

THIS IS TO AND
FOR THE MEN OF
"G" COMPANY, 275 REGIMENT
70TH INFANTRY DIVISION

BY

LAWRENCE G. SOUTHARD

DECEASED

This is my story and the way I saw things happen while serving with the 275th Regiment, 70th Infantry Division. I could be off on a date or two because this is written 32 years later than the events being recalled. What follows is only a small part of our 86 days of combat which faced "G" Company of the 275th Infantry Regiment.

On December 7, 1941, I was a 1st Lt. with the 57th Coast Artillery stationed at Camp Pendleton, Virginia Beach, Virginia. Twenty days later the 57th sailed from San Francisco to Hawaii where the Japanese were expected to invade. Nothing happened. In May of 1943 a number of 57th personnel were ordered back to Camp Pendleton to form long range artillery units for use in North Africa. This failed to develop so most of us ended up in Officer pools not having been assigned to a unit. While in Hawaii, under our table organization, there were three officer promotions in my unit. When I arrived back at Camp Pendleton, Virginia I reported to a Major who at one time was a sergeant under my command. In July 1944 I attended the Infantry School at Ft. Benning, Georgia. All were officers attending this school. After completing school I could have stayed at Ft. Benning as an instructor due to my length of service and having been overseas for approximately 18 months. However, I requested I be assigned to a combat outfit. When my orders were cut I had been assigned to the 275th Regiment, 70th Infantry Division, Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri.

I reported in on a Saturday or Sunday about the first week in September and was assigned to the 1st Battalion. Monday a.m. I reported in but was given no job to do. The first week there I'd get

out of bed about 10 or 11 a.m. and do nothing the rest of the day. On Friday of the first week with the 70th, a Lt. came to my room, got me out of bed and handed me a letter saying I was to be reclassified with an acknowledgement for my signature at the bottom. This I refused to sign. I had received my commission as an officer from The Citadel, Charleston, South Carolina in 1939 and entered the "old" army in 1940 as a 2nd Lt. It appeared that some officers thought that we were a bunch of misfits because we had been in grade so long. This not only happened in the 275th but also in the 276th as well. First Lt. John A. Jensen, killed at Baerenthal January 1, 1945, had served in the Aleutian Islands for 33 months before joining the 275th. After a certain Major and I had a talk, the reclassification idea was dropped. Monday, following, I was given an assignment as Assistant Transportation Officer of the 1st Battalion.

Later I was sent to "F" Company as the Executive Officer. We sailed from Boston and ended up at Baerenthal on the 1st day of January 1945.

It was my understanding that the 2nd Battalion was to relieve elements of the 14th Armored Division. We were to be taken by truck into Baerenthal and then move by foot north to take our position. We never reached Baerenthal. German tanks with 88's met us on the edge of town. "F" Company was held in reserve at this time for about 6 or 8 days. On about the 6th or 7th day in reserve we received word to put out our ground color panel because our air force was flying up the valley to do a job for us. In short time, about 12 or 14 P-47's showed

up over the valley we were in. All of the soldiers came out of houses and holes to cheer them on. After crossing our lines we could hear the Germans shooting at them with everything they had. Soon these P-47's were back over us flying in a circle like follow the leader. All of a sudden the lead plane started down with blazing machine guns and dropping bombs. One man I remember ran into a culvert for protection, but it didn't do him any good. One of the bombs landed on the culvert and we picked him up about 50 yards away from where he sought protection. We fired machine guns and small arms at the planes, but we didn't bring any down. It has always been a question in my mind if these planes had been flown by German pilots. I'd heard it had happened before. Fighting was awful for the two rifle companies on the front line and casualties were very high. At one time I was told that Col. Pettee, Regimental Commander, told Col. George Barton, my Battalion Commander, that he could attack, retreat, or stay where he was because the Germans completely surrounded us. As I remember, the mission of the 2nd Battalion was to block the road from Baerenthal south to keep the German tanks in check.

On the 6th or 7th of January "F" Company moved to the front line to relieve "E" Company on a hill to the right overlooking the town. During daylight one could see German soldiers and tanks moving freely in Baerenthal. There was an O.P. on the point of the hill with an officer required to be there from about 6 a.m. to sundown. I was on the point one morning about 6 a.m. and quite a bit of activity was going on in Baerenthal so I called for artillery fire in the town.

Activity there kept increasing and increasing and I called again for artillery fire. I told the Major I was talking with that it appeared that we were going to be hit by tanks and infantry troops in a short time. He then told me to get off the point of the hill and to have all of our men to keep down in their fox holes. He said a T.O.T. would arrive at 6:30 a.m. I got off the top of the hill and back to the Company C.P., telling the Company Commander and other men what was to take place. I was asked what a T.O.T. was, but I did not know. I called the Major again and asked him to tell me what a T.O.T. was. He said that is "Time on Target," and that every gun behind us that could reach Baerenthal would be there at 6:30 a.m. It arrived on time and was one of the most beautiful sounds we'd heard in some time. There was no activity on the part of the Germans that day.

