

My War with the Germans and the U.S. Army: From Civilian to Major to Civilian

By Howard Schlossman

I ended my internship at the end of June, 1941 and left Christ Hospital in Jersey City, NJ. My mood was euphoric. All the years of study and paying attention to the rules were about to pay off. I was going to be an Army Officer, a medical doctor with money in my pocket. While at Christ Hospital I received \$25 a month. All I could think of was high adventure and foreign lands. Orders were already in my hand to report to Camp Shelby, Hattiesburg, Mississippi on July 1st. My army career began with some amusement and confusion since my only uniform was the formal winter uniform within which I arrived in the heat of July. After the salute and recognition by the commanding Colonel of the medics in the 38th infantry Division he pleasantly told an officer to get me properly dressed at the supply depot.

Hattiesburg was miserable. The inhabitants were still fighting the Civil War. In no way were the shopkeepers gracious or friendly. The only respite was the weekend trip to New Orleans one of the officers had his car near the camp and on Fridays we were off until Monday morning. Of course we were still at peace. The town was jammed with soldiers and a hotel room near the center difficult to find. We went to the Roosevelt Hotel with its famous Blue Room for dancing and dining. (The hotel has a new name now.) The clerk was polite but no room. He insisted that it was fully booked. Being a New Yorker, everyone knows that hotels usually have a few rooms in reserve for pressure guests. How can we raise pressure? Before my departure to Mississippi, my father gave me the name of a business friend who owned a large jewelry store and pawnshop on North Rampart Street. We spoke on the phone. He remembered my father. He said wait about ten minutes and go back to the clerk. On our return it was, "Oh, yes, we have a room for you." But there was another event. I also got an invitation to dinner for Sunday. He had an attractive daughter. This led to a few dates during my months at Camp Shelby but romance didn't take. I wasn't ready and had travel plans.

While in New Orleans, my education about a good life progressed pleasantly. The restaurants were superb- Antoine's and Galatois were two of many. I learned to eat oysters, clams and Baked Alaska, hardly the diet of a Jewish boy from Brownsville, Brooklyn.

My first assignment was Officer in Charge of the motor pool of the medical regiment—me, who only knew of gas in the tank and the key to start the engine. But I was promoted to a more important job, building of wooden walkways within the tent encampment and a bridge for trucks over the drainage ditches surrounding the camp.

I never had a course in medical school about these things. But, I had a truck. and a number of soldiers to work out the problem. There were no rules. We had to beg and steal from supply, planks, hammers, nails and screws. It got done. The Colonel was pleased. However the bridge—that was harder. One day in driving the surrounding roads I saw cement culverts stacked. The county planned to use them for drainage. Well, very early the next Sunday morning my truck, men and I appeared and quietly loaded some culverts enough for our needs. By lunchtime they were in place, covered by, rock and dirt, in no way visible. I was learning the army way.

In September the division left for the Louisiana maneuvers. This was the military exercise that made Eisenhower's reputation. Life was not as comfortable at the camp and we had casualties, some from motor accidents, some psychiatric. one medical officer became psychotic and was hospitalized, never to return. During these maneuvers, I decided to seek more interesting surroundings such as foreign service. After all I had no ties at home or the army. I applied for service in Panama. That place appealed as Spanish, tropical and romantic. I had met an attractive, interesting woman, Sylvia, just before I left but I had orders. On December 3rd I was on my way.

It was a very nice boat ride, a pleasant cabin, interesting other officers, mostly career officers. On December 7th the war began. I had a small battery operated radio which I had out on deck and heard of Pearl Harbor. The ship's captain ordered full speed. We were all worried because German

subs were operating on the Caribbean against British shipping and would now turn on us. We made it to Cristobal in the Canal Zone by December 10th.

On docking I learned of my attachment to the 14th Infantry Regiment at Fort Davis, protecting the Atlantic side Gatun locks of the canal. The next day I was sent out to an old building, a fish and hunt club, near the earthen dam that held the waters of the artificial Gatun Lake. If the dam was destroyed and the water ran down the Chagres River, there would be no canal. This club was the headquarters of our infantry battalion, protecting the dam against saboteurs and I was their new battalion surgeon. On arrival the commanding major greeted me and alerted me that the following day he and I would inspect the outposts set to watch for any enemy landings. He would inspect the military condition, and I, the medical. "Early in the morning I came down to find three horses saddled up for the major, his orderly and me. I knew nothing about horses. Once in medical school on a Sunday some of my classmates got me a rented horse in the local park. At most I didn't fall off. Now I had to really ride. The major took off at a trot and then on the beaches changed to a canter. My horse did the same and I bounced up and down. This went on all day. I did learn the rhythm of the horse as the day wore on but my butt was sore. The major had in his saddle a bottle of whiskey. By evening he was feeling no pain. My saddlebag had medical supplies. What a beginning!

Later during my time in Panama I got to ride many times and pleasantly. The army had a battery of artillery carried on mules for use if necessary in the jungle. Horses were part of the equipment for the officers and men to control the mules. However, no one landed and no jungle warfare. We exercised the horses.

Drinking was a major institution in the army. The Officers Club, sold all concoctions, straight or mixed for fifteen cents. The bar was full by 5 o'clock when the rains began. Weather was part of life in Panama. The morning was beautiful with clear blue skies, then a rather warm afternoon. About 4 o'clock clouds would begin to form and by 5 rain came down like a waterfall. Everyone got wet,

outside rain and inside alcohol. Whiskey was cheaper than Coca Cola. In town rum and coke was fifteen cents but a bold bottle of Coca Cola cost twenty-five cents.

