



SPRING EDITION

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A Further Remembrance from the 291st Infantry Regiment:

In this issue of the AT Message Center we will present the portion of Sgt. Donald Pierce's (K-291) manuscript dealing with his experiences during the 291st's battle history during their Colmar (France) campaign. However, as you will discover, the volume of his recollections left no space in this issue for the story of his unit's next assignment for the Rhine crossing and the Ruhr Valley (Dortmund) campaign. However, in the M/C issue to follow this one, we expect to continue with some additional Colmar campaign recollections promised us by a fellow veteran who served in the 290th's 3rd Battalion. In that issue we will also try and find the space necessary to include a final installment of Sgt. Pierce's story, one that addresses K-291's crossing of the Rhine and finally his experiences in the Ruhr valley, both events that largely paralleled those of AT Company veterans, about which few if any written personal remembrances have survived. Thus, we begin with Don's account of the 291st's departure from Belgium and their arrival at or around the city of Colmar in southern France, circa February 1, 1945.

Colmar:

The route south was a confusion of towns and cities, and we had no idea where we were headed. [Going by way of Luxembourg] seemed a logical way to go. [But] after that, we were lost. Names meant nothing to us: Thionville, Metz, and then Nancy. This last city produced sights which could be remembered. Fancy iron fences with gilt surrounded rather impressive buildings. Its name was pronounced "Nan-say" but spelled Nancy. All I remember was that I had never heard of any of them prior to this trip.

We paused in Nancy. A Red Cross canteen, staffed with American girls in Red Cross uniforms, was serving coffee and doughnuts. As we entered, it suddenly dawned on us how different our American girls were and how long it had been since we had talked to any. The aroma of fresh doughnuts and coffee whetted out appetites, but so did the nice, white teeth of a smiling Red Cross girl. A matter of priorities caused us a problem. Do we concentrate on eating, or on getting acquainted? The aromas of brewed coffee and fresh-baked doughnuts were tempting, but so were the girls from home. They were really making a hit. A jaunty cap covering well coiffed hair, trim figures in uniform and pretty smiles were as much a treat as the sweets. Yes, this stop was a definite hit. It was crowded with G.I.s who had similar ideas to ours. We decided to eat and get along.

Only by stopping in Nancy did I realize that I had [previously] gone to Paris for free. No donations, no fees, no hotel charges, just a hell of a three-day pass. The canteen was nice, except for the fact that we were charged for the coffee and dough nuts. I guess behind the lines such things were common. The life of a "garatrooper" had its drawbacks.

We went south to Luneville and then into the Vosges mountains. The carrier slowed from the strain of climbing the mountain roads. Once again we were in the Snow Belt and it was growing colder. Just where we found my outfit, I could never tell you. It was south of St. Die and probably north of Colmar. We were just glad to get to the 3rd Battalion headquarters area. When we finally pulled in, we were tired. After a brief good-bye, I was deposited without ceremony. As expected, I checked in at the C.P. The sergeant in charge said to wait outside for further instructions. Having no ken of what had happened in this area, I walked about looking for some answers. They came in the form of one of our machinegun men who had also been instructed to sit outside and wait. I learned that he had been sent back for a rest.

Happy to see a familiar face alive and smiling, Dick greeted me like a long-lost brother. I was no less happy to see him. His information, however, was saddening. There had been a big attack upon their arrival near Colmar. Many of our men had been killed as they drove the Germans towards the Rhine. Losing control, Dick began running around crying like a baby. This had been his moment of panic. He was unaware of his actions, yet he had been one of our bravest. Cracking up until controlled by some of our men, he showed us that we all had a breaking point.

We two sat and waited for Eugene "Jeep" Eliasoph to finish in headquarters, where he was being interrogated. He had been captured by the Germans. He later escaped at an opportune moment and was now conveying valuable information about German positions to the intelligence officers. As we waited, Dick spoke to me anxiously. A rugged youth from the Midwest with intelligence and style, he was one of our A.S.T.P. men with class. I could tell he was still nervous and that he wanted to get something off his chest. Little did I realize what he was about to ask.

Looking me directly in the eye, he asked me for a favor. "Don," he said, "will you shoot me?" I could tell he was deadly serious and that he had given the subject serious thought. I laughed and tried to pass it off.

"Dick," I replied, "I have had the same thoughts. Where do you want me to shoot you?"

"Right here," he said, pointing to the fleshy part of his calf. After seeing the paratrooper in the barn with the wound through his anklebone, I had considered the subject of self-inflicted wounds. This was just the spot I had picked for my own S.I.W. I told Dick this, and we had a laugh about it. I rationalized with him, as I had done with myself. No longer believing myself invulnerable, I had given serious thought to this subject. Not too terrified yet, I had decided

that having gone this far, we were going to go the whole way. It was not good logic, but how else could you exist in this world of death? You had to believe it was always "the other guy" who would buy it. You would go on.

We laughed and then I said, with quiet determination, "Dick, they need us." He nodded and we sat, waiting for Eliasoph, without voicing any further negative thoughts. Soon after, out came that happy-go-lucky rifleman from Jamaica, Queens. He was a very solid Jewish boy, about 185 pounds, left-handed, and a worthy boxing opponent. Eugene and I had been together for basic training at Ft. Benning and as A.S.T.P. students in Brooklyn College. We both were assigned to "K" Company, 291st Inf, when we joined the 75th in Louisiana. Starting in basic training, we had formed a bond by turning out for boxing. It had been a way to get in off bivouac, and enjoy good food. Willingness to risk your neck for good food was a great basis for friendship. We became good pals.

