

Reflections of a "Dogface"

Section 1, Pages 1 - 30

In this reminiscence, John Lee Meyer, Jr. of the First Infantry Division, 18th Regiment, F Company recalls his military service during World War II. Meyer helped construct the courtroom for the Nuremberg Trials in Germany.

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Date: 2001

Callnumber: Miscellaneous Collection, John L. Meyer

KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 444606

Item Identifier: 444606

www.kansasmemory.org/item/444606



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Reflections of a "Dogface"



by John L. Meyer

*First Infantry Division
18th Regiment
F Company*

Reflections of a "Dogface"

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INFANTRY AT MIDNIGHT...

They came in many figures

Black and the moon edged light,

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.

And the night.



October, 1944

By L. T. Samuel Wray

by John L. Meyer

First Infantry Division
18th Regiment
F Company

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INFANTRY AT MIDNIGHT...

They come: bent clumsy figures

Black against the battle's dim edged light,

Heedless that their weary hands

Hold anger that shall split the night.

Their shapeless shadows move

Across the earth where hell was hurled,

Unknowing and uncaring

That their tired feet shall shake the world

Relief of the Battalion . . October, 1944

By LT. Samuel Wray

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

I traveled to the Induction Center at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, and was inducted. After graduation from Phillipsburg High School in 1942, I spent the summer on the farm. I traveled by bus to Berkeley, California in September to enroll in a design drawing class offered by the University of California. While there, I lived with my Aunt Lois and Uncle Emmett Meyer in Berkeley. I was assigned to a signal detachment in the Command and General Staff school at Ft. I completed the drawing course in six weeks and went to work in the engineering section of Richmond Shipyard No. 1 in Richmond, California. They were building LSTs (Landing Ship-Tanks) at the time and would launch one about every seven days. They hired me knowing that I would be eligible for the draft on January 12, 1943. As it turned out I got to work for eleven weeks.

Draft

Most notable telegrams that I handled included sending one to a family to I registered for the draft at the local Berkeley Draft Board on January 12th, my eighteenth birthday. I received my draft notice on February 25, 1943. By letter, dated February 25, 1943, the Local Board No. 1, Phillips County, Kansas was notified that I had been approved for transfer to their board for induction.

Induction

About every six months the Command and General Staff School completed and a class of Senior Officers. Their final assignment before graduation On March 12, 1943, I received orders to report to the Local Board No. 1 at 5:15 AM Mountain WarTime on March 22, 1943. Later that time changed to 4:00 AM in order to catch an eastbound bus leaving at 5:00 AM.

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

I traveled to the Induction Center at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, and was inducted into the United States Army on March 23, 1943.

I was accepted and sent by train to Fort Collins.

Basic Training I attended Colorado State College for six months and

I was placed in "limited service" because of being near-sighted. I was assigned

to a signal detachment in the Command and General Staff school at Ft.

Leavenworth. A small group of inductees, including me, were given six weeks of

basic training. I was then assigned to the telegraph office in the school. It was

pretty good duty. We worked a normal day shift and had a Class "A" pass to

travel anywhere within fifty miles when not on duty. That permitted us to go to

Kansas City. Our group from Colorado State was sent to join the 97th Infantry

Division at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri. There we received very good physical

The most notable telegrams that I handled included sending one to a family to

notify them that their son had been hanged as punishment for rape, and another

was to telephone a proposal of marriage to a WAC Officer. She seemed happy

about it so I expect her answer was "yes". We moved by train to Camp Roberts at

San Luis Obispo, California, for amphibious training. After our arrival there the

About every six months the Command and General Staff School completed and

graduated a class of Senior Officers. Their final assignment before graduation

was a 72-hour war games training exercise. Another fellow and I were assigned

to telephone switchboard operation with regular female civilian operators. That

was an interesting experience. Six weeks after our arrival at Camp

Roberts a number of us were selected to go in Europe as infantry replacements.

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

Engineering Training

During the summer, I applied for admission into the Army Specialized Training Program in Basic Engineering. I was accepted and sent by train to Fort Collins, Colorado. There I attended Colorado State College for six months and completed 28 2/3 hours of credit in basic engineering.

Advanced Infantry Training

Early in 1944, the military powers in the United States determined that more ground troops were needed. On March 10, 1944, I along with another 140,000 soldiers, was transferred from the Army Specialized Training Program into an infantry unit. Our group from Colorado State was sent to join the 97th Infantry Division at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri. There we received very good physical conditioning and infantry training in the Ozark Mountains. During that period of time we spent two weeks on flood detail on the Mississippi River.