On the morning of January 12th or 13th, I received a message to report back to Col. Barton at his C.P. I reported in about 10:00 a.m. and the first thing he said to me was to get cleaned up and shave because I was to meet the new Regimental Commander. Having relieved "E" Company on the front line the men of "F" Company had no time to shave. Temperature was about zero degrees and we were having trouble getting enough water to drink under such conditions. In fact, during daylight hours the men in fox holes couldn't raise their heads above ground level. The Germans were looking right down on top of us. At night our own artillery kept us "hemmed in" with their fire. After shaving, Col. Barton introduced me to Col. John H. McAleer, and let me add this now, he was one of the best Commanders I ever served under.

Col. McAleer told me that I was now the Company Commander of "G" Company, and led me over to a map on a table. He pointed out two hills on the map saying that the first hill was the last known position of "G" Company, which had not been heard from in a day and a half, were out of food, water, and ammunition. I was to take supplies, find them, and to be on the other hill by nightfall. Col. Barton told me that about 10 or 12 men from "G" Company were holed up in a house about 1/2 mile from his C.P. with food, water, and ammunition already there. I located the house and men and that's when things started with me and Company "G."

Arriving at the house where the "G" Company men were located, we packed the supplies and started out to locate the main body of men. About 100 yards from the house small mortar shells started falling all around us. This was around noon time and we thought that we were about a mile from the front line. Men and supplies were back in the house in no time. We sat for 2 hours--it wasn't the time to try to get the men moving. In time things settled down and we started out again. This time we made it well up into the mountains. The Sergeant leading me to "G" Company's last known position indicated we were near so I stopped the men. He and I took off to where they had been dug in. We found dead soldiers that had been members of the Company, but no "G" Company. The time was about 4:00 p.m., and out of the clear the Germans started raking the mountain with artillery fire. The Sergeant and I jumped into a hole and stayed there until it stopped. We then went back to get the men with the supplies, but they were gone with supplies scattered down the trail where I had stopped them. Back to

the house we went. Getting more supplies together, we started out again about 8:00 p.m. As we started out one of the men told me he saw a light on the side of the mountain. We later found out that German soldiers were in a cave behind our lines directing fire on us. When I first arrived at the house that day I was told that two men standing guard were seen about 100 yards away with their hands on top of their heads walking away from our known positions. No German soldiers were seen, but everyone knew they were all around us from what had happened in our first 12 days in combat. Back up into the mountains we went, and by luck we located the remaining men of "G" Company about 3:00 a.m. on the other side of the mountain where we had first started looking. Right before we found our men, the soldier on the point walked up on a machine gun nest where this trail parted, woke two men up, spoke to them in English (thinking they were our own); they answered in German and he took off. I doubted this at first, but months later saw the hole that he had described to me.

Shortly after daylight I received a call from Col. Barton's C.P. telling me to bring "G" Company out of the mountains, that we were being relieved by the 36th Division Engineers. We were shifted to a new area to regroup.

When I was able to have my first head count I found out I had 72 enlisted men and 2 officers—we started from there. The first silly thing that happened that I can remember was that a Lt. Col. from Division Headquarters went around talking to the enlisted men wanting to know if they had washed their feet every 3 or 4 days. All lied

except one and he told the Col. that he had a helluva time getting water to drink and he damn sure wasn't going to waste it on his feet. Remember the temperature was around zero or below and these men had been living in fox holes. I had to even write an explanation as to why this man hadn't been made to wash his feet.

"G" Company enlisted men that were sent back for battlefield commissions to be 2nd Lts. were Bernard Sandoval, Paul McCoy, Richard Vanderwerff, and Homer Powell. Other officers that were with me at times were Lts. Dan Brant, Walter Snelling, Eric Dentan, William Taddei and two other officers that were only with me a short time. The smartest move, in my opinion, I made taking command of "G" Company was in calling in the remaining non-commissioned officers and telling them that they and they alone would pick all other non-commissioned officers and I would do the breaking. There were only one or two men in the Company CP left--no 1st Sergeant. I wanted to know who they would like as their 1st Sergeant and they picked out a soldier named Harvey Hill. I asked his rank thinking he was there; I was told he was a private. In the meantime a Sgt. Wolfe from Col. Barton's CP arrived and said he was sent there to be the 1st Sergeant and that the Company was going to be built back up to a fighting unit. I called Col. Barton on the phone and asked him if I was in command of "G" Company. He said I was and that I would get all the help I needed; that he had sent me Sgt. Wolfe, a top man, to be my 1st Sergeant. I told the Col. that as long as I was in command that I would make my own 1st Sergeant and that I was sending Sgt. Wolfe

back to him. In one jump Private Hill became our 1st Sergeant. From then until I was injured on June 14, 1945, the non-commissioned officers of "G" Company made all non-commissioned officers. I did the breaking when I thought it called for such action.

As I remember we were moved one or two times and in the later part of January we were in reserve in the Saarbrucken area in the villages of Hundling and Welferding on the Saar River. Germans held the ground on the other side of the Saar River. Action was light at this time.

One night with the help of engineers we tried to send a patrol across the Saar River in boats, but was unable to do so because of ice freezing on the boats. The next night I, with the patrol, walked across the river.

