

There is no definite purpose or reason behind this attempt at writing. Merely something that I want to do, and this is as good a time as any to start on a more or less rough draft - so here goes.

Coming into the army was somewhat new to me. Not entirely so, however, since I already knew how to handle a rifle, and salute, and do foot drill, and dress according to style for the particular day or event scheduled. So - what with assignment to the T.D.'s at Camp Hood (south) and my first troop train trip (pardon the alliteration) arrival at camp, basic training and being turned to duty, getting acquainted with the gang, and so on - my life in the service was begun. All this in Texas. About the country, the first thing I learned is that Texas is big! Ask any Texan. Tumbleweed, ranches, wide open spaces, boots, ten-gallon hats, armadillos, Texans. That was Texas to me.

The outfit left for San Luis Obispo. Gee! Going to California! And how! That long train ride through El Paso and up into the land of beach umbrellas, movie stars, vineyards (miles and miles of nothing but grapes). The L. A. Station, with outdoor waiting rooms. Of course, one can go indoors when it rains, if one has enough sense to get in out of the rain. San Luis was nice. The big hill from which I watched the sunset into the Pacific. Hyphenate if you desire. I like it that way. Sunset.

A couple of trips to Pisimo Beach - and a few afternoons spent wading and doing my impression of a person surf-bathing. In May, 1943 we were slated (a polite way of saying shanghied) to spend a summer on the desert. The desert - in all it's burning glory. And we burned, too. More tumbleweed, sidewinders, scorpions, yucca plants, barrel cactus Spanish bayonets, sun and dust and sagebrush in the moonlight. Riding in the M-10 with Red Miles and crew. Him on the breech-block and me on the gun shield, eating dust and singing our fool hearts out. Fun after a fashion. Maneuvers, with all of the moving in column, and the M-10s can stir up more dust than a baby tornado. Water bags - gee! How cool the water gets overnight when kept in one.

While in camp we did have swell entertainment - on Saturday nights. The Dust Bowl. Ten-thousand G.I.s lighting matches when the lights were turned out made quite a breath-taking spectacle. Desert Sunsets. And a moon at least five times it's normal size or else it was like the stars - closer to the ground. Desert nights are wonderful, but not quite worth staying over through the hot days to see. Shall we leave?

We shall. Back to Hood for some schooling. Weapons and how to use them. Three months of that and Nichols goes back to California. Camp Cooke. More beach and the same amount of blue Pacific. Four days in Hollywood - and six days of maneuvers, which I spent driving Captain Long around. Or did he drive me? Yep! But we will never go overseas - too many old men in the outfit! Then why did we pack up in such a hurry and what are we doing in Boston? Didn't come here just to look at that boat! No, sir! We are going aboard for my first taste of sea travel. Portside, starboard, below, on deck, aft, stern, the bridge - how will I remember which is which? Sunsets on the Atlantic.

Captain Long volunteered to have five of his men stand watch on a 5" gun. Which we did. Coffee in the crew's mess, and rough water, during which I had an excellent chance to push said Captain overboard - which I didn't. The most interesting things to me were the way the water flows at night alongside and in the wake. Like fox-fire, only it's wet. And the ship's log, with every detail of the events of the day and

night recorded. First star of evening - school of porpoise off the port bow. Several days of this and then a bomber escort. Two days out. One day out. Port! And dark, too. Liverpool blacked out- just like all the towns in England. We docked and disembarked. Full pack during the walk to a railroad station. Small easy-riding English coaches. Four or five hours of trying to sleep and having no luck. Too many new experiences, too many packs, too many men with too many feet. Arrival at some station. W'ots the nyme, mite? Maccles Field. All out. Forward march - in the total darkness and over rough cobblestone streets. Two miles - and we got to camp. Quonset huts to sleep in and Titherington Hall to eat in.. Talked to the care-taker. Learned the history of Titherington that night and then forgot most of it during a night of heavy sleep.

An English dawn. Springtime. So this is England. This and a shilling and sixpence and making use of the expressions given in our Guide Book to England. Houses by name unstead of by number in our section. Red Roofs, Clovernook- Wynbourne. The Captain stayed at Red Roofs.

I discovered that Maccles Field was only a ten-minute walk without full field pack. First night in town was spent in walking around and eating fish 'n chips, which I had already tasted in Canada. Nothing novel there - but there was so much that was new and different and interesting. To St. James Church by jeep. Built in 1300 AD, reconditioned in 1800AD, and "Ye olde Tylting Grounde" alongside the church.

To the east from Titherington lay the moors. All around camp were things new to me. Footpaths, stone hedge fences, wayside inns- ("St. George and The Dragon", "Swan with Two Necks")stiles, pubs, double-decker busses. "Take the autobus to 'such and such' street, You cawn't miss it."