Eliasoph was the only soldier in the infantry who was blinder than I. He was marked "limited service" 20/400 and I was marked "limited service" at 20/200. How the two of us ever got to the front lines could only pose the question: what was "limited service?" This was indeed, a mystery. I could read the big "E" on the chart, but it was all just a blur to him.

During basic training, we boxed a few rounds and it came off quite even. As the son of a top coach at Lawrence, Long Island, I had a lifetime of being well trained. Only later, on the trip across the Atlantic, when bouts had been organized on the ship, had I been able to take him boxing. This took a third round to accomplish and I had a sore side from three murderous lefts to the body.

Knowing his character, I had wondered how "Jeep" had been captured and how he had escaped. He soon appeared and offered his story. He was seeking his platoon when we had a right turn instead of a left. This headed him, wearing new snow garb, into the German position. He had not realized he was behind German lines until a soldier, also clad in snow garb, said something to him in German. Unfortunately, his M1 rifle was slung over his shoulder by the strap. As he fumbled to recover it, the Kraut beat him to the draw. "Hands in der hoch!" and Jeep was a prisoner.

They took him behind the lines to question him. Scared that they would detect him as a Jew, he only gave his name, rank and serial number. They failed to notice his dog tag read "H" for Hebrew and ordered him back to imprisonment. Two guards led him out and started him to the rear. Walking slowly, "Jeep" managed to cause a spread between the two guards. He was still worried about being a Jew. It was beginning to get dark. American artillery was coming in along the road to the rear. The front guard was becoming uncomfortable about the shelling. Eliasoph lagged more. The rear guard came up to him, prodded him with his rifle, and ordered him to "mach schnell." Using some of his high school French, "Jeep" explained that he was "fa-ti-gued." The Kraut reached to help take his pack. It was then that he learned what a great punch "Jeep" packed. Down went the Kraut, a poncho was dumped over him, and away he sped. Shots were fired but no chase was in the offing. Eliasoph never stopped running until he reached our lines. Ecstatic with joy, he kissed the guys in "K" Company. He had thought he would never see them again. They responded by sending him back to the rear to be debriefed. It was after this that he came out to join us.

The three of us headed back up to the front. For Dick and my old friend Eliasoph, this was an all-too-recent event. I became aware of how many days of death I had missed because of the doctor's pass to Paris. The return had come too soon for me. It was soon dark but we located the remnants of "K" Company. Our boys were assigned to protect tanks sent to assist us. They were dug in under them. The tankers felt safe having us "Doughs" look after them. [They didn't realize that we too felt safe] with steel roofs over our heads. I, for one, slept like a baby.

In the morning I caught up with all the details of what had happened while I was "goofing off" back in Paris. In just a few days, so much had happened. The outfit had stopped fighting soon after I left to go to Paris. They were shipped out to the Colmar Pocket to go on the attack. The order came shortly before I rejoined them: drive the Germans back across the Rhine! The captain, hearing the order, was shocked. Mikules was no coward. His intellect must have told him that the orders were impractical. He resigned his command rather than lead his men into an attack he had no chance to win. This was even more shocking news. Only after the attack had he been proven right. He had argued that even if we were able to take the ground we would never be able to hold it as there just weren't enough men. Our executive officer, Lt. Kretzdorn, joined the captain in resignation. They were transferred up into division echelons until after V.E. Day.

First Lieutenant Irving "Smokey" Smorack, our weapons platoon leader, assumed command of "K" Company. He was given some seventeen replacements and he led the attack. Getting through the deciduous woods around Colmar proved how right Captain Mikules had been. It was quite a different forest from the Ardennes. For one thing, the troops encountered the turrets of the old Maginot Line. To dislodge the Germans from them required flame throwers and explosive charges. Then they were introduced to the "screaming meemees" (screaming mimis). These were mortars that fired six rockets at a time. Each was equipped with noisemakers akin to those on the wings of their dive bombers. It was as unnerving a racket as ever heard, from the minute they left the barrels 'til impact. The screaming seemed to last forever before they exploded, earning our nickname for them.

Deadly as these were, the trip mines set along the paths in the woods were worse. This was an ingenious explosive that popped out of the ground, bouncing up into the air, and exploding. Any unwary soldier who missed seeing the trip wire stretched from a "Bouncing Betty" landmine across his path [were subjected to severe injury when it exploded]. The Germans also deployed "shoe mines," a fiendish device designed not to kill but to wound. It was reasoned that if a soldier were to lose his foot, it would take others to carry him back to safety, thus taking them out of the fight as well. There was, of course, the usual infantry as well as tanks and artillery. Of the 17 "K" Company replacements, only four were standing when I returned.

Just prior to the big attack, Sgt. Lefers received one of those "Dear John" letters from his old sweetheart. That mail call prior to the attack caused him to be reckless. After reading the bad news, he heroically jumped up on a tank to direct fire. Unlike Audi Murphy, the most decorated American soldier of World War II, he was shot off the tank and

killed. Other heroes were cited, other friends died. The ground had been taken as the Germans retreated, but after the attack our men had to fall back into defensive positions in the woods.