Near the end of July, the entire division was moved by train to Camp Roberts at San Luis Obispo, California, for amphibious training. After our arrival there the Army determined that any soldier who had not had a ten-day furlough within the last year would be required to take one. I traveled by train to Kansas and back for my ten days. As it turned out I never did receive any amphibious training. I wasn't too anxious to experience riding in an army duck in the Pacific Ocean under the control of an army truck driver. Six weeks after our arrival at Camp Roberts a number of us were selected to go to Europe as infantry replacements.

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

At this time I was removed from limited service. We traveled by troop train for five days and nights from San Luis Obispo to Ft. Meade, Maryland. I was there for about three weeks and during that time I was allowed to have a weekend pass and visited Washington D.C. even thousand troops in relative comfort. I was assigned to a third class stateroom with five other soldiers. There were three- The next destination was Camp Miles Standish in Massachusetts. We arrived there in the afternoon and that night got hit by a fairly powerful hurricane. One of my buddies and I had gone to a movie. We came out into a terrible rain and windstorm. We had over a mile to walk so we were thoroughly drenched. The next day we were amazed at the amount of wind damage. We spent the next few days cutting wood and clearing the barracks area. Several of us had the opportunity to visit Boston on a one-night pass. The next move was to the Boston Harbor for embarkation. other hard and we wondered if perhaps they were left over from World War I. At one point we stopped along the way and the My train travels during the last seven or eight weeks before I went overseas, took me through twenty-seven states, and several of them more than once.

Europe Bound Warminster Barracks on September 30th and stayed there for Our troopship, the USS Mariposa, sailed out of Boston, Massachusetts on September 22, 1944, bound for an undisclosed destination in Europe. The ship, an 18,000-ton converted Matson Line steam ship, traveled fast enough that we were not required to go by convoy. I learned later that we would sail easterly to complete rainbows. They were arched normally on top, but were completed

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

near the Azores Islands and then northerly to Great Britain to land at Liverpool, England on September 29, 1944.

The ship carried approximately seven thousand troops in relative comfort. I was assigned to a third class stateroom with five other soldiers. There were three-tiered bunks on either side and we had a bathroom with stool and lavatory. There was a bathtub nearby if you cared for cold saltwater. I tried it only one time.

After we disembarked in Liverpool we were loaded onto a passenger train and were transported south and east to an Army Camp, Warminster Barracks at Warminster, England. On our trip we were provided coffee and donuts by the Red Cross. The donuts were rather hard and we wondered if perhaps they were left over from World War I. At one point we stopped along the way and the brakeman proceeded to tell us about the "bloody Irish". The English were very unhappy that Ireland remained a neutral country all through the war.

We arrived at Warminster Barracks on September 30th and stayed there for seventeen days. We didn't have much to do while there, but did daily exercises and went on hikes most days. The weather was bad most of the time because of almost continuous rain. One thing that was very unusual occurred there in the small valley where we were located. Several times while we were hiking we saw complete rainbows. They were arced normally on top, but were completed

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

across the bottom in a straight horizontal line. There was no pot of gold visible at either end.

We were housed in regular GI tents with metal cots. The grass floors were frequently flooded with a couple inches of water. I can remember lying there and using my entrenching shovel to chop night crawlers in two for entertainment. Another time I was field stripping my rifle for something to do. The firing pin spring flew out and across the tent. I was lucky and did eventually find it in the grass.

During this period of time the St. Louis Browns were playing the St. Louis Cardinals in the World Series. It was being broadcast on a speaker outside the mess tent, but the starting time was 10:00 P.M. and it was usually raining. I do not know who won the series.

On October 17th we went by train to South Hampton, England and loaded onto a ship called the Empire's Cutlass. We sailed a short distance to the Isle of Wight and waited for the weather to calm in the English Channel. I had one friend who was bothered by seasickness. He took Dramamine as a preventive measure and it worked very well. Three days later we crossed the channel at night and didn't know it until morning.