Another educational experience was an airplane ride. The regimental commander had arranged for artillery observer planes, large Piper Cubs, to fly company commanders over the Darien jungle east of the canal to observe possible invasion sites and communication routes. I needed the same information for the evacuation of possible wounded. It was an exciting flight over the jungle. Then the pilot went into a steep dive as a flock of large birds flew directly at the plane. The pilot told me that was a flock of vultures. They attack any birds in the sky. If one should hit the propeller we would have had it, probably crashed in the jungle and may never get out.

The time in Panama stretched to 19 months. Many casualties came to local army hospitals from submarine sinkings but no landings ever came. By and large it was very pleasant duty. After morning sick call and some chores we read, played cards and relaxed. I was stationed at Fort Davis on the Atlantic side protecting the Gatunlocks. It was fun to sit behind my quarters reading and suddenly a big ship would loom up in front of me as the lock filled, lifting the ship. Colon was the sister city to Cristobal over the Panama line, a Caribbean city with shops, restaurants and night clubs. At all corners there were men and boys selling an envelope stuffed with green leaves for ten cents—marijuana.

Part of my duties as assistant regimental surgeon was to inspect outposts.' They were most colorful in old Spanish forts, Fort San Lorenzo, Porto Bello and others. They had been built to protect the treasure Spain looted from Peru which then crossed the isthmus on the Camino Real and loaded on ships at Porto Bello. They sailed for Spain if they could escape English pirates. If senior officers were not using our elegant cabin launch I would use it for my official inspections. Life was good.

On regimental staff was an interesting intelligent young officer from Macon, Georgia, a lawyer in civilian life. Over time we discussed many things, life in the north versus life in the south. One day

he asked a curious question, "Tell me, Doc, did you ever operate on a black man? Is there any difference inside?" I told him that after the skin is cut there is no difference at all. He responded, "I know you are right but I can't believe it". So much for scientific curiosity. While I was at Fort Davis I encountered a curious medical problem. The troops were largely regular Army, often drunk and not too clean about their bodies. Quite a few had chronic inflammation and or warts of the prepuce. One man asked my opinion. I said ,that circumcision would help with cleanliness and cure the warts. He. asked me to do the surgery. Well, that started a thriving practice of circumcisions as word got around.

There was also a high incidence of V.D. In the tropics syphilis, gonorrhoea and others developed quite rapidly after exposure. I set up an experiment with sulpha drugs taken prophylactically as men got a pass. The first sergeant saw to it that the pills were swallowed. Another company got none. Very quickly here was a drop of V.D. among the pill-takers. As my supply of pills ran out I went to the Colonel in charge of medical services in the Canal Zone. After I explained my need he said, 'I won't have my boys experimented with. I got nothing.

Then Colonel Dunnington entered my life to raise my spirits and ambitions, only to dash them later in California. But that's another story. He commanded the 70th Medical Battalion stationed on the Pacific side Fort Clayton. He had trouble with a company commander who was alcoholic and whom he wished to replace. I had been recommended as a responsible, can-do, officer. He invited me and told me in the presence of the colonel commanding the 14th Infantry Regiment, my outfit at Fort Davis, that the position called for the rank of Major. After some months, I would get that promotion. Well, my colonel encouraged me to take the position and bid me farewell. There was no promotion for me at the 14th Infantry according to the Table of Organization. My friends, all infantry officers—Jim Norwood, John Sandiland, Milton Rosen all sadly said "Good-bye" as they bought my share of the jointly owned auto we had acquired to make life interesting in Colon.

Commercial life in Colon died with the onset of the war and the end of tour and commercial ships through the canal. The shops of Front Street in Colon were full of goods from Europe and the Orient but few customers. I bought silks, linens, rugs and fine English China at low prices. But my luck ran out. My loot was packed in footlockers for shipment to my home but a fire broke out in the storage hold of the ship and it was flooded with seawater my bargains arrived after a month of marinating—a mess. Only the barrels of china were in fine shape and are being used today. The Army reimbursed my original cost because bills had to be attached to the items. But there were no replacements in the USA.

Before I left the Atlantic side I got a message of considerable joy. My roommate through the four years of medical school, Irving Fagin, was on a transport on the Pacific side on its way to Australia. I promptly got a jeep and drove across the isthmus. Here he was on this crowded ship, unwashed, not very happy. The troop commander of the ship asked me to sign custody for him, i.e., to guarantee he would be back in 24 hours. I got him off and we had a good time for a day. . I got him washed up and rested at an officers club. We roamed Panama City. . An attempt to call his wife, Beulah, in New York failed because of time. The censor required a few days time to check the recipient before any telephone call was permitted. This was the last anyone ever saw Irv Fagin. He died in New Guinea of cerebral malaria.

After a few months at Fort Clayton in the spring of 1943, the 70th Medical Battalion was ordered back to the USA. The war had moved on. There was no reasonable threat to the Canal so much of the army was returned to the States. Toward the end of June we sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge to dock in San Francisco and then quartered in Salinas, California (part of Ford Ord) . Now I left on my first leave in nineteen months. I was going home.