In the meantime new officers and men were being assigned to "G" Company. On February 3rd or 4th at a Company Commander's meeting Col. Barton assigned "G" Company to conduct a raid, February 6th, on Grosbliederstroff, France. The purpose of this raid was to secure information and to bring back some German prisoners. On the morning of February 6th, 100 men of "G" Company left the front line at 4:30 a.m. to make their way into Grosbliederstroff. We had a few engineers with us for the purpose of building a foot bridge across a small creek which we had to cross. The snow was melting and this creek was bank to bank and rather swift. The Germans must have heard us and a number of machine guns opened fire--we forgot about the foot bridge and each man had to cross the creek as best he could. When I stepped

in I thought it would be knee deep--the water was waist deep and at one time while working our way towards the town my head went completely under the water. There were about five men with me in my CP, each rifle platoon was under the command of a 2nd Lt. and each had been assigned a certain job to do. We were keeping in touch with each other by radio. Our plans were to try to slip into town before daylight, but this did not happen. We were discovered and kept busy with machine gun and small arms fire. As we were working our way towards the town the men in my CP and I got out of the creek by a small flour mill which was powered by water through a small canal. While huddled in a corner of this building and the canal, two men, O'Conner and Wilkerson, were told to have a look on the other side of the canal. I was standing in the bypass and the two men ran up on top of the canal--hollered "machine gun" and jumped. The machine gun was lower than the canal so no one was hit when it opened fire. Dirt hit me in the face from the bullets that were hitting the top edge of the canal. We had one hand grenade among us--it was thrown, and back to the creek we went. The bypass was about a foot and a half or two feet deep and about two feet wide. There was a little bridge over the bypass for horse drawn wagons to cross. All men made it to the creek including myself except Sergeant Louis Hoyer, my communication Sergeant. We were headed for an open shed which housed farm equipment. I was the last man to hit the creek when I heard Hoyer cry out not to leave him. To my surprise, with a radio on his back, he had tried to crawl under the bridge over the bypass and he was stuck for the moment.

I had lost my carbine and helmet and only had a 45 pistol. I lay against the bank with pistol in hand telling him to relax and work himself free. In short order he was loose and we both made it to the shed across the creek. Each rifle platoon was great--all accomplished their mission.

We had what I consider to be about three blocks of the town. It was freezing cold from the water we had to cross. We had a good fight all day long as the German soldiers had been split apart. We had a group south of us and also north of us. In moving into the assigned positions one rifle platoon had one man killed and 6 litter cases which we had to carry back into our lines that night. As my CP and I were crossing an open area on the edge of town a German machine gun killed a soldier about 5 yards in front of me. The soldier killed with me was Pvt. Donald G. Grisen. Sergeants Hill and Roger had crossed the open area which was about 25 yards wide from the farm equipment shed to the house we were headed for. Another soldier was running in front of Pvt. Grisen and I was behind Grisen. A machine gun opened up and all three of us hit the ground. Pvt. Grisen had run into a hail of bullets. He never made a move of any kind whatsoever when he hit the ground. I crawled back to the shed. The man in front of Pvt. Grisen moved a leg and Sergeant Hill asked him if he was hurt very bad. He replied that he didn't think he was hit and at that Hill said, "Well get your ass over here." He began to crawl. I started from the shed again and all hell broke loose again. I hit the ground. Hill told me a German soldier appeared in a window with

rifle in hand and that they were giving me cover. I said well here I come and as I passed by Pvt. Grisen I grabbed his helmet for my own use. A day or so later Sgt. Hill told me that one of the men, referring to me, said, "I didn't know that big S.O.B. could move so fast."

About 5:30 p.m. I received word that I could start pulling out of Grosbliederstroff. As soon as I had received this Lt. Dan Brant reported that about 15 or 20 German soldiers were on the south side of the creek waving white flags. I told him to do everything possible to get them to come into us so we could take them back into our lines. This he tried to do, but they wouldn't cross over. He reported this to me and I sent him back again with instructions to try again, that we were pulling out of town at 6:20 p.m., but under no circumstances were those men to stay alive so they could fight us the next day. Lt. Brant tried again and again to get those soldiers to cross a foot bridge into his platoon--they refused to cross over. Under my orders he set up two BARs on a cross fire and opened up on them. We started pulling out of town with our 6 litter cases, 3 regular German army soldiers and 1 S.S. trooper. We crossed that freezing water again and arrived back into our lines at about 1:30 a.m.--I didn't have a man to catch a cold as a result of such an experience. "G" Company was given credit for killing 20 enemy soldiers and wounding 18 others that day.

On about February 12th or 13th, Col. McAleer dropped by my C.P. and told me that "G" Company was to be given the job to take Grosbliederstroff on February 17th. We were to be given six tanks to

help us do the job. On the morning of the 17th no tanks appeared-- I learned later that morning that the lead tank fell through a bridge and this blocked the remaining other tanks--we did our job without them.

