

Chapter 6: Going Home

I left Le Havre by car, accompanied by my good friend Sambo, and drove to Paris to check in at the Crillon Hotel, as per my instructions. SHAEF, if you remember, had been very nice and courteous to me as well as very thoughtful. When I had rested for two days, an officer of SHAEF and an employee of SHAEF—a Belgian lady whose husband had been killed about three months previous to that in Belgium—told me they would meet me at a small club in Paris, not far from the hotel. I arrived a little early—I got there around six, and I was supposed to meet them at six thirty or quarter to seven. But I had nothing else to do, so I went over and had a couple of snorts, waiting for them.

Standing at the bar pleasantly drinking were two, highly-decorated officers. One was a major and one was a captain. I got to feeling pretty good, and I noticed that they had on their arms insignias for the Eighty-Second Airborne. This division was a crack outfit and a bunch of fine soldiers. They were very proud of the combat record.

I moved over toward them and said, "What is that insignia and have you fellows ever been in combat?", knowing full well that they probably had had their fill of it. The expression of their faces was one of an incredible type which also was mixed with a little flushed anger. That meant to me that they were really going for the bait. I think they were really just about to tell me off. I outranked them a little.

But then, all of a sudden, one of them said, "Well, heavens! It's Col. Hodge. Don't you recognize us?"

I said, "No, I'm sorry I don't. I apologize. I just thought I'd get a rise out of you by my approach, knowing your pride in the Eighty-Second Airborne."

They said, "Don't you remember the town of Artina, in Italy, where you put us on your armored vehicles and into the town we went? We were with the Special Service Forces."

I must say I was completely chagrined to find that I had picked a point to spin my humor on such a nice couple of guys. About that time, the officer from SHAEF came in and said they were going to take me over to the club St. James, which was a Canadian officers club in Paris. The two officers in the Special Services had served with a lot of Canadians.

I said, "I'm sorry, but I have a date with this couple. I just can't make it." Do you think we could get rid of those guys? No, sir they stayed right with us the whole evening, and I'll tell you, we had a pleasant, laughing time.

I was in Paris for about ten days because the weather in February was miserable. Our flight was scheduled to leave from the airport of Le Bourget, which was the alternate airport to Orly in Paris. Obviously, the whole time we were on ready alert

to report to Le Bourget approximately seven or eight hours prior to the departure time, to allow all the necessary checking and administrative work to be done. I was very much concerned about having to bring Sambo with me, but I was determined to do everything possible to take him home with me. I knew that if I had gone through "red tape" for permission, the dog never would have gotten home. I decided to risk circumventing channels, and when I was instructed to go to Le Bourget for loading, I would just take a chance.

I was called about the tenth day in the early morning and was told to report to Le Bourget about eleven o'clock a.m. Other instructions were to report to the Operations Officer handling the dispatch of personnel loading on this particular flight. Sambo and I arrived at the airport at the appointed hour. I thought, "Well, here it goes now. It's now or never with Sambo."

I reported to the Operations Officer, as per orders, and he had his head down and was quite busy. He looked up he said, "Charlie!"

"Sparky Hoffman! I didn't know that you were in Paris."

He said, "Yes. I can't fly anymore, so I'm an operations officer for the Air Force. I was wondering if this was going to be you on this flight."

I said, "It's me!"

He said, "Charlie, we have followed your course all the way from England to Africa, all the way around the entire circle. What can I do for you?"

I said, "Sparky, you asked exactly the right question. You see this animal?"

He said, "Yeah^ what are you going to do with him?"

I said, "I am going to take him home, and I expect you to help me." There was a dead silence.

Col. Hoffman had been in, the New Jersey National Guard Air Force in the early days and was a real understanding type. He said, "I don't see how we can do that. You know your flight is going from Le Bourget to Presswich, Scotland, where it will stay for five or six hours. Then, it will go over to the Azores, where it will have another five or six hour stopover. From there it goes off to Newfoundland, and finally you will end up at Floyd-Bennet Field in metropolitan New York." Sparky also said that getting a dog in and out of England was much more difficult because of quarantine regulations than it was to get this dog on an Air Force airplane.