There was another purpose in my coming home. Sylvia and I had met through my friend Marvin. We had just one formal date the night before I left for Panama and we corresponded the

whole nineteen months—my pen pal. Our love developed in the letters. I had to find out her feelings. Well, after a week of courtship, the length of my leave, we were engaged, and I was broke. So how could I get back East to get married? The answer lay in army relations. Every medical officer was supposed to have basic medical field training at Carlisle Barracks, Pa., near Harrisburg. Even though my army career was now entering the third year and contained jungle training, command function, parade formation and other military madness, I was entitled to this basic training! So I applied and my application was approved. I came East and October 3rd we got married. At the end of the course we drove across the country and Sylvia, my wife, was introduced to all the officers and their wives. A very pleasant social life began. However living in a single motel room was not pleasant. One night we were at a cottage restaurant complex. The owner was friendly with the officer who asked us there. My friend explained our plight about room. The owner asked me whether I would help medically with any injured or sick worker at the complex if needed. Of course I agreed. Now we had a three room cottage overlooking the ocean. Oh, yes, Colonel Dunnington—while I was away on leave—he relieved me of my command, gave me a lesser command and I never got the majority that he promised me. Another officer on Dunnington's staff got the promotion.

I was furious and bitter. But not alone, other officers were seriously against Dunnington. We went to the Attorney General and lodged our complaints about him. He was relieved of his post and transferred somewhere. However, in a typical army way, every one of the complaining officers was also transferred. That is how I was posted to the 6th Armored Division.

About December, '43 I was ordered to join this Armored Division at Camp Cooke, Lompoc, California. Upon arrival I learned a "top secret"—we were a hot outfit due to ship out in a month. As I went around Lompoc and nearby Santa Barbara looking for a room for Sylvia and myself, everyone told me very quietly and confidentially to come back in a month when the 6th Armored will have left. So much for military secrecy.

With accumulated leave we left for a belated honeymoon. After our wedding Sunday afternoon, October 3rd, we had left for Carlisle where I was on duty the next morning. But now we had a car plus leftover gas coupons from our trip across the country. Mexico seemed alluring and I could try out my Panamanian Spanish. A last hurrah in Imperial Valley, Tijuana, Mexicali, Palm Springs invade France then off toward. We all knew we were going to invade France. Would I return?

In February, 1944 I rode a troop train across the country as the Medical Officer. Since I needed room for medical services as required, a large compartment was assigned to me—ideal for playing poker in crossing the United States.

ENGLAND

We arrived at Camp Shanks, Orangeburg, N.Y. and got a one day pass to New York. The next morning I was on a ship off Staten Island looking at Brooklyn—February 10, 1944. The division disembarked in Glasgow. My first view of war was a row of houses utterly destroyed by bombs.. Then off of the boat on to a troop train heading south to the Cotswolds.

our destination was Andoversford—very near Cheltenham. I arrived to a medical emergency on a pitch black night. A soldier had developed pneumonia and I hastened with my medical kit to arrange his transport to a hospital. I had to get by a column of men four abreast marching on the platform to trucks. Next I knew I had fallen down onto the tracks and lost my medical kit. The next day however a local policeman brought it to me. And so my arrival in England.

We were quartered in an old Georgian Manor house which was quite comfortable except for it being early February and cold. The only fuel we had was coke with paper and kindling to ignite the coke in the fireplace. There was no central heating. I tried again and again. The whole time I was in this mansion I never got the stuff to burn.

The owner of the estate was a WW I officer, Captain Caulville. He and his wife, an elderly couple, had moved into one wing while we had the rest of their many-roomed mansion. Their only

child, a son, had been recently killed in North Africa. They were pleasant but sad and kept to themselves. Until June 5, 1944 when we learned that Rome was captured. He invited all the officers into his large sitting room with a grand fireplace to "drink to the Valor of our Arms". He was England. That night we heard the roar of endless aircraft and climbed up to the roof to watch. All sorts of planes flying east and somewhat south. We knew something big was up. This was the softening up for the Normandy Invasion. Our unit had not as yet received any information.

Oh, yes! My first view of the live enemy was on a pass to London in March. A group of us arrived in London at night. Walking to our hotel for the night, there was a burst of anti-aircraft and searchlights. I could see planes flying about, It was fascinating. It was real. A "Bobbie" came up and insisted that we go to a bomb shelter. We assured him that we were going. But, we couldn't. This was war and there was the enemy. Dangerous or—not, we watched until the all clear.

After a month or so, I was sent to the 68th Tank Battalion at Chipping Norton to command their medical section. I stayed as the Battalion Surgeon till the Battle of the Bulge. Nice guys, nice quarters. we stayed in an old lounge/pub which had rooms above. Every evening the officers would collect in the pub room and talk, drink beer and get friendly. Then came Major Smith, roaring drunk with a 45 caliber automatic in his fist, swaying and shouting, "I'll shoot any son of a bitch who ?????". I can't remember the end of his statement since he was waving the gun around and I was scared to death. Some of the other officers came up behind Smith and knocked the gun out of his hand. Everybody laughed except me. And I learned this was almost a nightly occurrence with the 68th Tank. In fact, Smith was a great officer and was decorated many times. He was never drunk in battle. But that is a later story.

THE CROSSING

The Allies had crossed over to Normandy. We eagerly caught every word about the progress.

But the Germans wouldn't collapse. July the battalion mounted up and trucked to Southampton where it loaded on Landing Ship Tanks (LST). My Division was on its way July 18, 1944.

That night, lying in a bunk on the LST, I had my first French lesson. The Army had issued to all a phrase book of French sentences., a transliteration of the sentence and finally the English translation. "Of son Les Adleman" (Where are the Germans?) was the beginning. So I learned French. Anxiety is a great teacher. Within a few weeks I spoke with farmers, town officials and even interrogated a German prisoner not very fluent—but enough to get along. After all, eggs, cheese and butter which the Army did not supply were very important to one's well-being. How can one start a day without a good breakfast?