In talking with Col. McAleer he wanted to know how we should hit Grosbliederstroff on the 17th. I told him that I certainly did not want to go in the same way this time as we had done on February 6th-- that I'd like to hit them from behind. He told me to start making plans as to what we should do. We agreed on a plan for "G" Company to move out late February 16th--cross the valley and creek and up on top of a big hill in woods to the left of the town. At 6:30 a.m. on the 17th we were to move down the hill and be on the edge of town at 7:00 a.m. Our artillery was to begin firing on one side of town at 6:45 a.m. and lift to the other side at 7:00 a.m. We were to meet the tanks at the edge of town at 7:00 a.m. and start moving in.

On February 16th, late in the afternoon, "G" Company moved out of our front lines to do a job the next day. That afternoon it was misting rain and the clouds were hanging very low, which was great for us. We moved down the hill, across the valley and up into the woods on top of the high hill to the back and left of Grosbliederstroff. "G" Company moved through a mine field near the edge of the woods without accident. On moving into the woods we jumped a German Artillery Officer with one enlisted man. The Officer was killed and the enlisted man captured. We learned from the enlisted man that they were there to direct artillery fire in case we hit the town again.

This again was a break for "G" Company because the next morning we did not receive a single round of German artillery fire. Men in the CP were given the job to guard our lone prisoner. About 3:00 a.m. I moved around the area to see that things were in order, and I found our prisoner and the man guarding him sound to sleep in a fox hole facing each other with both arms around each other. I told Lt. Brant about this when I returned to our hole, but I didn't wake them up. The German prisoner was happy to be captured and there was no fear of him trying to get away.

At 6:30 a.m. "G" Company moved out and down the hill. Our artillery began its work on time and each platoon was in its proper position to hit the left side of town as soon as the artillery lifted to the other side of town. Each officer and all enlisted men did a great and wonderful job that day. We had complete control of the town in 6 hours, did not suffer a single casualty, captured 44 enemy soldiers and killed and wounded an undetermined number of others. During this action we did face a few problems--one of them being the anti-tank guns firing into the town from our front lines. The anti-tank guns were controlled by radio from the tanks that were to meet us on the edge of town. As I've stated before the tanks failed to reach us and as we moved into town we were receiving our own artillery fire. At about 10:30 a.m. Col. Barton came into Grosbliederstroff for a visit. I told him what we were up against in not being able to stop our anti-tank guns. A short time after he left our positions the guns stopped and I've always thought that he was the one that

corrected this for us. At about 12:00 it was reported that all enemy action was over except some German soldiers holed up in the last two or three houses on the north edge of town. We couldn't get to these houses because of small arms fire from across the Saar River. I went to see the Lt. in charge of this action and we decided to send artillery to them. I was on the field telephone and requested one round of smoke--it arrived and I adjusted and called for two rounds of H.E. (high explosive) and to give me an "on the way." The voice on the other end of the line came back with No. 1 is on its way-- three seconds later he said No. 2 is on its way. While looking for the two shells to arrive, a girl walks out of one of the houses with a bucket in her hand. Nothing could be done but look--the two shells hit on each side of her. The next day while walking up the street I was passed by a horse drawn wagon with a wooden casket on it, followed by a number of people. It's awful to have to remember such things.

In a day or so "G" Company was on the move again working our way from hill to hill until we faced the Siegfried Line overlooking Saarbrucken. We were moved to this position with the understanding that we were to protect the right flank of the 1st Battalion. The morning the 1st Battalion moved up along side "G" Company a terrific fire fight broke out with German troops and tanks. "G" Company had one platoon in on this fight with eight men having been hit. This was the day Major Duffie was wounded and captured. The 1st Battalion Executive Officer was killed; think his name was Major Strong. I've read in the Trailblazer where Charlie Pence thought Major Duffie was

killed there but he wasn't. I ran into the Major in Paris while on a 3 day pass less than 2 weeks before the war ended in Europe. Both rifle companies took an awful beating that morning. I was told that a Sergeant was in command of one company and a Lt. in command of the other. All other officers had been killed or captured. I was called to meet there with Col. McAleer, the Regimental Commander, and some staff officers, one of which was given command of the 1st Battalion, to decide what actions we were to take for the rest of the day. We stayed in our positions here for almost 10 days--pulled back for 3 days and then back up on top of the hill overlooking Saarbrucken. Instead of only one rifle company in our former positions we now had three companies there. It seems that when we were pulled back for 3 days, someone had the impression that I had asked to be pulled back--this was not so. Lt. Brant tried to explain to the C.O. what to expect, but he made a big joke of it. He lost eight men the first 2 days by sniper fire. "G" Company had taken the hill--stayed there 10 days with no such record.

During the 10 days I've spoken of on top of the hill, known as Spichern Heights, which I understand was a battleground and the turning point in the Franco Prussian War in 1870, I will try to relate a few things which were of interest to me.

We had been there a day or two when I received 26 replacements or new men in the Company. I gave them a short talk and then assigned them out to the rifle platoons. At this time we were feeding the men in their fox holes. Any movement on our part would draw in mortar fire.

Anytime I walked up on men gathered together I'd give them hell. One day as I came in the C.P., Hill the 1st Sergeant said that one of my C.P. soldiers looked out the window (we were in a hospital located on the side of the hill) and said, "Here comes that walking-talking son of a bitch." He denied this, and I told him he was lying and that if I had to be a son of a bitch to save lives that I sure wanted to be a big one. This was all in fun for both of us.