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

Early on the morning of October 20th we prepared to land at Omaha Beach, one of the D-Day, June 6th, landing sites. We had to take our duffel bags and other equipment over the side on cargo nets and climb down into small landing craft for transport to the beach. As one soldier was going down, the sling on his rifle came undone and his weapon dropped into the water between the ship and the landing craft. There was still a lot of evidence of the D-Day barricades, sunken vessels in the water and smashed pillboxes on the bluff. We traveled by truck to a tent camp at the small French village of Carentan. Along the way we had our first view of the many hedgerows that define the fields in Normandy. The hedgerows caused a lot of problems at the time the beachhead was being expanded a few months earlier.

After three days at this location we were loaded onto trucks for transport to the train station in LeMans. We had so many soldiers and so much equipment that several of us hung our packs on the outside of the truck bed. That was a big mistake because the road was narrow and we sideswiped another truck going in the opposite direction. I lost the entrenching tool off of my pack and that was of real concern since I was going to be in a combat area in the near future.

At LeMans we were loaded into the famous 40 & 8 railway freight cars. The numbers indicate a capacity for 40 homo sapiens or 8 horses. We had 30 or more soldiers per car, but with equipment there was not enough room for everyone to sit down. That meant a few of us would be standing all the time.

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

The train traveled slowly and stopped frequently so we had ample time to get off and stretch. Some of the soldiers would wander off to bargain for French bread and wine. The bread was delicious and the wine was generally apple cider. At one small town sixteen men were absent when the train pulled out. Fortunately for them, they were able to walk to the next town and caught up with the train. I was not one of those soldiers.

It was here that I saw my first American casualty, a sergeant whose body was It took five days to get to the outskirts of Paris on October 29th. We passed through and went easterly to a point close to Germany and then traveled northerly through Verdun, France, around Luxembourg, and into Belgium. Part of the time we were within artillery range of the German Army so I was credited with two days of combat time in France. We reached our destination, Verviers, Belgium on November 1st. While we were there I had my first view of a German buzz bomb. We were lined up outside to have lunch and one went over us flying very low, clearly visible, and moving along with a pop-pop-pop sound. Fortunately, it continued on for some distance before it came down. While in Verviers I was able to replace my entrenching shovel that I lost in France.

The Company had suffered some ninety casualties, both injured and killed. They were badly in need of replacements and the others who arrived at the same time.

Hungen Forest consisted mostly of large pine trees. It would be beautiful in peacetime, but it was deadly under artillery fire. The shells would hit the trees

German Buzz Bomb

Sketch by John L. Meyer

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

Hurtgen Forest I would explode in all directions. We had to cover our foxholes. We left Belgium on November 5th and traveled into Hurtgen Forest in Germany to the 92nd Battalion, 482nd Replacement Company. Eight days later on November 13th I joined the First Infantry Division at Zweifalle, Germany. We were in Hurtgen Forest south of Aachen and would be for sometime. very intense artillery fire. We moved out at night on a road through the Forest and as we were moving It was here that I saw my first American casualty, a sergeant whose body was lying under a tree. It would be taken care of eventually by the Graves and Registration Division. and did not explode.

I was assigned to F Company, 2nd Battalion of the 18th Regiment. When I arrived there the Company Commander told us that the Division had been in combat for two years and ten months and expected it would continue until the war came to an end. The First Sergeant advised "don't shoot yourself, you can be court-martialed for it". ng we moved back into the forest at Wenau and dug in for a few days.

The Division was in reserve after taking heavy casualties in the battle for Aachen. The Company had suffered some ninety casualties, both injured and killed. They were badly in need of replacements like me and the others who arrived at the same time.

Hurtgen Forest consisted mostly of very large pine trees. It would be beautiful in peacetime, but it was deadly under artillery fire. The shells would hit the trees

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

and the shrapnel would explode in all directions. We had to cover our foxholes with logs and dirt to have any protection. Like any other forest it was very dark at night.

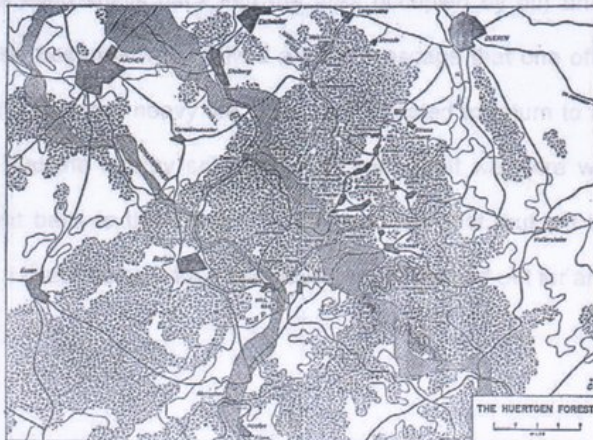
I was assigned to go on patrol through the front line. Shortly after we moved out we encountered a German patrol of four soldiers. A brief firefight occurred.