I looked at Sparky and said, "You asked me what you could do and here it is: get the damn dog on the airplane. You must have some imagination;" we called it "field expediency", figuring out how to do this.

He said, "Look, Charlie, give me the dog now, and you get aboard that airplane when it is called, which will be in about

four or five hours. At that time, don't open your mouth to anybody about your friend. Just get on the airplane, say nothing to the pilots or anybody else, and I'll do the best I can. In the meantime, good luck."

At about five in the afternoon, we loaded on the airplane—an old C-64, which some readers may remember was an enlargement of the DC-3, the work horse of early aviation. It was not a very comfortable airplane and only could fly at ten or twelve thousand feet, which normally would put the plane right in the middle of any rough weather. And February, from Paris to Presswich to the Azores, at that altitude has considerably rough, bumpy weather. The accommodations were not the plush accommodations of the airliners, but had what we called "bucket seats"—the type of accommodations used for paratrooper drops. But, no matter how uncomfortable it looked, it was a real pleasure to sit down on those cold, hard seats, knowing that we were on the verge of going home and that we were alive. I think that anyone would be somewhat reverent in his thoughts about Providence at that point.

I was quite concerned about Sambo, naturally, but I knew that if it was at all possible, Sparky Hoffman would make some arrangement for that dog to meet me somewhere along the line. I just couldn't figure out how or where.

He had cautioned me about the layover in Presswich and not to mention anything about the animal until we were well on our way to the Azores. We were in Presswich for approximately five hours, and I had all I could do not to make some inquiries, but knowing that Sparky would do everything he could, I refrained from opening my mouth on this matter.

The weather was moderately rough practically all the way to the Azores. About halfway there, when we got to a quieter area, through the door leading from the flight deck came the pilot—a major—to check over the lists of passengers and to inquire how everyone was doing. He came up to me and said, "Colonel, are you comfortable?"

I said, "I'm as comfortable as I'm going to be. But I think if I were going home in a coal car, after being over here for so long, I would be comfortable, so I'm happy."

At this point, I still did not dare open my mouth, but the major said to me, "Colonel, come up with me for a moment, will you please."

I went up into the flight deck and right behind the pilot and

co-pilot, wrapped up in a warm army blanket, was my friend Sambo.

He was glad to see me, but I thought he looked at me a little disdainfully since I was riding back in the bucket seat job while he

was riding very comfortably on the flight deck wrapped up

on protective clothing! I stayed and discussed the matter with the crew for a few minutes and then went back to my sett and thought, "Weil, how lucky can we all get? You're going to see your family and you'll have your friend Sambo with you. What next?" It was nice.

The stopover in the Azores was routine, with a four or five hour delay before we took off for Newfoundland,. The rest of the trip was really routine, even though I did have some misgiving about landing in Newfoundland. Not knowing what the quarantine regulations of Canada were, I was under some apprehension. That apprehension was relieved : the pilot, copilot and navigator got off the airplane and took Sambo to the ground, treating him as if he was their own particular charge. We had another layover at Newfoundland for several hours, and then proceeded over to Floyd-Bennet Field in New York. We landed in the evening, on a clear night. The York City blackout regulations were still in effect. Nevertheless, the outline of the city was there and searchlights played all over the sky. It was a magnificent feeling to realize that I was about to see my family and that I was back in my native land.

The routine of landing and entering the country was similar to any peacetime landing, in that I had to go through customs, and my orders had to be checked to make sure I was who I was supposed to be. In my case, I would have to be "debriefed."

There came one scene, however, that was a very unpleasant situation upon my arrival home and it involved a customs agent. I had on my hip a pistol which I described earlier in this book: this pistol had been surrendered to me by Gen. Neuling, the commanding general of all the German forces of Southern France. It was a beautiful weapon, but the customs agent looked at it and said, "That is contraband."