The next morning we landed on Utah Beach in Normandy. There was no dock. We drove off the ramp of the LST into a hubcap level of water and came to a mess of debris on the beach. The detritus of the landing battle had not as yet been removed. No human remains but lots of trucks, guns, jeeps—busted up. The first beat up town that we passed through was St. Mère Eglise ("Red Buttons" had been removed from the church steeple.) The battalion moved on to Le Mesnil where we remained in tents for about a week. July 27th brought an officer's call and our war began. The next morning we left through Fierville for the coast and to the Gulf of St. Malo on the road to Avranches. On the way, my first casualty was brought to me. A soldier had gone into a local house and picked up an item that had been booby-trapped by the Germans. it blew off most of his head. He was dead. A few days later I was almost dead.

The move from Normandy to Brittany was through Avranches which, at the corner, created a big bottleneck. There was just one road we could use. The Germans from Mortain, a few miles inland, had launched a counterattack with the plan of cutting us in two, part in Brittany, part in Normandy. During this bright day, my medical unit was slowly riding along behind my tanks. There were lots of stops because of the crowded road. Suddenly two Messerschmidt fighters appeared at treetop height

firing away. I could see the red spurts of the bullets from the guns. I could see the pilot through his plexiglass canopy. The tanks ahead of me pulled down the hatch cover and had inches of armor plate covering them. All I could do was drop my jaw in shock and surprise. This was it. Well, the pilot stopped firing when he saw my red crosses and resumed on the supply trucks behind me. That was one good German. I hope he survived the war. Later events did not bring the same respect for the Geneva Convention. My first battle. I was now a veteran. And I knew the answer to the questions that are in every soldier's mind. How will I behave?. Will I freeze? Will I panic? My heart was pounding. But I made it.

Before I leave Normandy, there are a few small events left in my memory. A young woman came up to me, excited. Someone told her that I spoke Spanish (more or less). She was one of a group of Spanish Republicans -displaced all the way to Normandy after the fall of Republican Spain—again detritus of the war. I also was called upon to treat a sick FFI (Forces Francais Interior) . And then there was the grateful French farmer with a jug at the side of the road yelling, "Cidre Cidre". The day was hot, the road was dusty and some cold cider was more than welcome. I held out my canteen. cup and got some powerful' Calvados.. The last of these memory bits was the story from the French that Hitler was killed during a coup. It was the time of an attempt on his life. How to they knew this so fast I'll never know. They were right about the coup but wrong about his death, sadly.

After the German attempt at the Mortain counterattack failed we moved into Brittany. Patton ordered the 6th Armored to take Brest. The Germans were retreating rapidly. A moderately wounded German Major was brought to my aid station. He was the only survivor of a carload of officers returning from a weekend in Rennes, the main city of Brittany. I asked him why they were on the road with the American army breaking out of Normandy. He stated that they never "dreaded the Americans could advance so fast."

Within a week, 1st to 8th August, 1944. we advanced across the whole Brittany peninsula from

Avranches to the area of Brest, moving night and day. Our route was the northern part of the peninsula. On one night I was half asleep coming into a French town and awakened by the wild excitement. The whole town was on the street in their nightgowns and pajamas, cheering, drinking, offering champagne cognac to all. One gray haired elderly woman held out a slice of buttered bread from a stack she had prepared, her contribution to the liberation. Not every event was so pleasant. A German infantry division tried to retreat into the defenses of Brest but didn't know we were across their road. We didn't know they were there either. It resulted in a very bloody encounter ending with their surrender. The next day I saw endless dead Germans and horses. One poor fellow was squashed flat into the roadbed. He had been run over by a tank. And I saw the difference between the American Army and the German Army. Except for their tanks and small cars for officers the Germans were a horse-drawn army. Their blitzkrieg consisted of tanks with men on foot or riding on the tanks when they could.

At dawn on 9th of August, we proceeded to attack Brest along a narrow hedgerow bound road. The German shelling was intense. All of us felt this was suicidal. The tanks were vulnerable in the hedgerows as they had been in Normandy. At the last moment the attack was called off. General Grow had sent a surrender ultimatum to the German commander of Brest. To no avail since he had 35,000 troops in Brest. So our feint was just that, to reinforce the ultimatum. One morning I saw an armada of bombers coming over to soften up Brest. It was awesome. The antiaircraft bursts were as thick as a swarm of bees. As some of the planes were hit I saw tiny white specks of parachutes coming down but if the plane had not yet unloaded its bombs all one saw was a bright flash in the sky and then, nothing.

The battalion rested for a few days near Brest. I had a major personal event in this period. After an officers call by the Colonel, I came back at night to a hedgerow squared field where we bedded down. Many of my men had dug a foxhole. I was very tired so I parked my jeep very close to

a hedge with its heavy earthen root system and went to sleep between the hedge and the jeep. During the night something stirred me to open my eyes. There were a group of men silhouetted against the sky at the hedgerow looking into the next field. I'm aghast! They were speaking German about the Americans. At that moment one of our armored halftracks in the same field with us opened fire with a machine gun. I was afraid that my men would be hit so I jumped out yelling at gunner to stop firing and at the Germans in my best German/Yiddish to lie down on the ground. They were all taken prisoner except for one poor fellow who had a heart attack and died, just as his war was over. On the field where they had come from was a pile of German weapons. it would appear they had planned to surrender but with the darkness of night they didn't know they had wandered into an American bivouac area. An ambulance officer attached to us observed all of this and at the end of war recommended me for a Silver Star. I didn't get it but that is another story that I will relate at the end of these memoirs.