Dances in town- and I dont dance. Met the charming Dorothy there. "Do you cycle?", she asks. The address as given to me was - Miss Dorothy Plant, Redway Inn, Kerridge, near Maccles Field, Cheshire County, England. So there I went- and was introduced all around to Mommy and Poppy and the rest of the Plant family. No, dear reader, Flora and Fauna weren't there.

Shall we go up to see Nancy? We used to call her white Nancy but she has been painted since the war and now we call her green Nancy. Much to my enlightenment, Nancy turned out to be a watch tower (dating back to the Norman wars)overlooking Kerridge, Bollington and Rainow. Sunsets from Nancy. Early English summer with long walks or cycling trips to nearby towns for high tea (with crumpets, praise the Lord.) Dainty! I think I would much prefer long taxi rides to strip-tease.

A trip to near London for equipment and supplies- driving on the left. Lt. Harrison drove for a while and did swell, except for pulling out for a right hand turn and upsetting a passing jeep trailer, I drove the rest of the way in.

My stay in that part of England was really most enjoyable. Well-kept homes, and picturesque landmarks that are a part of Olde Englande. Within a short walking distance from Nancy was an ancient stone bridge- a huge arched affair with steps leading under the arch down to the valley. Victoria Bridge- built ---- A.D. Dorothy told me that the people at one time carried water from the well at the bottom- up the hundreds of steps, to their homes, which have long since crumbled into piles of moss covered stone.

I saw Manchester - after it had been bombed. My first idea of the destruction wrought by war machines. Not a pretty sight. A word for England- she can and did take it on the chin. An old timer told me that "Jerry had given us a bit of a bombing." That's spirit! And courage. That's England as I know it.

One evening Captain Long called Jack Swiberg and I together. In a very solemn and secretive tone he informed us that he was sending us into a combat zone in a few days. That was one advance party that I wanted no part of- but it was mine not to reason why. We got busy- water-proofing

the jeep- getting the gear in order- and having a last few flings in that part of the country. The condemned men ate a hearty breakfast one ayem and traveled south by jeep to Barton Stacey, near Southhampton. There we joined the 9th Division troops who were freshly arrived from French Morocco, Tunisia and Sicily. Let some swell guys- combat men and from them we learned the first-hand facts of life- in combat. With nothing more to do we made short jaunts by waterproofed jeep to the nearby towns- Worth Downs, Whitechurch and so on. Had a lot of fun being more or less on our own until we were given final alert and restricted to the area. A day of this and then a night drive to Southhampton and loaded aboard a L.C.I. Harbor bound. When was D-Day to be? The answer to that question was in the roar of the bombers, fighter planes and C-47s that roared over the channel. This is it, men. A quiet crossing- midst hundreds of various types of landing and invasion craft. Arrival at Omaha Beach brought the sweating out of our first bombing raid, and the sight of a crazy quilt pattern of ack-ack fire from the defence guns installed on the beach and boats. Preparation for unloading- and then doing it. Not "by the numbers". Ruth and the Recon. Lt. were first off of our boat and Swiberg, Yakshe and Nichols followed, with Nichols at the wheel. Jeep number one hit a shell hole and went under. We by-passed him and got to shore with nothing worse than three wet fannies.

Shell fire on the beach from the Jerry guns to the south. Sweat it out. Line up in column and get the hell out of here- with us in the lead. To Transit Area B. De-waterproofing and the return to the beach to wait for the out-fit. Which we did for nine nights- making reconnaissance trips during the day- tire in order to locate firing positions. Great life! Small arms fire by day- and bombs by night. I shook with patriotism. Rough water in the channel made it necessary to scuttle ships and barges. This formed a breakwater so that unloading operations could continue in full swing. The beach covered with trash- broken gas and oil cans. No smoking in this area- the signs read. And they meant it! Free gas- but not bargain day at Joe's Service at 10th and Broadway.

The outfit arrived and we joined the 90th Division in their operations in Normandy. Normandy- wooden shoes- shell craters- hedgerows- Jerries- cattle bridges under fire- cross roads likewise- Nichols likewise- reconnaissance trips- K ration cheese and our first casualties. July 4th was celebrated on day early- with deafening barrages and air activity from our side of the line. Hill 121- overlooking the beach. What a view. It was Foret de Mont Castre to the French and a hell of a problem to us. We took it.

Making a foot reconnaissance with the Captain to the top of the hill. He walked and I rode part way on a jeep. Turned around to wait for him and no Captain in sight. Made three trips up and down the hill under sniper fire and returned to the C.P. where I found him drinking coffee. That's the first time I ever cussed out an army officer to his face.

After Foret de Mont Castre came the Sees River crossing. Miserable- but necessary. Adjusted our guns for indirect fire. The first round right into the target!