My reply was, "It is not contraband, I have the papers on it, and it is an historical pistol. Your classification of it as contra hand is quite remote."

This agent said, "Nevertheless, I'll have to take the pistol."

My reply was quite emphatic in the negative. The situation was getting very abrasive, but the agent took the pistol, and I think I probably expressed my views of the agent himself, his appearance and his general character in a rather direct way.

With that, the agent came around a little counter and looked at the dog. He said, "I suppose you put a soldier off to take that dog home."

That was enough for me to take some rather precipitate actions, which caused quite a stir. This action caught the attention of the military police, who took the appropriate action. Finally, the acting provost marshal said to me, "You

can't do things like that."

I'm refraining from saying what I did, but it was very effective. The major of the military police, obviously, was a relatively inexperienced officer; one look at him, and I knew he probably never had heard a shot fired in anger.

I finally said to him, "Major, I'm going to tell you just once. Don't interrogate me any more. Take me over to my debriefing area and let me be debriefed. And I want that customs agent to return that pistol to me within an hour, or I assure you there is going to be one hell of a row, and you're going to be in it."

The major then took me over to my quarters where I was to be debriefed, and he acted quite differently. He said, "The customs agent will be here shortly."

I interposed the remark, "He had better have that pistol with him, because if he does not, things are going to start to move right away."

About twenty minutes later, the customs agent walked in with the pistol and handed it to me. He apologized to me and said, "I was wrong, and I'm sorry."

I said, "You were wrong all right, but what you wanted was a beautiful pistol. I wonder how many things you've taken away from soldiers who didn't have the opportunity to resist such as I did."

He said, "I'd like to shake your hand."

I said, "Not me. The only thing I want to see is the back of you going out. That's all." He left.

The unpleasantness of such an incident soon was changed to the happiness which, comes when one regains a wife and family. I am not capable of expressing the deep-felt emotion that came over me when I met my wife Marylou, who was waiting at Floyd-Bennet Field. It was heaven.

I must say, however, that Marylou herself was a little bit astounded that I had gotten Sambo home. Because Marylou's family, with whom she was living with our two children, ran a very orderly and scheduled household, having a stranger of the canine type imposed upon them when they could say very little was a source of some concern not only to Marylou, but to me also. However, my wonderful father-in-law took to the dog just naturally, and he and Sambo became fast friends. I might say, "thank heavens," because if there had been any antagonism of one to the other, I guess Sambo would have been farmed out someplace. But as it was, he stayed during that period of thirty days, ensconced in a household which loved him. The children couldn't get over having the dog, and you would never see one of our children out anyplace where Sambo wasn't lying next to them or sitting there watching them. It was a great feeling.

The thirty days of R and R went by very fast. It gave us

time to be together and to spend a lot of time with my family and with friends who were all around us. I'm sure the entertaining that those friends did for us cost them a great many ration points: steaks, butter . . . it was just heaven! Ration tickets for fuel were ever made available to myself and to my wife, which was appreciated greatly. This, I, believe, was done by the Rationing Board; I don't know, but at any rate, we had sufficient gasoline to cover our requirements during that period of leave.

As the thirty days were passing rapidly, it was quite natural that both Marylou and I were wondering when my orders would come to go back overseas. I had a deep feeling that having gone through so much combat and having been so fortunate as to have been scratched only a few times, it was tempting fate to get beck in that area again. But I could do nothing about it. That was the way it was, I thought. About five days before my thirty days were up, I received a telegram from the War Department, which contained new orders. When I heard that a telegram had arrived, I was quite apprehensive, thinking that it would be to go back to Europe or conceivably to be transferred to the Far East. This telegram turned out to be an order to report to Fort Riley, Kansas, as the Chief of Tactics of the Cavalry School.