The weapons platoon lost their sergeant during the battle. Komerowsky, one of our married men and our platoon sergeant, had been wounded. A million dollar wound made him so happy that he ran back to the safety of the medics. Levin, our brave, Jewish medic, who ignored us "drop outs" when Col. Robinson had come along body hunting, was found dead. He was lying across a wounded rifleman. He had died in the line of duty, bandaging one of our wounded. Another artillery shell caught them both. No military decoration was written up, but he was a hero in our eyes. Another casualty of this fight was our good old country boy, Sgt. Baker. He had been wounded along with his buddy. Waiting for a medic to bandage him, he decided that it was time to go. Up he got and away did trot, so the stories went. The losses had been considerable, but MacMillen, Smith and other friends were still there. Of our five original squad members, Edwards, Lippert, and Macchia were no longer present. How much longer could we last? It was definitely getting to be "the last man's club" and only time could tell.

Guarding the tank, the night passed easily. I was feeling quite confident that my advice to Dick had been correct. So what did they do? With the break of day, we learned that they had assigned us to a combat patrol. We were to sweep the woods toward the Rhine and make sure that the Germans had retreated to the other shore. What a great assignment for my first day back! Dick, "Jeep" and I were all included. If I did not get killed this time, I could be sure my advice to Dick had been correct.

As good fortune goes, we had the best. The mission was accomplished and we returned unscathed. Only then did we believe that we had something going for us. With the tanks no longer near, we had to dig in anew. The shells and rockets were still being fired into our positions in the forest. So few of us were left that Smith, Mac and I decided to dig a three-man prone shelter. After considerable work putting on a roof covered by earth, we tried to get the three of us into it. It was a bloody struggle, but we made it. It was after this that Smitty went off to show a medic friend his latest souvenir. He had been gone only a short time when we heard the screams. The mortar fire was coming our way! Six bursts littered the area and then we were able to breathe again. No direct hits, but where was Smitty? Just after the thought, a blond-headed streak came diving into the shelter, gasping for breath. Where we had struggled before, he was in between us in an instant. "I've...been...hit!" he said between gasps. A lull allowed me to examine his leg, where a tear showed on the side of his knee. Sure enough, he had been cut by a piece of shrapnel across the bony part of his knee. There was no blood to speak of, but I advised him to get it checked out. The medics officially logged him as wounded, but he refused to go to the rear, instead returning to our hole. That was the stuff of which "K" Company men were made.

The next moment of impact was the word that our wonderful and brave kitchen men had brought up hot chow! The mere suggestion of their presence was enough to motivate me toward the marmite cans being lined up for serving. Sgt. Stringos, Auggie Meier, Sumpter and the rest always went one step further to take care of us who were on the front lines. Hot chow was morale, and they knew how much it meant to us. Fiendish as always, the Germans sensed it was time for another salvo of mortars. The woods were once again alive with diving bodies and shrapnel pieces ripping through the trees. Old Sumpter sat there stoically, refusing to budge. Then, "boing," the top of his marmite can was hit as he held it, flying off. It had been "hotter" chow than asked for, but none of us were going to let it go to waste. The danger had just sharpened our appetites. We ate with more than our usual interest.

With Germans being thrown back on all fronts, it seemed that we might just last through to V.E. Day. Victory in Europe Day was that wonderful event we were all praying for. Then the news that the Germans had fled to the other side of the Rhine reached us. It was a great moment which earned the 75th Division special recognition.

The Colmar operation had been one of the few times in American military history that U.S. troops served under a French command. The 75th, along with the Third and 28th Infantry Divisions and the 12th armored Division had been assigned to General de Lattre de Tassigny's command with orders to eliminate the "Colmar Pocket." Fighting along side of the First Moroccan Mounted Division, who dressed in Arab costumes and carried long rifles, had been a colorful part of the war. They had trotted along the left flank of the 12th Armored, more to keep General Charles de Gaulle happy than to annoy the Germans. The major unit for the French Army was General LeClerc's Second Armored Division. Calling this division the "Second" was a ploy to confuse the Germans; there was no "First" French division.

After the battle, representatives of the American units formed a parade in the city of Colmar where they were addressed by General de Gaulle. The mayor of Colmar bestowed to coat of arms of the city upon the troops, and officially made us heroes. As for the few of us left in "K" Company, we seventeen were relaxing in a farmhouse, near Wolfgantzen, sitting by a fire in the yard and sipping wine. The celebrating French troops came riding along with casks of wine upon their tanks, shouting, singing and firing off rifles. As a bullet ricocheted close to one of our men, we suddenly realized we had more to worry about than Germans! It would be wise to take cover while the happy French soldiers celebrated the liberation of their country. The battle of the Colmar Pocket was officially over, but danger lingered on!

With the "Little Bulge" flattened, we were pulled back for showers and a three-day break. This, as we soon learned, meant a trip to the town of Griviller or Vesez, France for the 3rd Battalion of the 291st Infantry. It was a treat which included showers, movies, beer ration, and a chance to go to church services.

Going to the G.I. field showers for my first time was a novel experience. Unlike the ones that broke down up in Belgium, these worked. As we lined up we stripped down to towels and shoes and were given clear instructions: we were given one minute of hot water to get wet all over, one minute to scrub with soap, and one more to rinse. It wasn't much, but it sure beat a "whore's bath" out of a helmet. Besides, it was my third chance to get clean in three months, so there was no reason to complain.

An unexpected treat was "Mail Call!" Even our usual cry failed to dampen our expectations. The slow, tedious calling out of names by semi-illiterates, who always got mail orderly assignments, was, no doubt, the cause for our

usual cry. Sticking to the tradition, as we gathered we sang out: "...48, ...49, ...50! ... some shit!" Unexpectedly, this mail orderly was sharp. He quickly had our rapt attention; not only letters, but packages as well! I was one of the fortunate ones. My mother's long-lost cookies had arrived – battered and stale – but still delicious! With fewer of us to share, it made slight difference. They lasted but a few minutes longer than usual! Such was the fame of my mother's cooking!