One afternoon a Chaplain came up to pay a visit. Right before he left he told me I had a man back at Battalion Headquarters, my kitchen was located there, and that he had left the front line and refused to go back up. I told him I'd be back there in a day or so and I'd take care of it. Just at this time I had a call to come back to Battalion Headquarters for a Company Commanders Meeting. I rode back with the Chaplain to my kitchen. I had learned the man's name from the Chaplain and I called for him. I was sitting on a box with my back to the wall with the cooks and drivers when this man walked in. He walked over to me and asked if I wanted to see him. I said I did and that I understood that he had left the line and that he had said he wasn't going back. He replied, "that's right and you are not going to make me go back--I want you to put me before a general court marshal." I asked if he was afraid up there. He said "no." I said, "You're looking at someone that is." At this point I got up, looked him in the eye and in no uncertain terms I told him to get his ass outside and to come back in and report to me as a soldier should report to his Commanding Officer, and if he hadn't been an enlisted man I'd knock

his damn head off. He did as I instructed him to do. I told him that I'd never put a man up for court-marshal and I didn't intent to start with him. I told him I was going to take him back. I'd have him sit on the hood of the jeep and I'd drive 10 miles per hour and if he wanted to jump off to jump and I was going to kill him. I told him I had 150 men on the front line and that I was damn sure going to be fair with them. He asked again for me to file charges against him. I told him no, but I did load a carbine that another man had, handed it to him and told him to go outside and blow his head off. He said he couldn't do it. I took the gun from him and gave orders to kill him if he tried to get away. I left for Col. Barton's Headquarters for the Company Commander's Meeting. Before the meeting started Col. Barton asked the soldier's name because he was going to be court-marshalled. I refused to give his name saying I had had a talk with him, that he was alright and that I was taking him back with me. It didn't go over so good, but I got away with it. Things were quite on the line so I spent the night at my supply house. Next morning while shaving this same soldier--I didn't keep him under guard--knocked on my door and asked to speak to me. He asked again to file charges against him for desertion. I told him things were the same as yesterday and that I was trying to be his friend and help him over his problem. I also told him to go talk to the Priest because time was running out. About an hour later I ran across him on the street and he asked if I was ready to go back. I told him I'd be ready in about an hour. Later that morning I pulled up, told him to hop in the back of the jeep and back to the front line we went. There was no more problem and the soldier was

excellent in carrying out duties assigned to him. Later I learned this man had joined the Army at 17 years of age--been in England as an assistant to a dentist for 2 years and within 2 weeks time he was on the front line. He was one of the 26 replacements I'd gotten a few days earlier.

While having food carried to the men in their fox holes overlooking Saarbrucken I had an occasion to go back to my supply and kitchen area. I walked into the kitchen and the first thing I noticed was a cook cooking himself a steak. I told him that it sure looks as if you fellows eat pretty good back here. I then ran him up stairs to get the mail orderly, Pvt. Robert Markovitz. I was upset over our mail being late getting to the front line. As I finished with the mail orderly S/Sgt. James Gantz, my mess Sergeant, walked into the kitchen. I made some remark about how good everyone was eating in the rear area, but that is not what I'm concerned about. What I'm concerned about is that I've never seen any cookies, cake or pies on the front line. At this he told me that he had thought of the same thing. Then he proceeded to tell me that we were not issued any shortening, flour and other such items to bake such things as I had mentioned. At this point I told him that I knew what in the hell he was issued and he knew what in the hell I wanted. Now if there couldn't be some changes made in a day or so that he might find himself a private up on the front line. I left the kitchen to go to see my supply sergeant, S/Sgt. Halsey Soderberg. I returned to the kitchen in about 2 hours and to my surprise, the cooks were baking cookies. I didn't ask any questions.

While up on the hill "G" Company was blocking the highway that runs along the Saar River. The 63rd Division was about 3 miles behind us on the other side of the river. Higher Headquarters ordered the 63rd Division to pull up along side us so the 70th flank would be protected. It was decided that in doing so the 63rd Division would use my area for their artillery O.P. For about 3 days we had quite a few visitors, both officers and enlisted men in our area. After capturing the hospital on the side of the hill, we discovered a number of chairs with holes in the seat for the patients to use in relieving themselves. We decided that in order to have comfort, we should use them over our slit trench. We had about eight seats in a row and we were very proud of our setup. One morning about 7:00 a.m. I was seated there reading the Stars and Stripes when this enlisted man came up, pulled his pants down and seated himself next to me. I couldn't help but notice his clean new uniform. Thinking he was with the 63rd Division and trying to be friendly, I asked him what outfit he was with. He looked over at me and with a very loud voice said, "I'm with "G" Company of the 275th Infantry. What God-damn outfit are you from." I looked at him and said, "Well it so happens that I'm the Company Commander of "G" Company 275th Infantry." For a moment I thought he was going to fall through the hole that he was sitting on. I didn't wear any rank while on the front line, although it was called to my attention a number of times. This man was also one of the 26 replacements I had received.