The happiness which, permeated not only my immediate family, but my in-laws, was wonderful to behold. I should say at this point, that I had not requested a change of orders of this nature, but that I was terribly grateful that the Army again had seen fit to do what probably was a just thing. The reason I was selected as chief of tactics of the Cavalry School, I was told, was based purely and simply on my record and my extensive experience in combat with the armored cavalry arm.

The new orders were very happily received indeed, and it was decided that I would drive the car to Kansas with as much clothing and equipment as I could get into it. Marylou and the children would come by train after I had been established in quarters. At this time, young Marylou was five years old, and Charlie junior was three years old. It would have been too long a drive in the middle of winter for the family, and we would have arrived without quarters.

About the first of March, I started out alone with my car with Sambo along toward Ft. Riley, Kansas, which is practically the geographic center of the United States. I thought it was a rather severe winter, and I'll never forget that my first stop was in Terre Haute, Indiana. I had reservations at the Terre Haute House in the center of town. It was a very icy, sleety day when I arrived.

Having a car full of clothing and equipment, and a

passenger in the form of Sambo, I pulled up in front of the Terre Haute House, and said to the large, black doorman, "Do you mind if I pull this up a way while I go in to check in?"

He said, "'No, pull it right down there."

I said, "Keep your eye on it, will you, because there is a lot of equipment in the car."

He said, "Yes, Sir, I will."

Thereupon, I went in, registered, made sure that I could house Sambo in the hotel and came out, because everything had been taken care of. At this point, the great big, black doorman came up to me with a smile on his face as wide as a barn and said, "Boss, you asked me to keep my eye on that automobile of yours. Were you kidding? With that animal in there, nobody's coming anywhere close to it!"

The doorman and I became good friends, and I think he had quite a respect for Sambo. But when I walked in to get my key to the hotel, and the room clerk looked down at the dog and said, "My God! I didn't know it was that big."

I said, "He's a quiet little fellow."

He said, "Get him out of here."

I said, "You mean to my room?" He said, "Yes, to your room. Don't worry about it."

So we went to the room. 'We had a pleasant evening and started off early the next morning for Ft. Riley.

My wife and children arrived at Ft. Riley about two weeks after I had arrived, and by that time I had established very pleasant quarters—roomy—and had become oriented to the post. I had been there twice before as a student officer, but not on the staff. Marylou and the children loved it out there, and it was just a fine place for the "regrouping" of our family. All life was on the post—very simple life and a very healthy one—and under the circumstances, it was a magnificent interval.

I think that I added a great deal of realistic training pertinent to the armored cavalry. Furthermore, I changed the teaching staff, with the request and permission of the commanding general, to a staff composed of officers who had had a large amount of combat in the arm, and many, of whom had been wounded or injured. This personnel was highly capable of laying down the facts of combat in this particular arm, as it should have been laid down, without embellishments, but with cold, hard reasoning.

It was at this point that I determined that the small unit battle drill would be rounded out and supplemented by fighter aircraft to give close ground support to the forward elements. There was an Air Force installation contiguous to Ft. Riley, and the field was known as Marshall Field, named after General Marshall. The commanding officer of Marshall Field was a young fighter pilot by the name of Lt. Col. Dale. He had a splendid record in the Far East and was a practical man as well as quite a

hero. We became good friends, and together we worked up the elements of the training exercises which would combine armored ground attack and fighter aircraft supports in the ground attack. It was really done beautifully, and we had many visitors, including many foreign military personnel, coming to watch the demonstration which was put on with live ammunition and live bombs. I might say that, the bombs were purely the explosive type, limited in power and not too destructive on open ground.

I never shall forget that one general officer of the Air Force who had never been overseas and who really had no intimate knowledge of close ground support for the ground forces, came out to view the exercises because he had heard so much about them. I'm not going to name this officer, because I think he was of limited intelligence as well as limited knowledge of what the facts of life in combat were.

In going over the rehearsal one evening, he said, "Who is directing the aircraft onto the targets?"