News from an Evansville girlfriend, and my family, lifted my spirits. The folks were always concerned about me, but how can one write that they had every right to be [concerned]? My negative views came creeping back, and I pictured that dreaded telegram arriving at 1030 Crestwood Road, Woodmere, N.Y., with the opening words, "We regret to inform you that your son..." followed by the bad news. With my two older brothers in the service, my folks had a triple chance of receiving one. I knew that I had the greatest chance of being the cause. I prayed, "Please, God, let them keep on missing me!"

By sundown the theater was ready for the showing of our evening treat: a Hollywood movie of unknown quality or age. It had to be dark because our theater was a blown-up church with a single wall standing, rubble forming the seats. Nevertheless, there was a capacity crowd, and we hooted and cheered as events solicited a youthful response. Acting like civilians seemed to make all of us relax a bit, forgetting, if even for a moment, the war.

The good news had come after the showers: mail call and movies. Our whole battalion, less than one company in numbers, was billeted in one farmhouse near Keyersberg. King Company was down to some 17 men from 180. The bad news came the next day: as expected, since the Bulge the 75th, shock troops of Europe, were off again. With the Germans chased out of France, we were loaded onto Forty and Eights. It was the 15th of February, and we were of on the luxurious ride into Holland. One happy note was that the weather had warmed up. Compared to earlier rides, this one was a pleasure. The tour included a weekend in Belgium, where we once again enjoyed the hospitality of those wonderful people. Taken into their homes and fed, we were treated like visiting dignitaries. It was an amazing change from the dirty hovels we had scratched across out in the forest!

As all good things we come to an end, on the 18th of February, reality returned. We found out that we were assigned to relieve a British unit. In the interim, we learned that Smitty and I were now buck sergeants and could wear three stripes. He would command the 1st mortar squad in place of Willis and I was to command the 3rd in place of Edwards. We were to pick up replacements so that we would actually have people to command! Nineteen-year-olds with responsibility: were we really ready for this?

Holland

The rumor mill had been hard at work again. It seemed that we were to go up the Maas River and relieve some English troops. The mill was once again correct. We arrived at the British Regimental C.P. in Heijthuisen, Holland on the 18th of February, 1945. The British unit turned out to be Canadian paratroopers, who had been pulled back in anticipation of our arrival.

The British were busily engaged in a game of volley ball. Happily they greeted us, and rapidly began to fill us in on how to barter with the locals. We were considered to be "rich Americans" and they were worried about us raising the price for eggs, pies, and other such goods. Specific prices were enumerated and we assured them that we would not spoil the locals.

We settled into various farmhouses in the town and waited for nightfall. This was when the patrol action got going because we could not move out near the Maas during daylight. The ground was too open and flat, making us easy targets for German artillery fire. It did not surprise even one of the new men arrived to tell me that I was to report to Lt. Smorack at the C.P. I was called by Smokey whenever he had a worrisome problem and this time was no different. I was to accompany a British sergeant who was to lead three "K" Company patrols out on the flatlands along the Maas: just what a mortar squad leader was never trained to do, but off we went.

We passed through town, cut off to the north, and advanced into the land of the unusual haystacks. They looked a bit unnerving as we approached them in the gloom. Had a German patrol crossed and set up fire positions before we had arrived? This was where the reserve patrols was to set up and wait. We dropped off one squad. Moving closer to the river, we stationed a second group. Moving north from there, we established a third position. Each was linked by field phone. They could communicate quietly should something appear, or call for assistance if needed.

The British sergeant and I returned to town, where he gave the rest of the briefing to Lt. Smorack. The river had overflowed its normal limits but was expected to drop back before too long. If such were the case, the patrols had to be moved closer. I took note of this, but felt he was premature. The patrol positions were as close to the river as they needed to be, the water seeming quiet stable. Lt. Smorack was impressed by the advice and took note. Meanwhile, it was my assignment to lead the riflemen out to their patrol places each night. As mentioned, walking through the gloom toward darker shadows caused by the haystacks was nerve-wracking business, but there was more.

With nightfall I would start out through the town leading the patrols. Each night we would pass those green "K" replacements on guard duty. They were as scared as we had been when we first came to Belgium. Before their challenge came the click of a safety being unlocked. My ears were very attuned to noises at night and I would halt with the click, sign and countersign, and move on to the next.

One night there was no challenge from the dark shadow standing along a house wall. No challenge and no click. It seemed unlikely a patrol could have penetrated this far into our lines, but I was ready. I advanced, slowly and cautiously, toward the shadow. There was no sign of movement, no noise, certainly no challenge. I walked right up to one terrified guard, grabbed his rifle and gave him hell.

"If I had been a German, you would be dead by now," I shouted in a muted voice. "Don't you ever let anyone get so close to you again, 'soldier.'" 'Soldier' was the superior's way of putting an inferior down. Sergeants were especially good at using the phrase and, as a new sergeant, I was dying to try it out. It deed seem to snap the recruit out of

his trance, as his initial "buck fever" became a memory of the past. We left him with the understanding that, on guard duty, he had better be prepared to kill or be killed. If he deserted his post he would be shot by his own men. If he failed to stop the enemy, they would kill him. We continued as usual.