The Division went back into action on November 19th under very intense artillery fire. We moved out at night on a road through the Forest and as we were moving through a roadway cut, an artillery shell came in low overhead and ploughed into the back slope. It showered me and others with mud - pretty scary -, but fortunately, it was a dud and did not explode.

It is hard to imagine and describe how much noise an incoming shell makes. Later that night we joined another unit in some earthen bunkers near Schevenhutte.

At some point, approximately 1½ miles into German territory, we were halted.

The next morning we moved back into the forest at Wenau and dug in for a few days.



Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

My first real baptism of fire occurred on Thanksgiving Day, November 24th. After a typical breakfast of cold C-rations (Meat and potato hash) my squad of seven men was assigned to go on patrol through the front line. Shortly after we moved out we encountered a German patrol of four soldiers. A brief firefight occurred and the Germans were killed. As we moved on through the forest we came to a small stream. It was perhaps eight or ten feet wide and filled with a couple of feet of swiftly moving water. I tried to jump across and didn't make it all the way. After I got soaked, I decided to leave my wet, heavy wool overcoat, my gas mask and my pack. I was still carrying a rifle, ammunition belt with ten clips (six rounds each), two bandoleers with ten clips each, and two high explosive, fragmentation grenades. Attached to the belt there was a bayonet, canteen with cup, first aid pouch, and entrenching tool. Finally, I was better prepared for combat.

At some point, approximately 1½ miles into German territory, we were halted under cover in a row of trees near a small village. We were watching a large mortar team firing shells back into the area occupied by our unit. They were lucky that day because we received a radio message that one of our battalions on the flank was under heavy fire. We were directed to return to our position. I am certain that the enemy soldiers never knew that we were watching them. When we got back to the stream, I recovered my coat, but left the rest of my equipment. I used the coat for a few days until we moved out for another attack.

the stream was. Consequently, we did not sleep much or get very much rest.

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

Circumstances were such that we didn't have our next meal until the following evening. At that time I received a turkey drumstick and a slice of white bread. It was probably my all time best Thanksgiving dinner even though it was a day late.

Hunger was not a problem. I could eat when food, C-rations, were available, but The next day, November 26th, we were still in a holding position. I decided that I should clean and oil my rifle. I proceeded to do so and the thong broke, leaving a wire brush stuck in the barrel. I was advised that our machine gun crew might have a cleaning rod. They were set up nearby, next to a road. They loaned me their rod so I was able to free the brush. While I was with them a jeep, occupied by two Negro soldiers came along and headed into enemy territory. We tried to flag them down, but they went on. A few minutes later we heard shots fired and they came back so fast the jeep sounded like a P-47.

Several times we were assigned to outpost duty at night in front of the machine guns to give them some protection and warning against enemy patrols. It was so quiet in the forest during the nighttime that any sounds were pretty spooky. We certainly tried to be quiet in order not to reveal our position.

Immediately ran into heavy mortar fire. One of the shells exploded right behind It was customary during combat operations to share a foxhole with another soldier. We were required to have one man awake and alert at all times, either day or night. We changed shifts every hour and tried to get some sleep during the alternate hour. Consequently, we did not sleep much or get very much rest.

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

The adrenaline caused by excitement and fear can keep you going for quite a while.

Hunger was not a problem. I could eat when food, C-rations, were available, but did not have much of an appetite.

We brought the injured one back into the ditch and laid him in the bottom, hoping to get help for him.

At that time there were three kinds of canned C-rations. One was meat and beans, another was beef and vegetable stew, and third was meat and potato hash. The beans were good, but generated too much gas, the stew gave me heart burn and the hash was sort of generic (tasteless). There was a second can with each meal that contained three very hard biscuits, hard candy, 4-pack of cigarettes (usually Chelsys) and a packet of instant Nescafe or lemonade.

All through the night we were subjected to mortar fire periodically.