I said, "Some of our officer personnel—cavalry officers who have been trained by your Air Force unit here. At their request, they are guiding the airplanes into the targets. It's all set to go tomorrow morning as a "really excellent combined exercise."

This general said, "You cannot put it on."

I said, "General, what do, you mean, we can't put it on? It's all arranged. We have four or five hundred foreign military personnel here to watch it. It's been done time and time again. It's perfected! What's your objection?"

He said, "Nobody but an Air Force man can direct an airplane onto a target. I order you not to do it." I said, "What does Col. Dale say?"

He said, "It doesn't make any difference what Col. Dale says about it. I say you can't do it."

I went to our commanding general, Gen. Grimes, and I said, "General, this is ridiculous. I'm trying to teach that these are the facts of combat life, and this officer, who may be an officer, just doesn't know what the hell he is doing. What should I do?"

Gen. Grimes, being a great guy and a practical guy, said, "I've already heard from this general that your remarks to him in the conversation this evening were quite direct. But I'll tell you what let's do. Say nothing more to him, and let's just put it on as planned."

I said, "Fine by me, but how about Col. Dale? Is he going to get in trouble?"

Benny Grimes said, "Don't worry, I'll take care of that. But after it is all over, go up to see the general and apologize for calling him an idiot tonight."

I said, "Yes, Sir."

We put the problem on, very successfully, and we put it on regularly about once every two weeks from that point on for other dignitaries, officers in training and pilots. After the exercise, I went up to this general and said, "Sir, I apologize for being a little forward in expressing my views of you last night. I'd like to say that we appreciated your personal interest and hope that you realize that there was no personal offense intended. I hope you agree that the exercise was an instructional success."

He looked at me, right straight in the eye, and said, "Well, it worked well, didn't it?"

That's the last I heard of it, and I reported back to Gen. Grimes and said, "He's a funny guy."

He said, "Yeah, I know, but we got away with it."

I said, "Yeah, no problems."

I had been quite tired when I reached Ft. Riley, and the medical people said I probably had a little battle fatigue. They made me retire very early in the evening, get up early in the morning, work for half a day, then take some kind of physical, athletic work all afternoon, so as to be physically tired that I could sleep well at night. I did that for my first thirty days there, and found it to be very constructive therapy.

In the middle of the country in Kansas, in the broad Plains with only a few hills, it got colder in the wintertime than any place I'd ever been, and it got hotter in the summer time. At the same time, I was like a woodsman as far as my dress went, having lived in battle clothes for almost three years. To be able to purchase brand new, expensive uniforms at Moores, a renowned military tailor stationed at Junction City, Kansas, I went a little bit overboard in buying some tropical worsted uniforms, which I thought were beautiful.

One evening prior to Marylou and I going to a social dinner on the post, Marylou said, "Charles, will you take the children over to the Officers' Club and buy them an ice cream cones?"

I said, "I'd be delighted." So into the car we went. We got to the Officers' Club, and we bought two great big, chocolate ice cream cones. I suppose the temperature at that point was about 92 degrees--no air conditioning--and the children used to love to stand up over my left shoulder to talk to me. I loved it too. It only took about two minutes to get home, but about half way there, I felt something wet dripping down both of my shoulders and some onto my neck, I thought it felt very uncomfortable. When I got home, my brand new, tropical-worsted, high-priced uniform was nothing more than melted chocolate ice cream. Mamma Mia! I was so newly arrived at home, I dared not be mad, and I went in to show it to Marylou. Instead of saying, "Isn't that too bad," she started to laugh. Then everybody started to laugh. My feelings are still hurt, I think, from that uniform spoiled by the ice cream, but I didn't dare speak.