The only time I can remember that I wanted to cry in Europe was when Sgt. McCoy came back to my C.P. leading Pvt. Gerald Bales to be

sent back to our first aid station. Our heavy weapons company was zeroing in on a number of concentration points in front of us. They were firing white phosphorus and in adjusting range someone decreased instead of increasing range. A shell landed near Pvt. Bales and splattered his face and hands with phosphorus. His statement to me was "Thank God it wasn't H.E." (high explosive) I later learned from Lt. Gracia North, a nurse with the field hospital that followed us, that Pvt. Bales did not lose his eye sight. At that time he was in a hospital in Metz, France.

This next tale is heresay because I wasn't there at the time, but I'm sure it's true. Without the knowledge of anyone a general officer of our division showed up about 7:00 a.m. with some members of this staff. He was standing about 15 yards in front of his staff members in Lt. Paul McCoy's platoon positions on top of the hill overlooking the Siegfried Line. McCoy's men were in fox holes running from the Cliff by the highway to what I'd say was west or to the left of the Cliff. The men in the holes were about 10 to 15 yards below the crest of the hill. Out of the clear blue sky the soldier, a private, looks around to see this person standing straight up looking down toward the Siegfried Line. Without thinking the soldier yells, "Get down you son of a bitch--don't you know that there are snipers out there." The General hit the ground, crawled down to the soldier, patted him on the back, thanked him and crawled away. Lt. McCoy swore this was the way it happened. I could write many more things and events to take place in the 86 days of combat, but there are just too many for me to put on paper.

As well as I remember about the 15th of March, Col. George Barton 2nd Battalion Commander was moved up to Regimental Headquarters and 2nd Battalion received a new Commander. He moved his CP into the hospital on the side of the hill and after our short relief of 3 days I moved "G" Company back on the line and my CP into a small chateau where 1st Battalion had their C.P. Patrols were being sent out every night because we had to know where every German machine gun was located in the Siegfried Line because sooner or later we were going to have to make a breakthrough. While on the hill a Lt. who had received a field commission was to take a patrol to draw such machine gun fire. It was raining that night, but at no time did we hear any noise or arms fire. He had picked his close buddies to go with him on this patrol. About 2:00 a.m. he reported into the C.P. and started with his report to me on the patrol. He said nothing that I didn't already know. Laying in the sack after he finished, I reached out, put my hands on his shoes and said, "Lt. you know its been raining tonight and another patrol is going out at 3:00 a.m. If you want to lead it ok, if not you will have charges filed against you in the morning." He went out again that night, and I must say came back with good information that we weren't aware of.

On March 20 the action had become very light. It seems that an atmosphere existed with us as well as the Germans which was "if you don't shoot at me then I won't shoot at you," but this didn't last long. As I said before, the 1st Battalion C.P. and "G" Company C.P. was located at the same spot which was about 20 yards from the men

in fox holes. At about 4:00 p.m. on the afternoon of the 20th, "A" Company sent a fifteen man patrol through our lines ("G" Company) to feel out the bunkers in the Siegfried Line. They had been gone about 15 minutes when all hell broke loose below us. In a matter of minutes a soldier came running back into our lines to tell us what had happened. The following was published in the Trailblazer in Europe in 1945, quote, "The Germans must have had the 15 man patrol under observation all the time. Waiting until the patrol had formed its skirmish line, the Nazis opened up with machine guns. In a moment, all but one of the 15 men were dead or wounded. He was Pvt. Jesse D. Cain, Jr., Philadelphia, Co. A, 275th.

Lying in cover so shallow he couldn't raise his arms from his side without drawing fire, Cain's only thought was, "Wait till dark and maybe I can make it in."

But Cain's wounded buddies couldn't wait. Several prayed softly. One muttered, "Get a doctor" and raised his knee to ease his pain. The German machine gun rattled death.

Pvt. Cain didn't wait. He crept, crawled, finally sprinted for the woods. The Nazis blazed away at him; they missed. The wounded soon were evacuated." - end quote.

Having learned what happened, we asked for volunteers to go down and bring the wounded out. As we were getting details as to what had happened below us Pvt. Cain told me that Donald A. McDonald told him that he had to get back into our lines to let us know they need help in a hurry. One of my Sergeants was in charge of the volunteer group

and I instructed him to check each man--bring out the wounded but leave the dead. Our artillery put up a barrage of smoke--the volunteer group went down and the wounded were brought out, which numbered eight or nine men. I knew Lt. McDonald but he was not among the wounded. I checked with the Sergeant in charge of the volunteer group and he told me that all of the men left behind were dead; he was sure. This was reported to the 1st Battalion Commander and he and I discussed the fact that Lt. McDonald was the one that had told Pvt. Cain to get back to us. At that moment a private in my company walked up and told us that he couldn't help but overhear us and that he would volunteer to go down and check Lt. McDonald. The smoke had lifted, it was still daylight and the 1st Battalion Commander said to me, "Southard, he is your man, it's your decision and I sure would like to know about Lt. McDonald." I thought for a moment then I said, "I appreciate your coming to us and volunteering to do this, but I wouldn't swap a good enlisted man any day out of the week for a wounded officer. Go back to your hole." I passed by Lt. McDonald the next day, but that will come later.