The weather at this time of year was rain most of the time, some snow and rather cold temperatures. On the morning of November 27th, the Division was ordered to move on through the forest toward the Rhine River. Our immediate objective was to take a town named Langerwehe. We moved out about mid-morning and immediately ran into heavy mortar fire. One of the shells exploded right behind me, knocked me down and blew a fragment through my left shoulder. My buddy behind me stuck his finger in the hole in my clothes and reported that I wasn't bleeding. There were some other casualties, but most of us kept moving. Soon after that we reached a large man-made ditch (probably constructed for

away. Since we would wait until dark to move on, we started digging foxholes, a

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

drainage) and we were pinned down for the rest of the day by small arms fire and mortars. my right hand had become badly swollen. Several days earlier I had worn blisters in the palm from digging and it became infected. We were crowded. Our first and second scouts had climbed out of the ditch and were both shot. The first scout was killed and the second was injured. We brought the injured one back into the ditch and laid him in the bottom, hoping to get help for him. Later that day, I was covering one end of the ditch and came under rifle fire. I was lying in about three inches of snow and water, trying to hug the ground and hide behind a small tree. One bullet notched the tree just above my head and another went over me and hit the wounded man right behind me and killed him. We recognized the sound and ducked down in our hole. The grenade. We remained pinned down there all day and stayed in the same position through the night. All through the night we were subjected to mortar fire periodically. The shells would start at one end of the ditch and cover the full length of it. Fortunately for us most of the rounds were falling short on the bank above us. Early in the morning before daylight, I got a cramp in my leg and rolled out from the bank in time to catch a very small mortar fragment in my left thigh. It didn't hurt, but I was beginning to have a dull ache in my injured shoulder. Later we moved into a store building and remained there for the rest of the night. One After daylight we discovered that the Germans had withdrawn from the position in front of us. We traveled several miles and reached the edge of Hurtgen Forest by mid-afternoon and we could see Langerwehe, our objective, a couple of miles away. Since we would wait until dark to move on, we started digging foxholes, a

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

normal practice whenever we stopped. The digging proved to be difficult for me because my right hand had become badly swollen. Several days earlier I had worn blisters in the palm from digging and it became infected. We were crowded together at the edge of the forest and two other guys were digging quite close. It was convenient when digging to lay our equipment on one side of the hole and pile dirt on the other side. When the pile got high enough we would reverse the procedure. One of the soldiers next to us moved a hand grenade and the pin fell out so the handle flew off. That meant it would explode in about three seconds. He grabbed it and threw it, however, it hit a tree and came back by the hole. He jumped out of his hole, got behind the pile of dirt and his buddy jumped into their hole. We recognized the sound and ducked down in our hole. The grenade exploded and no one was hurt. I am glad that didn't happen during training at Ft. Leonard Wood. 24 hours. All I wanted to do was sleep so hated to be awakened that often.

Just before dark we moved out of the forest and headed for Langerwehe under cover of artillery fire. As we entered the town we had to wade through water about two feet deep. The Germans had blasted a dam to flood the town. We walked in cold water between burning buildings on either side of the street. Later we moved into a store building and remained there for the rest of the night. One loud noise during the night was caused by some cows running down the street.

I discovered that night that I could not hold my rifle very well because of the infected hand. Early the next morning, I located our company medic and he

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

suggested I needed to go to the rear medical station for a better examination. Because of the flooding I had to walk a couple miles through an area covered by snipers, so I had to take my rifle with me.

Note: I would learn, about three months later when I returned to my unit, One of the that on the morning I left, my squad of six remaining soldiers went pretty careful out on patrol and were either captured or killed. As far as I know they were never heard from again.

At this point I was able to hitch a ride to the rear medics. I was examined there and sent to the 97th Evacuation Hospital at Aachen, Germany. They transferred me to the 77th Evacuation Hospital in Verviers, Belgium. Years later I would find out that this hospital unit came from the University of Kansas Medical Center. At this hospital they cleaned my shoulder up and started giving me penicillin shots every hour for 24 hours. All I wanted to do was sleep so hated to be awakened that often.

From there I was shipped by train to the 48th General Hospital in Paris, France. I would remain there for three days. My first couple of hours were spent in a shower trying to get clean. The nurse laughed at me because I was so dirty. Next I spent a lot of time soaking my infected hand in hot water. Eventually, they lanced it and got it started on the road to recovery.

On December 2nd I was moved to the 166th General Hospital at LeMans, France. There I had surgery on my shoulder and got it patched up. I was very happy to

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

be in a warm tent with a warm bed and getting some hot meals again. I must have looked pretty sad because one of the nurses befriended me and taught me how to play double solitaire. It was really painful until the medic lanced them for me and then I felt a lot better.