On August 15 the 6th Armored was ordered to take over the position of the 4th Armored containing the Germans in Lorient. This was about the most peaceful period. The Germans remained in snug fortifications and we were ordered to contain them, nothing more. We inherited foxholes all dug and clean left by the 4th Armored Division. My first sergeant set up a trade route with the local farmers. They had eggs, country bread and butter while we had soap and coffee. Also, laundry service was highly desirable. One day a friend, major Erinakis, of the Division Surgeon, office picked me up and we went to a great dinner in a French country inn.

I

While in transit to Lorient, we spent the late afternoon and evening at a river crossing, Pont Scorff. It was warm, we were dusty and the river was inviting. So a group of us climbed down to the water, swam, laughed and came out. We each had a number of leeches attached. Wow, I never swam in a French river again. One the group spotted another problem. on the high ground, the opposite side of

the river, Germans were watching us. They didn't want to fight and we certainly didn't maybe they saw we were medical troops and let us alone.

Another time, in response to a rumor of a wine cache at a local chateau, I drove up into the hills overlooking Lorient. It had been a rest center for German troops. The walls of the grand entry hall were all covered with well-drawn pornographic pictures. The FFI were all sitting around drinking wine. After a short reconnoiter we found the wine cellar outside separated from the main building and loaded four cases into the jeep. There wasn't room for more unless my passengers walked down the hill.

Another peaceful activity beside breakfast and books was my constant interest in stamps. Without wounded to handle and light sick call in the morning I had lots of time to explore. Brittany was noted for lace. Nearby were the towns of Quimper and Quimperle, centers for this industry. I bought lace gloves in particular for Sylvia and sent them off. I hoped she would figure out where we were since censors forbade any mention of location. Also another item of our constant correspondence was in my barter and purchase of the stamps of Vichy France. They had been shut out of the stamp dealers market because of the war and the prohibition of trading with the enemy. Well, Sylvia and I had a great project going. I bought the stamps for two cents a franc and suggested that Sylvia get four cents a franc in New York. I underestimated my wife's market experience. She recognized the interest of the stamp dealers. After all, she was the first one in the stamp market with Vichy stamps. She got as high as twenty-two cents a franc. Not bad for a non-philatelist! We kept our enterprise going across France, Luxemburg, Belgium and Germany. So much for entrepreneurship.

Our "day at the beach" came to a close on September 13th and we moved east to rejoin the war. By the next day we moved to Orleans for a few days of vehicle maintenance, new equipment and general non-dangerous tasks except to stop any German units trying to cross the Loire on the way north to Germany. We did bag a corps of 20,000 Germans who came to the Loire, saw the

American cannons and tanks and surrendered.

Paris was about ninety miles north of Orleans and had been captured from the German-Vichy forces a few weeks earlier. I had to go. So I drew on my army experience "chutzpah" and approached my commanding officer, Col. Duvall, with the following tale. Lt. Lundh has been coughing for some time and I wonder I whether he may have contracted tuberculosis. MY CO, very sharp, answers me, "And I know; the nearest X-ray is in Paris." I grinned and said, "Yes." He gave me permission for three days then asked me to take Capt. Polk and Capt. Bland along for their relaxation. These two tank company commanders had distinguished themselves repeatedly in the battles of Brittany and Brest. Sadly, I must relate that on October 1st both were brought to me, one dead and the other lasted a day.

I was pleased to have them along. The area between Orleans and Paris was not declared cleared. There were German and Vichy stragglers roaming around. So we took off. I had three officers with guns as bodyguards. We entered Paris through the Port of Orleans and moved toward the center. on the Boulevard Hausmann, we saw American officers in clean rest area uniforms going in and out of a hotel. We were dirty, unshaven and in battle dress. As senior officer I went to the desk to request rooms only to be told that this hotel was for officers only on regular posting in Paris. As transients we should go to the American express office in the Place de la opera for quarters. Reluctantly we went and I spoke with the sergeant in charge, showing him my orders. He pulled out a requisition form and showed me the lodgings for transients on the map. It was way out, a long way from Paris life. I went back to my group, irritated, what to do? We talked and I came up with a great idea. The sergeant had filled out the form in pencil. So I went back to the fellow and asked to borrow his pencil. At a desk, shielded by my fellow conspirators, I erased the designation and wrote in the hotel on the Boulevard Hausmann. We got right in, presented the requisition and had a suite of two bedrooms and a sitting area. In the way were two enemies, the Germans and the bureaucracy of the

rear echelon. Lt. Lundh did not have tuberculosis.

One other element of interest took place in Orleans. Lt Barrett and I went to a French restaurant. Barrett joined me at Lorient, a lawyer trained as a medical administrative officer to manage all the non-medical needs of my section. He was a very nice guy. We maintained contact after the war. We ordered a nice meal-but no bread. The waiter asked for bread coupons of which we had none. Around us all the customers came over with their coupons. We graciously accepted and took out our packs of cigarettes, which were just as graciously received.

The joint entrepreneurship of Sylvia and myself continued to prosper in Paris. I saw a stamp dealer's shop and went in to ask about a set of French stamps issued just as the United States broke with Vichy France. Very few had come to the American market and therefore had a high value. We negotiated. An army food package was accepted and I got sheets of 100 of these supposedly rare stamps. (They have minimal value now.) Sylvia took them to the stamp dealers in lower m6nhattan got \$175 for them.