As I reported back to the C.P. a few nights later, Lt. Smorack said to me that he thought perhaps we should advance to patrols closer to the water. I knew he had been impressed with the advice from the Brits, but I was even more impressed by my nightly hikes out onto the flats. I politely disagreed with him, suggesting that he should accompany me to personally check them out. He thought this a good idea. Back I went, leading him through the town. With the third click and challenge, I could see the suspense of each encounter affecting his mood. Cutting off to the North, we entered the land of the unusual haystacks. They were no less ominous than always. They had the same impact on Smokey as on me. We approached the patrol in the reserve position. Smokey was getting jumpy. The sign and countersign routine did little to relax him. He noted the field phone because I had the patrol call ahead to the others that we were approaching. Cutting across the empty, flat tidal fields between the patrols, staring at nothing, always got me. Again, it had the same effect on the Lieutenant. His stammer came back as he whispered to me, "ho-ow much fur-rther is it?" "Just ahead, sir," I calmly replied. We reached the patrol's position without incident.

He observed the water and agreed that it was close enough to the patrol's position, indicating that he was ready to return. I said that the last position was just off to the left. It was about as far away from the water as the one we were at. It satisfied him completely, so back to the C.P. we went. After this episode, the riflemen had learned the routine so I was excused from the nightly chore. Amen!

My liberty, however, was short lived. They assigned me to cover a new position near a railroad, which had been established by the Brits in a cellar of a house near a railroad crossing. Outside there was a two-man hole dug by the gates for the guards on duty. A wire line ran from the pit into the cellar where it had been attached to a tin can full of stones. A tug on the line and the noise told me the guards wanted me. Inside was a field phone which communicated with the C.P. All of this communication ability was something new to us, making standing guard on duty a bit more entertaining. I stationed two men, showed them how to alert me with the wire, and ducked into my cozy cellar. There was even a dim bit of lamplight to read by. This being a sergeant did have its advantages!

No sooner thought than rattle, rattle, rattle. I grabbed my rifle, ducked out the opening, checked carefully before exposing my position, and scurried across to them. "Sarge," they said, "We heard something up ahead. It sounded like someone walking around by that house." I listened expecting to hear nothing but the wind and that's all that I heard. I explained how it was natural to imagine noises and movement when you were first on guard duty in the dark, but that they would soon settle down. Back I went to my cozy cellar.

A short time later, rattle, rattle, rattle. The drill was repeated and the report was the same. Once again I listened, but this time I heard the footsteps. These lads had been quite correct. It seemed to me that we had something worth investigation, so I ran back to the phone. I cranked it and spoke to the C.P. We had need for a squad of riflemen to check on a possible patrol in our area. They replied that they would have someone there pronto. Having made the call, I rejoined the men to wait. It was only a few minutes when our boys arrived. We pointed out the area, and they were off to nail the intruders. Things had been a bit dull of late, but this promised some action.

We strained to see, and to listen, expecting shots to ring out at any moment. Then came a noise we had least expected: the sound of laughter. A short time later the patrol returned triumphantly leading the enemy. It was a hungry goat that had caused us all to sweat. They, too, had thought the enemy had penetrated to our side and almost shot the goat. They laughed at their own nerves, and at our vivid imagination. Sergeant Pierce was just a bit chagrined! I thanked them for the prompt support, said adieu, and ducked back into the cellar.

Such events caused excitement, and once in a while, fun. One night, shortly thereafter, I was again in the cellar by the phone. Suddenly I heard the ringing caused by the cranking. Then I heard an excited voice. It came from the patrol guarding a partially blown bridge across the river. Someone was starting to cross the bridge. "What should we do?" From the C.P., a calm voice told them to challenge, and then throw a hand grenade, if necessary. We were close enough to the river to hear the explosion. However, it took the word on the phone to enlighten us. The grenade that had been thrown exploded harmlessly in the water. It had been thrown in haste because the men returning were an "A" Company patrol with German prisoners. With trigger-happy replacements manning positions, they had sent the P.O.W.'s first as a precaution. We were able to enjoy the laughter this time.

More fun was provided when we had a chicken-stealing trip back from the front to the first farmhouse we had been using. We had tried to barter for a nice, plump chicken, but the farmer had a thing about his prize, egg-laying hens. He guarded them with his life, and nobody could tempt him to trade. Our section sergeant, Lester Darrel Price, thought it was time to take action towards a chicken feast at the front. Having just returned, along with Harvey, our company barber, a party seemed to be in order. Harvey was the chicken stealer and I was the covering gun! We rode back together on a man's bicycle in the darkness.

My job was to keep an eye on the house, and if the old farmer came out with his gun, I was to scare him off. Price had not trusted any of the other mortar men to shoot so carefully. Once again, I was selected. The only thing wrong with the plan was that I had never stolen a chicken, nor wrung one's neck! As I was standing outside the coop, Harvey did just that! He handed me the freshly-killed chicken without its head. It was sure dead, but what I did not know was that the rest of him was quite lively. That damn chicken jumped out of my grip and flapped around me. Harvey grabbed it again. "Shush," he cautioned. He then popped back in and, before mine had settled down, he had wrung the head off a second chicken. We were ready to go! Never a noise had reached the farmhouse. Quite pleased with ourselves, we rode off into the night. The farmer may have wondered what happened to his chickens, but finding the cigarettes we had left for him should have tipped him off, easing my conscience and making the chicken harder to swallow!

With warmer weather and easier duties, life in the Netherlands was quite passable. The replacements were getting seasoned through the patrol action and incoming artillery shells. We were gaining much-needed rest from the extreme stress of combat. This did not mean that the brass had forgotten their shock troops. Assault boat training was started and we knew big things lay ahead. Chasing the Germans across the Rhine was in the offering. However, just how soon we don't know.