Somewhere along the line things broke for us and the drive across France was begun. (St. Hilaire du Harcourt- and jeeps and tanks bedecked with roses Champagne came later. Long road marches got us away from the hedgerow country. (St. Xavier Lendelin- first night in a bed. No sleep) and took us to Avaranches, Mayenne, Bayeaus, Fontainebleau, and phase lines east. Arriving at Fontainebleau we got our first glimpse of French womanhood in summer attire. But lovely. We-dirty, unshaven, tired, hungry, thirsty- and they, cool, refreshed, and refreshing. Creme de menthe brought to my jeep by a charming blonde creature(femine) who parley'd English. The goblet, like the girl, was tall, cool in appearance- and invigorating.

Just outside of town we bivouaced in the hunting grounds of one Louis XIV. Deep forest- black as a bat in a coal bin on a rainy night- after

sundown. The following morning we journeyed jeep-ward over modern highways. On to LeMans and through it. Church hill, Alencon brought a sweep to the north to what turned out to be the Palaise Gap. The destruction of an army. Capt. Long played humpty-dumpty by getting blown off a wall by an artillery shell blast. Shirly and Red battling a Jerry tank round for round. Holding the line against a counter-attacking force of eleven hundred S.S. men trying to make an escape corridor. They failed- and I lost Red Miles, and very carelessly got three flat tires on a truck and trailer. Not a service station in sight. With the pocket around Treen, Chambois and St. Lonard Le Pin cleaned out and having met the Poles and British 2nd, we moved on to Verdun, through the high country and to the Marne at Dormans- east of Chateau Thierry. French bread and a steak dinner with a former G.I. from the last war. Fifth Division.

North to Rhiems- and the French kids piled in my jeep, singing the Marseillaise and directing me to the Cafe de la Commerce where we had champagne. The war was ended as far as they could see- because Rheim was liberated. And I was a "bonchaufferer". Stayed at Bergogne- six kilos from Rhiems and worked liaison for batallion.

Bergogne- like other small French towns was just a group of farm buildings and houses incorporated into a community. The sheep herder came down the street at sunrise and the sheep would come out of the courtyards and follow him to -- greener pastures, I guess. Return at sundown was the same procedure in reverse. At the end of the street he would blow his horn, at which signal the gates leading into the courtyards would be opened. The collie sheep dog did most of the sorting out of any sheep who would know not where they lived.

An old lady stopping in to see if le American soldat required anything. "Vous avez bon couche?" "Un tasse du lait?" You sleep good? A cup of milk? She went to church every morning and I was amused at the way in which she, on stopping by, would put her hands together- fingers upward- to signify that she has prayed for me while I slept.

It was north of Bergogne, In Roisy, a few Kilomets that I met the miller and the miller's wife, Mary Ann. He dug up a shotgun, which he had buried five years before- at the time of the Nazi occupation and showed it to me. A beautiful weapon- burnished silver trim, intricately etched with deer and pine trees. Un belle fusee. The wife offered me cognac and a hot shower, speaking very good English.

My trip to Rhiems was interesting- but would become too involved to record here. And the moving from that area into the next- around St. Marie Aux Chemes is blurred in my memory. More about those later. So much of the latter as I can recall was a bivouac in a grove of saplings- rounding up a flock of Heinies- a visit from the doughnut wagon (our first) rain, and a cold wet night march on muddy roads- arriving at St. Marie at dawn.. S.N. A.F.U. Parked the M-20 reconnaissance vehicle in a barn and slept in the hay, for the umpteenth thousandth time. Nice change from fox-holes. We were seventeen kilos from Netz. Captain Long set up the C.P. in a house and we kept busy getting things cleaned, oiled and in working condition. Shaves, clean uniforms, showers and civilians in the untouched town. The nights were getting chilly but the evenings were grand. No shellfire from Jerry. Got acquainted with the road network and surrounding towns. St. Privat (1st Plt.) Gravelot (2nd Plt.) and Niene Ida (a mining town= 3rd Plt.) Tours in St. Marie that I met Alice- pronounced Aleese. The milkmaid. Very proud of her garden ("pour la Victoria" she put it.) Gracely in manner, charming in appearance. Smiles 'n smiles. How she managed to make the same spring outfit look so nice while wearing it every day I'll never know.

I spent several weeks at St. Marie and Niene Ida and Privat while we were waiting for a Metz offensive to open up. During that time I read special service pocket-books, stood guard (tojours la garde), walked with Alice, cycled to Joenf every morning for French bread and beef-steak, toyed with my slide rule and math books, made a trip down into the iron mine, went on contact patrols at night- and took life easy when possible. The outfit was converted from towed guns to M-36s. Like a tank, you know. Then a new phase and style of operations began. No more half tracks- no more dug in gun pits- 'Put 'em there and fire 'em'- was the new byword. Or as the Colonel said- "Shoot the bastards. Fill 'em full of 90 millimeter". Which we did.