The war was. supposed to be over by Christmas. All of us were in accord except for the Germans and the rain. The weather was miserable and the rain constant. Everyone was wet, and, cold and the tanks had trouble, in the mud, often sliding off the road. Nevertheless, Patton insisted on his plan. We moved east toward the Saar as scheduled on November 8th. Fortunately for us the Germans didn't believe we would attack in all this rain. A few days later the rain changed to snow.

I was leading my medical section following the tanks to the towns of Suisse and Landroff. We were now in a part of Lorraine that had been German from 1870 to 1918. While on the road, German 88's began to shell us. We dove out of the vehicles into the ditch for protection. A salvo of 881 s landed to my left and a few minutes later another to the right. We were bracketed. I knew the next one would get us. My ear succumbed to rage. With fury, I arose roaring at my men to get back into the vehicles and we drove as fast as we could to the edge of Suisse and into a solid rock-built house

with walls about two feet thick. These people had had plenty of experience with war on the Franco-German border. Every house was a fort. This time I lost no one.

Our stay in Suisse was not very comfortable. The Germans kept shelling and shelling. For about three days I could not evacuate my wounded. The number of combat exhaustion cases rose sharply due to the cold miserable weather and the shelling. Now I had an opportunity to use my very limited psychiatric training (six days at a neuropsychiatric center in Stafford, England) . After some rest, hot drinks and conversation many of the exhausted returned to their units.

Major Smith, the drunken officer with the waving gun in Chipping Norton, became a remarkable hero. As the Germans attacked, he led counter-attacks into the face of their fire. At one point he limped into my aid station. A bullet had entered the calf of his leg, another went through his clothing, ran along a rib and out the back, bloody but not serious. I cleaned and patched his wounds. He refused to stay and went back into the fight.

Exhaustion finally came over me. I didn't know how many wounded I treated. During a lull I told my 1st Sergeant that I would take a nap and put myself on a litter under the sill of a window facing the yard. This was safer than away from the window. While I slept a shell landed in the yard destroying my two ambulances and pockmarked the wall opposite my bed. I slept through this. A few years later, at a division reunion, I met one of my sergeants.

Hezl told me that he and others were aware of how tired I was so they had put a capsule of Sodium Amytal (called Blue 881s) in the hot cocoa I drank before the sleep. Now I understood how I managed to sleep through a shell-burst so close.

This bloody battle had a positive effect on my Army career in subsequent events. After the area was clear of German attacks a Major from the Division Surgeon's office came to check on conditions.. He told me that I had the best record on evacuation of combat exhaustion cases (called Shell Shock in World War I). In laughter I related that my ambulances were destroyed, the road was constantly being

shelled so their treatment had to be local in basements of many houses. A few days later I got orders to leave my tank battalion (another doctor took over) and return to Nancy to set up a combat exhaustion rest center for the entire division.

But I had self-doubts.

Though delighted to get out of the front line danger I began to worry that I was a coward. Maybe Major Erinakis thought I was cracking up? What did the men and officers of the battalion think of me? In Nancy with about four hundred patients at a time I was busy and stopped thinking of myself. My rest center must have proved useful because as my division joined in the relief and battle for Bastogne I was ordered to set up a center in Longvy, France-at the Belgium/Luxemburg border.

After a few days rest and talk sessions with some I got about ninety per cent of the men back to their units. The division didn't have to fill in with inexperienced replacements.

Two episodes were pleasant. My medical experience was very important for the command function of the battalion. I had 95% grain alcohol for antisepsis. When there was an officers' call at the battalion CP my alcohol with four times grapefruit juice in a large cooking pot was the centerpiece of the battle plan. It reeked of raw alcohol but it went down very well. The other episode stemmed from my Jewish origins and Hebrew studies. The driver of the division chaplain was a student rabbi. When practical on the Sabbath and holidays he would organize a minyan (ten men) and conduct a service. One Saturday with snow on the ground he asked me to join. We met in a roof less, floorless French building.. Fire from earlier shelling still flickered in the wooden joists that had held the second floor. I had left God a long time ago but not Jewishness. Reading the prayers with the other men was a warm experience.

Around the middle of December we finally got into the German Saarland. I had been alerted that a hot turkey dinner was going to be sent to us for Christmas and things were quiet. The town was Merlebach, a coal mining town. The great joy was the presence of hot showers. The miners had run

the day before but no one had shut off the hot water. I believe this was the first time I had my clothes off in weeks. In addition, through good relations with the battalion intelligence officer, I was given copies of the latest Intelligence Note ""the. Germans were trying to put together the 5th Panzer Army across the Rhine but our aircraft was pounding them regularly and there was no threat". Boy, were they wrong. There were two armies, the 5th and 6th Panzer Armies and they attacked on December 16th.

That ended our Christmas dinner and our relaxed shower time. Abruptly we packed up and headed north through Metz on the road to Bastogne. On the way I received an order to turn over my medical section to my assistant, Dr. Duane Callister, and proceed to Longvy, France to set up a combat exhaustion center for the division. My earlier work in Suisse and Nancy had not been forgotten. So I missed the worst of the fighting in Bastogne. A few days later a message came that Duane Callister and my driver, Pete Smeda were killed by a rocket that landed right on my former jeep and my administrative officer, Howard Barrett, was badly .wounded. A depression and guilt hit me hard. With all the death I had encountered this was by far the worst. Guilt because I was glad to be out of the fighting-

As the German Ardennes' thrust collapsed, our army was pushing them back across the Our River into Germany. My rest center was closed and I received a new command as CO of Company C of the 76th Armored Medical Battalion. My time with the 68th Tank Battalion was over..March of '44 to January, '45, a time of action, excitement, fear and death. There were still a few episodes of shelling and strafing but in the main the war was drawing to a close. I was in Bastogne for a while and then we entered Germany across the river marked with a big sign, "You are now entering. Germany by courtesy of the 6th Armored Division."