We did know that psychological warfare was being carried out via artillery firing occasional broadsides of leaflets over to the Germans. The surrender pamphlets promised safe passage and good treatment and were designed to soften up German resolve. They reminded me of how the Germans had used such tactics on us. After a big secret move from the States to the front line, we arrived in Belgium and moved up on the line. An explosion of propaganda pamphlets came fluttering down: "Welcome 75th Infantry Division!" they said. Why we had bothered removing the red, white and blue patches with big, blue seven and red five emblazoned on the shields from our uniforms was a mystery then. The flier messages contained a dozen ways to get on sick call, thus avoiding being killed by the "superior German forces" facing us. It had a chilling effect on us at that time. Such items as eating toothpaste and holding G.I. soap under the armpits to raise body temperature did stick in our memories. Our messages must have had some effect on them. With Germany facing invasion from us across the rivers on their western flank, a safe P.O.W. camp had its attraction.

We were serving under the British Second Army at this time, and this was the fourth army and third nation to which we had been assigned. This in a mere two and a half months of combat operations. Maybe the brass was not thinking of us as the shock troops of the E.T.O., but it sure could fool us! With patrols crossing the Maas nightly to obtain information on German plans and actions, and with assault boat training under way, it seemed to us that we would soon be into real action again.

Another part of the scene along the Maas were the nightly R.A.F. raids on the city of Dusseldorf. Our positions along the river gave us a front row seat of the fighting. First we would hear the German air-raid sirens start their wailing, and then the lights in the distance would go off. Next was the drone of the bombers approaching. Ack-ack fire would start bursting in the sky as powerful searchlights swept up into the night, searching for an R.A.F. Target. Often a bomber would be caught in a beam, becoming quite visible to our naked eyes. It gave us a peculiar, detached sensation to just sit, lie, or stand there watching that panorama of the night. Like moths, we were fascinated by the lights; we vibrated sympathetically with the AAA bursts. The impact of the bombs would be registered by tremendous explosions. Soon fires began to spring up from the devastated city in the distance. With the red glow lighting the sky, we could only imagine how awesome it had to be under that carpet of falling death. However, any human shudder of sympathy for the poor Germans of Dusseldorf would disappear whenever a bomber would burst into flames and spiral down to oblivion.

How quickly our feelings changed. Sympathy changed to remorse for our dying comrades in arms. After a plane had blown apart in the air, seeing a parachute would ease our sense of loss. You prayed that the downed airman would be captured by soldiers, not civilians, for the civilians had been known to hack some of them to death. Germany was being devastated by U.S. planes by day and R.A.F. planes by night. The people hated all of them.

Because we Doughs came in on foot, when captured, we were better off than the airmen. Arriving in inflatable rafts was almost the same, but it was no way to travel into a fight. At best it was a crowded, rather fragile raft with small paddles and of questionable stability. We practiced with them as we prayed it would not be our fate to attack across the Rhine in them. Picturing us in one on the Rhine, under fire, I had already decided that a swim was in my future. In March, a hypothermia month, only a short swim could be considered. Meanwhile, it was the Germans, who were falling back all along the front. Rhine time was nearing.

During the first week of March, our 291st Infantry Regiment moved up through Holland...The start of the second week found us defensive positions on the west bank of the Rhine River, just south of the city of Wesel.

Closing Comment:

We regret to report that we have received belated confirmation from his daughter-in-law that Lovell Wallace died during the month of November 2007 at a nursing home in California. His death is believed to have followed the general deterioration of his health after sustaining a fall earlier in the year. We have had no word as to the survivors within his immediate family, but he will be sorely missed by those of us who knew him over the past 63 years.