I had Lt. Powell on patrol the night of the 20th. He drew fire from these same machine guns. After completing the patrol he reported to Regimental Headquarters with his report, back to Battalion Headquarters and then to the Company C.P. He arrived back at the C.P. about 7:10 a.m. He told me that I may be getting a phone call pretty soon from Battalion C.P. that the new Battalion Commander was talking to another rifle Company Commander and that my name had been overheard by him. In less than 5 minutes the phone rang with instructions

for me to report to the Battalion C.P. as soon as possible--it took me about 10 minutes to get there. When I arrived the other rifle Company Commander was leaving and he said to me, "Southard, get your men to start firing so they will think you are in a fire fight." I didn't answer because of previous reasons. I reported to the Battalion Commander--we chatted a minute and then I received this order, "Capt. Southard at 9:00 a.m. this morning you are to have your company in position to start through the Siegfried Line. You are to breach the line to such an extent that two rifle companies can get through you." I asked him if he had heard what had happened in front of me the day before. I don't know his reply. I then asked the Battalion Commander this question, "Is this a direct order that you are giving me to take my company and proceed through the Siegfried Line at 9:00 a.m. this morning?" He replied and said, "This is a direct order." I asked the same question again. He replied, "Yes and I want to wish you all the luck in the world." I again for the third time asked the same question. He hollered back, "Yes and I expect this God-damn order to be carried out." I hollered back saying, "That God-damn order will be carried out," and I walked out slamming the door with all my might--the glass in the door came out.

I arrived back at 1st Battalion and my C.P. at about 8:00 a.m. with the sad news. The 1st Battalion Commander and his Executive Officer couldn't believe what I told them had taken place. I told them I'd much rather go at night and do the job than in daylight hours. I understand phone calls were made and the next word that I received

was that the 9:00 a.m. hour was off, but I was to go at 12:00 noon. At 11:45 a.m. I was briefing the lead patrol when I received word that the move had been called off and that I was to breach the line that night. That was great news but things started again about 12:30 p.m. Word came in that the Germans had started withdrawing and that our artillery would fire smoke along our line from 1:30 p.m. until 2:00 p.m. If there was a reaction by the Germans to this smoke such as incoming artillery, machine gun or small arms fire the night drive was still on otherwise "G" Company was to start through the Siegfried Line into Saarbrucken, capital of the rich, long disputed Saarland. Our artillery smoke screen started at 1:30 p.m. We didn't receive any incoming artillery or small arms fire. At 2:00 p.m. Lt. Paul McCoy was at the bottom of the hill with the lead patrol where the 15 man patrol had been the day before. I was on top of the hill with the 1st platoon. When the smoke started to lift Lt. McCoy called on the radio saying there were 5 or 6 German soldiers that were waving white flags. I told him to stay put--get them in and send them up to me. When the Germans got up to me I asked them what the situation was in the Siegfried Line and what was taking place in the general area. I was told that the main forces of the German soldiers started pulling out at 10:00 a.m., that a delaying force had been left in the line, but that they all wanted to surrender. I told the Germans that if what they said was true that they would be alright, otherwise I would send orders back to have them shot. They assured me that everything they said was true. I called McCoy and told him

that he had free sailing and to get going--with this, the 1st platoon started down the hill. In a minute I was upon Lt. McDonald's body-- I stopped long enough to see that he had been hit at least four or five times if not more. I felt certain he died right after giving Pvt. Cain orders to get back to us. The German soldiers that came into Lt. McCoy were telling the truth. There was a little firing going on as we advanced deeper into Saarbrucken, but very little. At about 3:30 or 3:45 I put in a call on our field telephone which we had taken in with the 1st platoon for my Executive Office, Lt. Dan Brant, who was left back at the C.P. Instead of getting Lt. Brant, I got the Executive Officer of the 1st Battalion and the first words he said to me were, "Southard, have you heard the news?" I said, "No what news." He replied, "We have just gotten orders to move into Saarbrucken." I said, "Just where in the hell do you think I am. I'm in Saarbrucken now, and I'm calling Lt. Brant for him to get permission for us to cross the Saar River." I got Brant on the phone but I was refused permission to cross the river. Lt. Brant came into Saarbrucken about 5:30 p.m. saying he had been granted a 3 day pass to Paris provided I'd ok it also. I gave him the ok under one condition and that was that he bring me back a bottle of Paris perfume in order that I might send it to a girl in Texas whom I later married. We turned over about 37 German prisoners to Brant and he started back with them. This ended "G" Company's combat role in World War II. The officers and enlisted men of "G" Company in which I had the pleasure to command were the greatest.