Now, the Division returned to the campaign in the Saar. We went through Saarloutern and Kaiserloutern, heading for the Rhine. Event moved rapidly. After the Remagen. Bridge capture,

Patton couldn't stand it and ordered a pontoon bridge . crossing at Oppenheim, south of Frankfurt. My company went across at night and suddenly Messerschmidt jet fighters appeared. Unbelievable! I never saw planes fly so fast. The searchlights of the .antiaircraft units could not keep them lighted for the guns. As we crossed, the Germans bombed. Fortunately they missed the pontoon bridges and we got across. If the Germans had developed their fighters earlier they could have recaptured the skies and seriously hurt us.

Across the Rhine we moved north to the area of Frankfurt and arrived at Neiderrod, a suburb just south across the river. I moved my company into a large mansion that the Germans had been using as a field hospital. First I had to order an artillery observer officer out of the cupola. A medical unit could not be with a fighting unit in the same place. Then there was the letter box. it was full of letters by German soldiers written the day before. of course, I read them. one has stayed in my mind all these years. From his letter I learned that the building was the Villa Manskopf. It had belonged to a Jewish banker and was usurped by the Nazi's. The soldier also wrote that the Americans were advancing very rapidly. He did not know whether he would stay with German wounded and become a prisoner or be evacuated. Since this place was empty of people but full of hospital equipment, the Germans had pulled out in a hurry.

We bypassed Frankfurt. Tanks are not intended to fight in cities and moved north and east to Giessen and Langensalza. We got attacked once by two planes who appeared with no warning. They flew low, just above the trees. I can't recall any casualties.

One morning as I awakened, an amazing sight occurred. Coming down the road led by a German soldier with a white flag, followed by a colonel and his staff, all in proper uniform and in parade format, about 2,000 German troops marched in to surrender. Another strange, eerie sight was in a forest east of Weimar. The Germans had built an airfield with green painted runways under the trees of the forest. Parked among the trees there were hundreds of fighter planes with the center of

the plane in ashes. To avoid capture someone had dropped a thermite bomb into the cockpits of all these planes, leaving the wings and the tails sitting on the ground. My guess is that the Germans had no fuel for these planes so they destroyed them.

We arrived outside of Weimar in early April. The war was quiet. Except for SS pockets, there was no longer a German army. On the 11th or 12th I got two terrible-pieces of news. Listening to BBC on my halftrack radio I heard that Roosevelt had died. We were shocked and sad. It had been a well kept secret. that he was so ill. The other was the discovery of Buchenwald, a few kilometers from Weimar. General Grow, our commanding general, ordered the Burgomeister, his family and officials with their families to come with mops, pails, etc. to clean up the camp. They had denied knowing anything about Buchenwald. Then it was our turn. In groups we came to look. I still see the human lamp shade collection of Ilsa Koch, the ovens bones and barracks which had a horizontal door for rolling out bodies of those shot who could not get up to work. The next stop was Jena. The city was a mess having been worked over by allied bombers. I was amused, as well as one can be in war, by the bombers work on the Zeiss Optical. factory across the street from the medical college. This factory made lenses for the submarine periscopes as well as other needs. The bombers hit a small corner of the optical works but across the street. the medical school was in shambles. I saw the archway entrance inscribed, "Anatomie" with nothing but tangled rubble behind it. So much for precision bombing.

By April 18th, 19th, or so we were deep into Saxony waiting for the end of the war. The Russians were expected on the east bank of the Mulda River which flows north in-to the Elbe. There was no shooting—only rumors. A universal great fear among us was to be shot just at the end of the war—what incredibly bad luck. The major towns where command was set up were Rochlitz and Mittweida.

I was told by the colonel to install my medical company where I wished in the area. There was a castle in a nearby town. My driver and I went to reconnoiter. As we entered town we found that we had captured the town as the first Americans. I stopped a German soldier on the street to ask for the Rathaus. As we arrived the Burgomeister and his staff were lined up on the walk waiting. He followed me into his office where I sat at his desk and instructed him as to my needs for vegetables, eggs, bread and a laundry service for my men. He assured me that he was not a Nazi and I assured him that I was a Jew and knew of the killings with profuse apologies to me that he knew Hitler was wrong about the Jews and that he personally never was against Jews.

Now, the castle was out of a storybook. There was a main wall around it with a sizeable courtyard through the archway able to park all of my vehicles. I walked into a very large room that had a stone staircase against one wall. The ceiling was about 25 feet above. The walls of this chamber were hung with ancient weapons, crossbows, spears, antique firearms, shields and hunting trophies. The Baroness arrived, well dressed, trim, about forty. She spoke perfect English. I told her about my plan to return in a few hours with 150 men and officers, vehicles to establish a Medical Aid Station, a ""Kriegslazaret". She was solemn, agreeable and would instruct her staff to serve as needed. She suggested a bedroom and office for me at the head of the stairs arrange for one of her servants to bring hot water and towels for showering and morning ablutions. In response to her gentlewomanliness, I, as a gentleman, advised her to clear her walls of all the ancient trophies and weapons. Once my troops arrived I knew they would be looted. But one item I kept for myself. The Baron, who was in Dresden to the east, fighting against the Russians, had a dress saber, complete with Nazi cross, green tassel and a gilt handle which stuck to me—one of the few war souvenirs I brought home.