*Ray Smith, Editor
Rob Smith, Treasurer and Publisher*

ADDRESSES & PHONE NUMBERS for AT-290TH IR

<u>NAME</u>	<u>PHONE</u>	<u>STREET</u>	<u>CITY</u>	<u>ST</u>	<u>ZIP</u>
Anderson, LeRoy V. (Anja)	281 579 3126	1802 Fantasy Woods Drive	Houston	TX	77094 - 3464
<i>Berry, Gordon</i>	616 363 6074	1225 3 Mile Road NE	Grand Rapids	MI	49505
Black, Velma (Bill's widow)	unknown	Infinia at Kensington - 613 N. Main	Kensington	KS	66951
Blake, Jean G. (Charles' widow)	513 984 5589	9840 Montgomery Road	Montgomery	OH	45242 - 6425
<i>Bondaruk, George</i>	203 378 0689	25 Franklin Avenue	Stratford	CT	06497 - 5239
Boyle, William B. (Ruth)	812 546 4948	P.O. Box 35	Hartsville	IN	47244 - 0035
Bradley, Connie M (Rudy G.'s dgtr)*	410-228-1643	1210 Stone Boundary Road	Cambridge	MD	21613 - 2854
<i>Brown, George A.</i>	508 477 1144	Box 1439	Mashpee	MA	02649 - 1493
<i>Claypool, Edward L.</i>	903 785 1197	123 23 rd ST NW	Paris	TX	75460 - 3727
Coldwell, Mary (Robert's widow)*	unknown	13309 E. 43 rd	Independence	MO	64055
Daehler, Ralph H.	319 652 3737	700 Pershing Road	Masquoketa	IA	52060 - 2402
Daniels, Rudy [or "Rubbie"]	770 613 0389	3231 Canary Ct	Decatur	GA	30032 - 3717
<i>Denegre, John</i>	203 795 4843	289 Merry Circle	Orange	CT	06477 - 3417
Dionne, Norman R. (Regina)	603 524 2867	9 Sargents Pl - Lot 56	Gilford	NH	03249 - 2268
<i>Dole, Robert</i>	913 483 4274	1035 N. Maple Street	Russell	KS	67665
<i>Elbon, Arthur</i>	408 356 5041	Pueblo De Los Gatos, 420-28 Alberts Way	Los Gatos	CA	95032
Ellis, Paul B. (Rosemary) K/290	803 547 4913	104 Hilton Head Court	Fort Mill	SC	29715 - 9758
Fary, Raymond E. (Irene)	219 836 7974	8254 Madison Avenue	Munster	IN	46321 - 1627
Files, Ira (Flossie)	501 352 7515	RT 1 BOX 56	Ivan	AR	71748 - 0000
Gase Jr., Virgil C. (Seattie)	513 858 1254	998 Hicks Blvd	Fairfield	OH	45014 - 2853
Graves, Betty C. (Paul's widow)	859 987 3754	19 E. 19 th St	Paris	KY	40361 - 1156
Grimm, Elide Lucy (Tom's widow)*	512 452 2354	1904 Wooten Drive	Austin	TX	78757 - 7702
<i>Guhl, Paul J. (Betty)</i>	860 536 1626	45 Sequin Drive	Noank	CT	06340
<i>Harter, Vicki (John Benfield's dgtr)</i>	253 535 2966	11901 Alaska Street S.	Tacoma	WA	98444 - 2317
Huchingson, W. Paul	unknown	21910 Country Woods Drive	Fairhope	AL	36532 - 4453
Ingles, Ernest (Ruth Brown)	517 437 4704	1341 Hudson Road	Hillsdale	MI	49242 - 9345
<i>Jarrell, Melvin/"Bill" (Buelah)</i>	302 629 3062	Route 1, Box 318	Seaford	DE	19973
<i>Johns, George Randall</i>	503 236 2274	3728 SE 35 th PL	Portland	OR	97202
Kirk, William (Peg) (chgd to cell phone Mar '07)	443 521 1277	110 Choptank Avenue	Cambridge	MD	21613 - 1625
Kolarczyk, Frank M.	unknown	1515 Painted Leaf Drive	Crown Point	IN	46307 - 9694
Krause, Michelle (Groves' dgtr)*	unknown	1208 N Finlandia CT	Muncie	IN	47304 - 9093
<i>Lauland, Byron J. (John's son)</i>	504 348 7651	2776 Colony CT	Marrero	LA	70072
Lauland, Cary J. (John's son)*	504 689 4286	5026 Trahan St	Marrero	LA	70072 - 7656
<i>Lauland, Eric J. (John's son)</i>	504 341 8911	1035 Cedre Dr	Westwego	LA	70094 - 4533
<i>Lewis, Charlotte A. (Rudy G.'s dgtr)</i>	410 228 3272	6033 Corners Wharf Road	Cambridge	MD	21613
Louder, Lena Mae (Howard's widow)	814 696 5774	811 Hedge Street	Holidaysburg	PA	16648 - 2259
McElroy, Thomasina (Bob's widow)	631 669 8251	163 Van Buren Street	West. Babylon	NY	11704 - 3410
Moir, Janet (Scotty's widow)	unknown	19201 Pearl Road-Retirement Apt. 236	Strongsville	OH	44136 - 6938
Nelson, Gilbert M. L/290	781 740 2573	301 Linden Ponds Way - Unit 407	Hingham	MA	02043 - 3736
<i>Parsons, Nina (Orland's widow)</i>	513 853 2987	5263 South Ridge Drive	Cincinnati	OH	45224
Pildner, John A. (Lynetta M.)	440 998 2721	1806 E. 36 th Street	Ashtabula	OH	44004 - 5804
Puckett, Jay R. (Janet)	913 961 5839	1024 S 11 th Street	Louisburg	KS	66053 - 8406
Raze, James Dalton (Dalton's son)*	703 569 9027	6008 Merryvale Court	Springfield	VA	22152 - 1231
<i>Rezach, Howard (Janet)</i>	920 684 6148	1314 S. 16 th Street	Manitowoc	WI	54220 - 5612
Rogers, Connie (Bill's widow)*	618 457 2211	1203 W. Hill Street	Carbondale	IL	62901 - 2463
Roxburgh, Jessie Al's widow)	916 485 4226	2719 Laurel Drive	Sacramento	CA	95864 - 4950
Sheridan, Peggy (Bill's widow)	203 458 9733	5 Paddock Lane	Guilford	CT	06437 - 2809
Smith, Raymond C. (Molly)	651 429 1051	2365 Lakeridge Drive	White Bear Lake	MN	55110 - 7412
Smith, Robert M. (Caroline)	904 743 6933	5353 Arlington Expy - APT # 11M	Jacksonville	FL	32211 - 5575
Snow, Gloria Bell (Len Bell's dgtr)	913 722 6385	5017 Reinhardt Drive	Roeland Park	KS	66205 - 1508
<i>Sutton, Robert L.</i>	812 522 4454	614 North Park	Seymour	IN	47274
<i>Swift, Edward L. (Ann) A/290</i>	606 744 6594	103 Hampton Avenue	Winchester	KY	40391
Uremovich, Niklos (Katie)	513 753 5887	3678 Bristol Lake	Amelia	OH	45102 - 2618
Yack, Donald M.	435 353 4432	Box 241	Neola	UT	84053 - 0241

Note:

Bold, non-italic print reflects a client's valid subscription through July 2007.