One of the technicians working in the hospital said he had to work hard and pretty carefully or they would threaten to send him to an infantry unit. 22nd General

Hospital. I was allowed to recuperate from my surgery for a couple weeks. I left

The "Battle of the Bulge" started on December 16th and, for that reason, I believe most of the patients in the 166th General Hospital were evacuated to England.

On Christmas Eve, December 24th, we were loaded onto a passenger train and moved to the port city of Cherbourg, France. It was a very cold and uncomfortable ride. During the night we were loaded on to a small British hospital ship. It was a converted mail packet that had always operated in the English Channel. I was one reinforcement unit to the next and into the 1st Division.

Following my short stay in combat, I was soon moving from one hospital to the

Sometime during the night we crossed the channel to South Hampton. We were awakened early in the morning with a jolt when we ran into another larger hospital ship. Heavy fog was the main reason for the crash. The damage to our ship was a large dent near the bow, some lights were torn down, and the bottoms were knocked out of all the lifeboats on the port side. The fog was so heavy that we were unable to dock until December 26th. Had we been able to land we would have had a turkey dinner for Christmas. As it was we had limey stew with white bread and it was delicious.

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

Shenandoah. I hadn't even known that they were going to do it. Maybe they

I had to contact an English medic on the ship on Christmas day. I had developed three boils on my left wrist. It was really painful until the medic lanced them for me and then I felt a lot better. on February 9th and went to Barton Stacy Camp at Andover, England. From there a group of us, including another First Division

We moved by train on December 26th to Kington, England to the 122nd General Hospital. I was allowed to recuperate from my surgery for a couple weeks. I left the hospital on January 12, 1945, my 20th birthday, and was transported by train back to Warminster Barracks, Warminster, England. The camp was now the 827th Convalescent Center. Physical therapy consisted of calisthenics, hiking, and lots of volleyball. We played in former tank barracks. er fellow from the First Division and I became friends so we stayed together on the return trip. After we

After I left England the first time I did not receive any mail for a long time because I kept moving from one reinforcement unit to the next and into the 1st Division. Following my short stay in combat, I was soon moving from one hospital to the next and it took four months for my mail to catch up to me. * is a different infantry division. Several of us had traveled together from Boston to England, but were

I did write to my parents as soon as I was in the hospital to let them know that I was alive and only slightly injured. Then while I was in England I received several letters from my mother from Shenandoah, Iowa. I thought they must be visiting my grandparents who lived in Pacific Junction, Iowa. However, I found out later that they had left the farm near Phillipsburg, Kansas and moved to

was assigned to the 11th Reinforcement Depot as a supply sergeant. He said

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

Shenandoah. I hadn't even known that they were going to do it. Maybe they were trying to tell me something by not telling me anything.

I left the convalescent center on February 9th and went to Barton Stacy Camp at Andover, England. From there a group of us, including another First Division soldier, were sent to the 10th Reinforcement Depot at Birmingham, England. We were issued new clothes and some equipment in preparation for going back to our units. We did have one night to wander around the city.

Our next stop would be back in Verviers, Belgium at the 3rd Reinforcement

After a few days we were transported to South Hampton where we were loaded onto a Victory ship to cross the channel again. The other fellow from the First Division and I became friends so we stayed together on the return trip. After we stowed our duffel bags in our assigned space we went back up on the main deck. He suggested that we watch the other soldiers coming on board. I turned around just in time to see a good friend that I had trained with in the 97th Infantry Division at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri. He, too, was returning back to a different infantry division. Several of us had traveled together from Boston to England, but were assigned as replacements to a number of different units.

After we crossed the channel we landed at LeHarve, France and went to the 15th Reinforcement Depot. Next we went to the 11th Reinforcement Depot at Givet, France. It was here that we ran into another friend from Ft. Leonard Wood. He was assigned to the 11th Reinforcement Depot as a supply sergeant. He said

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

that if I would help him issue equipment to our group he would give me a new rifle that had the cosmolene cleaned out of it. I readily agreed to that.

along the Rhine River, through the city of Bonn, to the site of the Remagen

That night he took me and our other friend out on the town to visit a couple cabarets for some food and drink. We didn't have passes, but figured if we got caught, the worst they could do would be to ship us out sooner. We heard the Beer Barrel polka played in each place we visited.