Across the swollen Moselle river from the St. Marie area lay the Metz fortifications- and the city- now in Jerry hands again. All platoons were in on infantry support missions- and the 95th Division made it's appearance on the field of combat. We were to work with them. Night infantry assaults against Fort Driant, St. Jeanne de Arc- and Fort Julienne. Three tough babies- which meant a fourteen day assault in which we participated. Martelli turned infantry and took three prisoners in the cathedral. Got 'em good and drunk and then brought 'em out to turn 'em over to the regular infantry. He's my boy. That's my gunner. Fired the Gestapo building with Jerries all over the place. Lots of that sort of thing- and when the smoke cleared away one sunny day we were lined up in column on top of the hill near Fort Julienne- rarin' to go. The rush to the Saar river was fast and furious. Several skirmishes- and my first mission as commander on "Betsy". A night in a school-house- another along the road, freezing our handsies and toesies and fannies. Fifty miles one day, forty the next and finally into the region of the Saar river. Moving at night into nobody knew what kind of a situation. Then a day-time road march. Shirley, Jack Swiberg, Cannonball Canterbury and Nick went out to garrison the town (Merton) for the infantry. Jack and Nick came back- with Betsy the only destroyer left out of four. The ride back to Co. C.P. with what was left of our third platoon hanging all over her. Great Gal, that Betsy. We found the Co. C.P. and started walking around town looking for positions- Anti-Tank defence. A barn provided shelter for three nights of pouring down rain. Then we reformed and moved out through a town where the church had a double spire affair. Hill top positions from which we helped the Jerries cross the Saar. Into Lisdorf. Jack's crew and mine stayed in the cellar of a shoe-shop. Burned the wooden forms for firewood for a week. And gave the pillboxes across the river hell during the daytime. Nichols made 'Sgt.'. Lt. Seidel made Lst Looey. Great day- being promoted at 3:30 AM in a cellar in Germany. What a hell of a life!

Icy roads. Plenty of mail from Jerry. 6000 packages a day for seven days. Sweating out which platoon would be first to cross the river. "A" Company joined us in the war- crossed the river first. Stayed four days and we relieved them. Four days restriction on the front line- no motors to be run- no fires to be built for warmth. No mail. Change of position. The Colonel selected positions to the north- still in the city. Moving at night into another cellar and setting Betsy so that she could cough through the window of the house next door. Jerry beat the buildings down all around us- and tried to give Betsy a hot-foot. No luck. Fired on the house across the street, against orders from the Captain, and got thirty-eight Heinies out of it plus two flame throwers and a miniature arsenal. They didn't like us. Then after our days and days of this we were relieved.

Back to the bunkers of Saarlauten and a big C-ration supper avec le champagne. White table cloths, wine goblets, china ware of exquisite pat-

tern which we later smashed against the walls- and a good nights sleep. Moved into Ludwig Pfeipffer's department store- to the bargain basement. New thick rugs on the floors - and more good sleep. Snow for two days and we painted Betsy white for camouflage. Spent a few days laying around and then got alerted for movement. A long trip. Where to? Bastogne. The bulge. My question was "how the heck are we going to Bastogne when it's surrounded by the German army?" The answer "How do you think?" we went to Bastogne. Icy roads. Snow. Cold raw winds- and the word that Bastogne was liberated. Not completely, we found out- but enough so that we could get in- to without too much trouble. Arrived and left the same day- for Hanfallize, Belgium. An inn on top of the hill. Big open fireplace- and the Jerries in full rout- order retreat.

The country was badly beaten up in this area. Moved through St. Vith (one night stand there) and on to the Siegfried line for the second time. Side roads knee-deep in mud. Hurtgen forest- booby trapped till hell would- n't have it- and we didn't want it either but we had to take it (for what it was worth and it wasn't worth much).

Working with the 87th (Ration-Stealing) Division on this phase. Betsy made a pretty good snowplow. Hill top town- and visibility supreme. A hay- wire (SNAFU) night move (me and the crew) to both and back again. By the time we got back the infantry had taken over our living quarters and we were left out in the cold, cold barn. Two days- and back down the hill to another town. Long ride through more of the forest- and into a town in the valley. The old mill. Found four hams, fried and ate same with the infantry as guests. Staged for days and days and days and couldn't get relieved due to muddy roads. Finally relieved by crews- left Betsy in Tommie Thomas' care and went back to both. Orders came through for the Cologne offensive. Spent nights going over maps and terrain data and selected to return home. Which I did.