Some italicized entries may have become outdated due to communication failures.

* Indicates a paid contribution despite a survivor's qualification for a complimentary subscription.

File last edited 02/15/2008

AT-290 KIA/WIA AND TAPS

			<u>KIA</u>
Francis T. DeVault	4 th Plt	2 nd Sqd	17 Jan '45 near Burtonville, Be.
William P. Hulsey	3 rd Plt	2 nd Sqd	after 25 Dec '44, near Soy, Be.
Wilbur A. Isaacs	1 st Plt	Sergeant	date unknown, in Korea
Carl Sieg	1 st Plt	1 st Sqd	25 Dec '44 friendly fire, Ny, Be.
Lino Silvani	2 nd Plt		Aug '44 (M Co, 39th Inf) Ste Lo, Fr.

WIA (probably did not return to AT-290 by war's end)

Russell Hedberg	Hdq Plt	Recon Sgt	details unknown
(?) Holtzhauser	unk Plt	unk Sqd	Shrapnel in thigh or arm (at Rhine?)
Fred Marsh	1 st Plt	1 st Sqd	Easter 1945 - Land mine
Alexander Moir	1 st Plt	1 st Sqd	Shrapnel, left arm - evac
Bud(?) Scheidt	3 rd Plt	jeep driver	Shrapnel, arm, land mine Colmar Fr.
Niklos Uremovich	1 st Plt	1 st Sqd	25 Dec '44 Friendly fire
Donald Yack	4 th Plt	2 nd Sqd	Feb. '45 at Colmar, Fr.

Post-War Deceased

Lennie Dale Bell	Hdq Plt	Mail clrk	2 Nov 1994 - Lebanon, KS
John F. Benfield	4 th Plt	T/Sgt	17 Apr 1988 - Seattle WA
Bill(y) B. Black	4 th Plt	2 nd Sqd	18 Jun 1998 in WV, of aneurism
Charles Blake	2 nd Lt	3 rd Plt Ldr	1995 (reported BB Jan 96)
Robert C. Coldwell	3 rd Plt		1986
Paul W. Costinett	Capt,	pre-ETO CO	1987 Los Angeles, CA
Woodrow W. Fisher	1 st Lt	AT ExO	1960
Lawrence R. Gillen	Capt,	AT CO in ETO	22 Sep 2000: Maryland-heart failure
Paul C. Graves	2 nd Plt	1 st Sqd SSgt	15 Jan 2005: Paris, KY
Clayford T. (Tom) Grimm	2 nd Plt	2 nd Sqd	13 March 2003 - Austin, TX
Lawrence H. Groover	1 st Plt	3 rd Sqd SSgt	Oct 1984 - Smyrna, GA
Charles Grose	2 nd Lt.,	Hdq Recon,	unknown
William F. Groves	Hdq Plt	SupplySSgt	1999 - Muncie, IN
Russell Hedberg	Hdq Plt	Recon Sgt	unknown
John Joseph Heiterer	AT Co.	Clerk, Sgt	12 Jul 1994
Justice Horton	3 rd Plt	driver	1995
Frank T. Kysar	4 th Plt		1992
Joe Lassiter		unknown	1977
John D. Lauland, Jr.	3 rd Plt	3 rd Sqd	18 Sep 1995 -Westwego, LA-of cancer
Michael Malinak	1 st Plt	1 st Sqd	unknown
Fred Marsh	1 st Plt	1 st Sqd	1967
Robert F. McElroy	Lt.-	2 nd Plt Ldr	28 Feb 2007 -W Babylon, NY
Alexander Moir	1 st Plt	1 st Sqd SSgt	1 Oct 1984-Cleveland, OH
William C. Nichols	1 st Lt-	3 rd Plt Ldr	10 Dec 2005-Cheyenne, WY
Edward K. Norfleet	1 st Plt	3 rd Sqd	13 Aug 1989-Venita, OK
Orland H. Parsons	Hdq Plt	1 st Sgt	12 Oct 1997-Cincinnati, OH
Lee A. Premazzi	Hdq Plt	driver	6 Jan 1997-Portland, OR
Ben G. Premo	4 th Plt	1 st Sqd	unknown
Dalton D. Raze	2 nd Lt	1 st Plt Ldr	28 Dec 1997-Springfield, VA
William J. Rogers	1 st Plt	driver	3 June 1999-Springfield, IL - heart
Alfred S. Roxburgh	2 nd Plt	Bty B CN289	28 Sep 2006-Sacramento, CA-kidney failure
Predose Sittig	2 nd Plt	3 rd Sqd	October 12, 2005 -Eunice, Louisiana
William J. Sheridan	1 st Plt	1 st Sqd	April 17, 2006 - Guilford, CT
Carol C. Smith	? Plt	S/Sgt-2 nd Lt	1960
Edward S. Stewart	Hdq Plt	Comm Sgt	1991
Willard S. Strawn	4 th Plt	2 nd Sqd	circa 1988
James B. Vosters	4 th Plt	Ldr 2 nd Lt	3 Feb 1997-Miami FL
Lovell R. Wallace	1 st Plt	1 st Sqd-driver	November 2007-CA
John P. Webster	Hdq Plt	Sgt/2 nd Lt	1970

NOTE: Please direct corrective comment directly to the M/C Editor: Raymond C. Smith, 2365 Lakeridge Drive - White Bear Lake, MN 55110-7412 or e-mail him at raysmith111@comcast.net Last edited 15 Feb 2008