Our next stop would be back in Verviers, Belgium at the 3rd Reinforcement Depot. We saw quite a few buzz bombs going overhead during the few days that we were there. One afternoon we were asked to fall out for a weapons inspection. There were about a dozen in our group and most of us had M-1 rifles. One man for some reason had a 45-caliber pistol. We were lined up in two rows and on a command to open the chambers for inspection, the pistol fired and put a crease in the steel helmet of the man standing on my right. Boy, was he mad. Since he was returning to combat after being wounded in action, he sure didn't want to be killed accidentally. The pistol should not have been loaded.

I rejoined the company on March 19th in Frohnhardt and was assigned to a squad

When we left Verviers I went back to the 92nd Battalion, 482nd Reinforcement Company in Frechen, Germany, for the second time.

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

Remagen Bridgehead

I left the 482nd Reinforcement Company on March 19th and traveled by truck along the Rhine River, through the city of Bonn, to the site of the Remagen bridge. The bridge had been destroyed by this time, but the army engineers had constructed a pontoon bridge, and we crossed over the Rhine into the Remagen bridgehead. That night I stayed with the F Company kitchen in Eudenbach, Germany, and enjoyed a hot dinner.

When I returned to F Company the next day, I decided to keep my pack this time to carry a mess kit and stationary. At this particular time the Company kitchen was trying to prepare and furnish two hot meals each day when possible. The meals usually had to be served before daylight and after dark for safety reasons.

We had received a few hot meals earlier when all I had to eat out of was a canteen cup. It was hard to decide whether to have hot coffee first or hot food. Then all the food had to be put in the cup at the same time and that wasn't too good.

I rejoined the company on March 19th in Frohnhardt and was assigned to a squad as first scout. It is noted here that scouts are readily expendable. When a unit advances, a first and second scout generally leads it.

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

After the Allied Army had crossed the Rhine River at Remagen and established a bridgehead the fighting was very intense. The Division, and in particular F Company, had again suffered heavy casualties. Normal strength for a platoon would be thirty-nine soldiers, but counting me we had two 7-man squads and a sergeant in my platoon. We were to stay at this location for a day and a half. Then it was necessary to expand the bridgehead, and get more troops and supplies on the east side of the river.



April, 1945 Moving to clear a town. Artillery fire has set a house on fire.

March 22, 1946 Frohnhardt, Germany Remagen bridgehead, 2 days of rest. Shernaman, Heighs, Bellantoni, and Sgt. Danielson (My squad leader)



From "The First!" History Book

Our battalion was assigned to capture the village of Ukerath and hold it until the Third



Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

Armored Division came through. We moved out late in the day and it was dark when we arrived. Each company went in from different directions. F Company entered into the back of a large two-story house with an attached barn. We soon discovered that a large tank was stopped in front of the house. The hatch was open and my platoon sergeant wanted to toss a grenade in, but it did not happen because there was concern that he might miss. We didn't want to reveal our position with so many soldiers in the house. The tank fired an 88 mm shell into the middle of the house. Five of us including one soldier from my squad and three I was assigned to stand guard outside the barn by a large manure pile. It provided good cover, but didn't smell all that great. Before anything happened there, my squad was moved to another location a block or two away. We entered another two-story house from the rear entrance. Once inside we could look out onto a street. At different times we saw German soldiers, civilians, and American soldiers moving on the street. When we checked out the basement we found three soldiers from E Company trying to stay undercover.

Later during the night an enemy tank stopped in front of the house. Several of the occupants unloaded and came toward the house. We all decided to go to the basement and soon we could hear them moving around inside the building. We talked (quietly) and decided that our man with a Thompson submachine gun should be ready at the bottom of the stairs. It wasn't long until the door opened and they started down. The machine gun fired and a body (the tank commander) tumbled down the steps. The other Germans stopped and soon a grenade was

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

thrown down. For a short time it became real quiet and then a second grenade was tossed down. We all had taken cover behind different things and none of us were hurt, but it was pretty noisy. Another fellow and I had been behind a pile of coal.

so frightened when we were trapped in that basement that I do not think a normally healthy person can be killed by fear alone.

It got very quiet again and we didn't know what to do. Eventually we started to go up the stairs, but before we all got out, the tank fired an 88 mm shell into the middle of the house. Five of us including one soldier from my squad and three from E Company were still inside. It wasn't too long until a second round was fired into the middle of the house. We were still OK, but what now? While we were trying to decide what to do, we heard the tank start up. My first thought was "Are they going to come right in after us?" Soon the sound faded slightly and we made a quick exit. When we had entered the building we went through a small coat room, but it had been blown completely away. There was a large hole clear through the middle of the house.

at was not a very comfortable position to be in.