There is more about the Baroness. She looked and spoke cultured English like the English and French aristocrats that I had met before. They all came from the same mold. After a few days, she

took me on a tour of the castle to point out her nobility. The chapel was from the 11th century and she wanted me to know that her family was much older and—thus more noble than the Hohenzollerens who ruled Prussia..and became the German Kaisers. Her world had collapsed but she held on to her nobility.

She needed my help in another matter. She had two late adolescent daughters who were becoming friendly with my troops. Would I keep my men away from her daughters? I told her, "Madame, that's your problem, not mine".

The war was about over— the weather very agreeable after the horrible Bastogne winter. I was feeling puffed up, a real conqueror. So when a German major with a complement of men came onto the castle grounds to surrender I refused to shake his extended hand. He was ordered with his men into a large windowless room below ground which we used as a prisoner of war (POW) cage. But a moral matter must be reported. The major was sick. He was clearly jaundiced and walked slowly. He didn't ask for help and I wasn't offering.

At dusk there was another event at the castle. Two weary dirty German soldiers came in to surrender. I was still in my conqueror mood In my best German I angrily stated, "Where were you all day? Now you want me to feed you and protect you. No go into the fields another night. But you'd better be here in the morning or else I'll send troops after you. They sheepishly left but did return in the morning. When I had a truckload, about forty prisoners, I sent them off to a POW camp.

The recollection of the Baroness brought to mind another aristocrat German. A badly wounded German major was brought in. He had been found in a barn, covered with lice, dehydrated and with a yellowish in color with a low-grade fever. The reason was a hole in his lower right abdomen from which feces extruded—a fecal fistula. Fortunately for him he had a walled of localized peritonitis from the wound. I proceeded to clean him, dress his wound and started an intravenous fluid. Again, he also spoke perfect English. His father was a general in the German army, the family was East

Prussian Junkets going back hundreds of years. As I prepared to send him to an evacuation hospital he began to regale me about his family and war— I still vividly recall what he said. "You and I are gentlemen.. War is the ultimate gentleman's game. These men are the pawns with which we play our game. This time you win, next time we will win. I exploded in rage and told him to shut his mouth. If he spoke like this at the hospital someone will kill him.

Late April, 1945, weather is fine, sleeping in beds and no more killing. We figured the Russians were close because Germans were swimming the Mulda River in Mettweida to surrender to our troops. The division chaplain, Lt. Col. Milford, came for help. He had discovered a hut full of Jewish women slave laborers in very poor condition. Food, medicine, clothes were quickly gathered up and we took off. It was a miserable sight. They were all Hungarian Jewish women. The spokesperson, speaking English, was a Professor of History at the University of Budapest. One woman was lying on a bunk, breathing heavily. I suspect she was dying of TB. We arranged to provide for them. I don't know the final story because the Russians arrived a rid this was to be their occupation area.

About the Russians, the meeting was amiable, lots of laughter. I spoke with some officers in German, the only common language. I was struck by the appearance of Russian MP's directing traffic. They were all women and built like the German tanks. With their arrival we pulled back to the Weimar area.

On returning to Weimar we set up in brick buildings that had been a military school. All was very comfortable—showers, beds—hot food. My company was given the task of providing for the survivors of Buchenwald. Some were so malnourished and sick that they could not survive. A small hospital was set up to provide for them. Each morning my first sergeant would report the number of dead. Some mornings there were extra bodies. We learned that camp inmates were killing those who had collaborated with the Germans.

It was early may and the war was over. The universal thought was how and when do we go

home. The point system was instituted, one point for every month overseas and five points for each medal and battle star. Well, on adding up, since I had 38 months overseas and all the battle stars plus a medal, mine was the highest among the medical officers except for Major Erinakis. He had three children. Each was worth twelve points. But I was on my way home. We were to leave together for LeHavre and a liberty ship home as one-way ship surgeons with freed American Prisoners of War.

The idea of a command car, though larger, more comfortable than a jeep with all our luggage for three to five days to LeHavre was not very appealing. Pete and I had other plans. There was a nearby airfield. After we left our division, after all the good-byes, we drove out to the airfield and found a cargo plane leaving for Paris. I filled out orders for the driver and assistant to proceed with our luggage to Paris in three to four days. The orders were needed for their provision and lodging on the way. We were in Paris in two hours and stayed at the Hotel Crillon which was now officers' billets. After three days of leisure our command car arrived. The next day we left for LeHavre while the driver and assistant were rewarded with a slow trip back to Weimar on our written orders.

LeHavre was crowded. We were not the only lucky ones. Finally, close to the end of June, I was going home on a liberty ship on arriving in New York I had a small war with local officers. My orders read that on landing, go home and report in to the nearest military establishment after thirty days of rest and rehabilitation. These orders made in LeHavre were superceded by local orders to go to Camp Kilmer and then Fort Dix in New Jersey. I was furious. I demanded to see the Commander General at Kilmer. He calmed me down and stated that I would be delayed about two days at the most. Having now had over four years in the army I didn't trust anyone. But it did happen. I was on a train to New York and my wife and family. The delay turned out to my advantage. Since I had officially checked in and my address noted I received a telegram about ten days later to return to Fort Dix, start terminal leave and be placed in the reserves and I finally received the promotion to major promised to me in about February.

Oh. yes, not to leave a hanging chad, what about the Silver Star? As I was getting ready to leave Weimar, the CO of the Medical Battalion asked me to stop by. He said that I had been recommended for a Silver Star medal. Would I pass on it since I had more than enough points for home. Others were scrounging for points. I told him to forget it. I wanted to go home and be a civilian.