

2 June 1945

Wurzburg, Germany

"-----In my last "installment" I ended the letter by saying that the Germans negated our hopes of spending Christmas at the Chateau A Faulx. For some days we had heard rumbling in the distance -- as of artillery and bombardment. And the night sky was often lit with continuous flashes in the East. Meantime, the rumors were spreading, and the German radio talked of a big German offensive. The American Army, as you know, clamped a blackout down on most news, but even 48 hr. old tactical situation maps in the Stars and Stripes told us that the Jerries weren't too far off. All roads leading to Namur were "road-blocked" and patrolled. Tanks were stationed at Main routes into the city; and whenever we went into town on business, frightened Belgians looked regretfully at our truck, which they imagined was retreating. Sometimes even we wondered why we were staying at the castle. Finally, 3 days before Christmas we moved out and "withdrew" to Namur. while still loading trucks at the chateau, a British armored column stopped and asked what in hell we were still doing there.

I was in Namur one night and late the next afternoon I took off for Charleville. That night was one of the coldest nights I've ever experienced And I was riding in the back of a 2½ ton vehicle. The driving all the way was without lights, for the Germans were only 4 or 5 kilometers the other side of the river. Stopped at an installation about 3AM of the 24th, to catch a few hours sleep and a little grub. More than once that night I awakened to find my feet numb from cold. Honestly, Peg, I don't know how those unsung infantrymen were ever able to fight and live and sleep in that cold. But they did -- and outfought the Germans at the same time.

Early in the afternoon of the 24th I got to Charleville, and the installation was set up. That night, and for several more nights in the week following, the Germans sent over bed-check Charlie to raise a little hell around town. The siege of Bastogne was in full force at the time, and the important railway link from France thru Belgium to this front lay thru Charleville, where the railroad crossed the swollen Meuse River. So that was Charlie's role -- getting the bridge. He didn't succeed, and one night around New Years an ack-ack outfit up the valley put an end to his meanderings.

For several days during the week Christmas- New Years, the sky was blackened by flights of C-47's carrying supplies to be parachuted to Bastogne. It was an impressive sight -- planes as far as you could see.

At the time, we were messing with the MP's and soon became accustomed, on arriving for chow, to seeing 4 or 5 German parachutists, some dressed in American uniform, who had been captured in or around town. Everyone was on his toes, and steel helmets, gas masks and guns were the order of the day. I even took my carbine to church on several occasions.

After the "bulge" started to collapse, things settled down to routine -- eating, sleeping, and doing our job. And that's the way it went till mid-March, when we once more went back to Faulx.

It was good to get back to a place you knew and liked: but the vacation lasted only two weeks (by which time we were eager to get



buzzing again). This time it was to Buderich, across the Rhine from Wesel -- and it was our first taste of Germany. A good look at Aachen convinced us there wouldn't be much to see in German cities. And there hasn't been. They're all the same -- piles of rubble that have been pushed aside to clear the roads. That's all. Buderich was a mess -- in a different sense, however. Here most of the houses were standing, but every thing in them had been dumped out into the streets. Everywhere were smashed furniture, old geds, wrecks of motorcycles and bicycles, linens and clothes and bedspreads and pictures trampled into the mud. And not a civilian anywhere, for this was a restricted zone. You can't picture the desolation, Peg. And the dead cows and horses raised a high stench that nauseated one. Wild pigs roamed through town, and we were half afraid to move from roads or pathways, for fear of mines. The first railway bridge wacross the Rhine was then in building by Army Engineers, perhaps you've seen a picture of it in the papers. It was finished in 2 hrs less than 10 days -- a remarkable achievement/

Next I went south, thru Neuss, and Cologne to Bonn. Cologne was the worst shambles I've seen so far. The devastation and wreckage is beyond imagination. It has to be seen. How any living survived the scourge is beyond comprehension. Thank God that such a thing did not happen to an American city.

I stayed in Bonn some 12 hours. Then I was off to Kassel. The road scenes were the same -- van loads of German PW's going to the rear, and Allied men & materiel moving up. Kassel and the work there, were unspectacular. The best memory we have of it now is the 12 hours we spent in a truck getting there. When the work in Kassel was finished, I came down here to Wurzburg. And here we sit. It's undoubtedly the easiest deal we've had since we hit the ETO, but it's beginning to pall. We want to get moving again; and the unknown factor is that we don't yet know what the Army has in store for us.