We found the rest of my unit and the first five guys had gotten out OK. One of them came back to get his bazooka from the first floor. He fired one round at the tank and that is why it moved away.

a somewhat fatalistic attitude: If your time is up, you are going to get killed, otherwise you are not. Once we got underway I

We moved to another location in the village and it was almost daylight. Some of our guys went inside another house, but I decided I would take my chances outside. At about 5:00 AM the first elements of the 3rd Armored Division began to

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

come through and we could relax a little bit. They chased a total of ten Mark VI and Tiger Royal tanks out of Ukerath and eventually destroyed several of them.

bell. Fortunately, it was almost spent and didn't hurt anything.

I was so frightened when we were trapped in that basement that I do not think a normally healthy person can be killed by fear alone.

when we hiked ten miles during the night.

We were permitted to rest most of the day, and then moved out to begin a series of long marches to secure the area behind the 3rd Armored Division and to help encircle the heavily industrialized Rhur area east of Cologne. The German Army was fighting for their homeland and as the area was being compressed we did encounter some very heavy resistance.

One moonlight night we were halted in a brushy area along a roadway. There

We cleared out a number of small towns and forest areas. Occasionally we were asked to provide infantrymen to ride on the outside of our battalion tanks to protect them from rocket fire. That was not a very comfortable position to be in.

made the shovel difficult to locate.

Since our company had three rifle platoons we alternated at the lead position. Therefore, in my position as first scout, I was out in front about one third of the time. That situation tends to create a somewhat fatalistic attitude. If your time is up, you are going to get killed, otherwise you are not. Once we got underway I usually took off and challenged the company to keep up. One day we were moving through some woods and I got too far ahead and I was sitting on the ground waiting for the rest of the company to catch up. An artillery shell

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

exploded some distance away and a piece of shrapnel about one-half inch wide and four inches long hit the ground behind me and bounced against my ammo belt. Fortunately, it was almost spent and didn't hurt anything.

Every time we passed the shell, we would add a few more bags of seed around it. Another time it turned out that I was spearheading for the 3rd Armored Division when we hiked ten miles during the night.

hidden a lot of merchandise under the bags. There were several sets of sterling silverware, fine china, large vases. After we left Ukerath on March 25th we occupied the following towns: Rettersen on March 26th, Kuchhausen on March 27th, Friedwald on March 28th, Burbach on March 29th, Rudersdorf on March 30th, and Anzhausen on March 31st.

One moonlight night we were halted in a brushy area along a roadway. There was occasional artillery fire so I was digging a foxhole. One round came in fairly close and I threw my shovel as I ducked into the hole. Then I nearly panicked because I couldn't find it again for a long time. The shadows in the moonlight made the shovel difficult to locate.

There was a dead German soldier lying on the ground in the yard. A soldier in In another of the towns, I think it was Burbach, we went in at night and had trouble with a tank covering the main street with machine gun fire. We were on one side of the street for a while and later crossed to the opposite side. In my haste to get across I lost two cans of C rations out of my jacket pocket. There was no way that I was going to go back and look for them.

Reflections of a "Dogface"

REFLECTIONS OF A DOGFACE

Later that night we moved into a building that was a grain or seed warehouse. A large artillery shell was about half imbedded in the concrete floor in the middle of the building. We were being subjected to heavy rocket fire throughout the night. Every time we passed the shell, we would add a few more bags of seed around it in case it should be detonated by rocket fire. When we moved some of the seed bags we discovered that the Germans had hidden a lot of merchandise under the bags. There were several sets of sterling silverware, fine china, large vases, radios, typewriters, etc. I also found two boxes of new German medals. One was full of iron crosses with ribbons and the other was the German equivalent of our Purple Heart. Even though it was a little risky I did keep one each of the medals and I still have them.

While we were in there the next day, a boxcar beside the building was set on fire by a rocket.

Another incident occurred while we were in one of the afore mentioned towns. There was a dead German soldier lying on the ground in the yard. A soldier in our company by the name of Bellantoni noticed the dead man had a nice ring on his hand. Bellantoni decided he wanted to have it, so he got a pan of water and soap and removed it. If he would have taken a knife and cut off the finger to get the ring we wouldn't have thought much about it.