sent to **Wakeman General at Camp Atterbury.** They sewed up the scar tissue got my feet to stop draining and discharged me on Dec. 13, 1945.

Wakeman was the last place I saw Wilholt. He had a bad head wound. I talked with him several times but he went home quite a bit as he was ambulatory. I cannot remember what his home town was so if you can, please send it to me, would certainly appreciate it. Also, anything you can remember about Maestro, who I believe was from New York or New Jersey.

As I look back now what has happened to a lot of the guys Cormen (Crum Bum) Melnick (the creep), Kosciow, Hille, Waveris, Duckett and all the rest that I mentioned before. Baldwin was at Obermasafeld to but I did not know it until we were liberated. Had leg and arm wounds pretty bad. He was from Washington state, Bremerton, I believe, but was inducted at Jackson, Michigan. I have checked there but no luck. I have sent letters through the VA to several of the guys, but wonder if they received them through that fouled up outfit. Also have letters out to Capt. Huyett, through Washington, D.C. but no answer yet.

But won't give up, plan to pester, cajole and contact whomever, to establish their whereabouts or if they are still living.

Really didn't intend to tell you all my experiences, but was so damned glad to hear from you. I just started and couldn't stop. Yes, I also remember the incident when we were on the Queen Elizabeth, guess my nerves were really beginning to show through. I also remember you As a good soldier and not at all "cocky". But must have been pretty "rough" to go through the P.O.W. ordeal. You were certainly not at all "cocky" and I remember you as a friend.

Source: Letter from self



Page last revised

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