After Saarbrucken "G" Company moved from village to village towards the historic Rhine River. We crossed the Rhine on our way to Wiesbaden for the purpose of bringing back law and order to a wonderful city. We arrived in Wiesbaden late in the afternoon; posted sentries around the quarters we moved into, with instructions that a curfew was in effect from 7:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m. By the noise that went on all night long one would have thought it was New Year's Eve in Times Square. At 5:30 a.m. I heard a shot ring out. A "G" Company sentry had shot a German civilian when he failed to stop after being ordered to do so. I had to write an explanation to Division Headquarters about this incident. At 9:00 a.m. Col. McAleer, Col. Barton and Company Commanders met with representatives of our military government who were administering the City. We were told about the curfew in effect, but asked to give the civilians an hour leeway. Col. McAleer replied to this by saying, "Our men have just finished 3 months of front line combat and that when an order is given that order will be carried out; the streets will be cleared at 7:00 p.m." "G" Company was assigned a third of the City and a number of outlying villages to administer. Company Commanders were instructed to have all men on the streets at 7:00 p.m. and to start shooting, but not to shoot so that anyone might be injured. When 7:00 p.m. arrived the streets were filled with civilians; we started shooting and the streets were clear in less than 5 minutes. Strangers stayed overnight with strangers that night. At 6:30 p.m. the following afternoon, one could not even find a stray dog moving around.

From Wiesbaden "G" Company was moved into Offenback, a major leather goods center near Frankfurt, and we were there when the war ended in Europe. In the later part of May we walked north to a small village named Niederselter. We had only been in Niederselter 2 days when I received my first complaint. The Burgermeister came to me with the complaint of having trouble housing the women that had followed "G" Company into town. I asked him how many he had taken care of and he said 26 so far. The mess sergeant and I checked the chow line to see who was going back for seconds because we both knew the food wasn't that good.

About this time, someone in the Allied Command came up with the bright idea to sell War Bonds to all the soldiers in Europe. June 1 and July 1, 1945 were the 2 days set for this big event to take place. The old saying made its rounds "We fight the damn war; now they want us to pay for it." I appointed Lt. Vanderwerff as War Bond Officer to sell bonds on payday June 1, 1945. On June 2nd at about 3:00 p.m. I received a call from a certain Major in 2nd Battalion Headquarters as to what was wrong with "G" Company in buying War Bonds. (Let me add that this Major and I did not see eye to eye and all of my men knew it.) I told him of having appointed a War Bond Officer and asked what he was complaining about. He told me that one man out of the 225 men (a number of wounded had returned to the Company) now in "G" Company bought one \$18.75 War Bond, and that "G" Company was the lowest in the entire division to buy bonds. I asked him what my quota was over the 2 months. He said \$10 per man, which is \$2,250.00. I told him I'd have a different figure for him that night.

Word went out that every man was to stand Retreat at 5:30 p.m. except cooks on duty. After Retreat was held I had the men gather around me for a request I wanted to ask of them. I recalled the reasons why the Major and I couldn't see eye to eye and then the gist of my request is as follows: "G" Company has always been and is now a lead company and I want to keep this position. I want us to be in front. It has been said by others that we are the worst disciplined company in the entire regiment. I don't believe it and it's not good, but if that's our reputation, we are leading in that respect too. Before I took over command and when the 275th was committed to combat you were one of the first rifle companies to face the enemy face to face in hard combat, you were a leader there. After I took over command and when the 2nd Battalion had to carry out a raid February 6th on Grosbliedenstroff who was the company chosen--it was "G" Company, and that's when we took over the leadership of the 2nd Battalion. Although Grosbliederstroff was the 2nd Battalion objective, what company was picked to take it. It was "G" Company and we did it alone. We moved into German territory the day before the attack--we were certainly the leaders when the push began on February 17th. A few days after this we moved out at night to protect the flank of the 1st Battalion before they had that awful fight on top of the hill overlooking Saarbrucken. Our other rifle companies were behind--we were the leaders in the 2 Battalion. When it came time to move into Saarbrucken which company was picked--it was "G" Company again and we led the entire division into Saarbrucken, and because of all this

and as a personnel favor for me, I wish you all, if possible, would buy a War Bond. In a minute you will be dismissed to go to chow. As soon as supper is over we will start selling War Bonds. At 7:00 p.m. we stop selling bonds, count our money and a report will be given to each platoon as to what we've done. By the way, we are leading in one other subject which I failed to mention a moment ago. Day before yesterday, Capt. Kurt Lekisch, our medical officer, informed me that "G" Company is leading the regiment in the venereal disease rate. Let's keep our position in buying War Bonds. You are dismissed for supper."

At 7:30 p.m. on June 2nd, after counting the money in hand collected for the War Bond, I put in a call to the Major. When he was put on the line I said, "Major I have a new number for you to write down for "G" Company in buying War Bonds. The new number is \$3,964.00." The Major came back with, "For God's sake Southard, you didn't force them to do that--did you." I said, "No, I merely asked them to do me a small favor." That ended our conversation.

My tour of duty with "G" Company, 275th Regiment, 70th Infantry Division, ended on June 14, 1945. I was on my way to pick-up 150 bottles of champagne for a company party that night when I broke the socket of my pelvic bone in a jeep accident. They say it was some party.

The last statement I want to make on what I've written is addressed solely to the men of "G" Company, the dead, the wounded, and the living. I never gave an order, I never failed to give an order, and I never failed to question an order unless I thought it was for

the benefit of the men under my command. I am certain at times that I used bad judgement, made mistakes with certain individuals and for this I want to apologize.

This Ends My Story.

Yours,

Lawrence G. Southard

P.S. There are so many more true tales that could be told concerning individuals and events, but I think I've written enough and I want to thank all for going along with me through this.

L.G.S.