Miscellaneous Notes

To explain the point system a little further, a soldier got so many points for being overseas, so many for campaign ribbons, so many for invasion, decoration and so on. As 1945 progressed into the summer, it became obvious that the war in Europe was won, but no armistice yet. Therefore, the point system came into great prominence to allow officers to leave the service as it became apparent that no great need would be required in Europe from that point on. The Far East was a different matter, however, and we were training our troops at Ft. Riley for operations in the Far East, not in Europe. This training included jungle warfare, war dog training and maneuvers that would be used in the Far East. However, V-J day came upon us quickly as a of the atomic bombing, and it became apparent that there would be an immediate cutback in the military forces.

One sad occasion occurred at this time. General Grimes, the commanding, general at Ft. Riley at the time of V-J and V-E Days, was to make a speech, at the gathering of the entire [garrison?] on V-E Day morning. Just as Gen. Grimes and the staff were assembling on the grandstand, the adjutant of the school came up to me, and he looked almost white.

I said, "What's the matter?"

He said, "Here is a telegram for General Grimes. We have talked

it over, and we think the only person who can give it to him is you."

I said, "Let me see the telegram." The message was from the War Department, stating that Gen. Grimes' only son, who was in the service out of West Point, had been killed in action two days before. The question that confronted me, then, was whether to give him the telegram before he made the VE Day speech or to hold it until afterwards. I told the adjutant, "You tell the rest of the staff not to mention this. Just leave it with me, and I'll take care of it in my own way."

I decided to wait until after the general had completed the speech to the military personnel and others assembled in the open-air ceremony. I decided to get him immediately after the ceremony as it had to be done. After his speech, I said, "Benny. . .", which was the name used only in social activities, not in the line of duty. As soon as I said it, he looked at me at me and said, "What's the matter, Charlie?"

I said, "General, I've got some bad news for you, and I'd like to go to your office."

He said, "No, tell me now."

There was nothing I could do but to give him the telegram, which was a complete shock to him. Those are the things, I

suppose, that men must take, but it is not pleasant to see.

Shortly V-E and V-J Days, I was processed, because of my number of points, to the termination of my active duty. This ended my active service which had extended from January 6, 1941 until September, 1945. My wife and I and our family returned to Maple

Wood, New Jersey, where we again imposed upon my splendid in-laws, while we searched for a place to live.

My military service actually was not completed, because I was asked to reorganize the One Hundred Second Armored Cavalry and to aid in the reorganization of the New Jersey National Guard. I also commanded the Combat Command of the Fiftieth Armored Division and the Division Artillery, which necessitated my going to Ft. Sill for instruction on the latest artillery mathematics. I then returned to complete the reorganization of the National Guard. It was at this time that Marylou and I commenced to build our home in Short Hills, which was built on the lot my wife had purchased while I was overseas in North Africa. We lived there for many, many happy years, until we built another house in Short Hills.

I would like to say a few things here which I might have forgotten. I mentioned the incident in North Africa at Kasserine Pass when Gen. Maurice Rose spoke to Col. Hoy. While serving as the commanding general of the Third Armored Division. Gen. Rose was killed in the Ardennes Offensive by the Germans in December, 1944.

(Note: I will submit for your consideration a series of documentaries extracted from the Historical Operations of the Seventh Army, which is an official book. In addition, I will include some photographs which are of some of the personnel who have been mentioned in the book. The documentation submitted at this point does contain some of the official maps and of the operations.)

I think that as we approach the end of the Second World War in Europe and my memoirs pertaining to it, it is fair that I also include some observations.

The first observation which has crossed my mind is to tell the readers about the wonderful groups of military personnel who were the division and higher commanders of this fantastic military effort. Unfortunately, because I don't have the space, or my memory is not sufficiently good, I cannot recall all of them, but I will, make some specific references.

But I do want to say' that this group of officers was the finest group of men that I have met in my life. They were dedicated to one thing only, and that was their nation. I still feel that through all the years of war and peace this country has been through, the finest, most dedicated and most intellectually

honest group of men in the nation, ever, was the command element of our military forces. I do not mean to say that they did not make mistakes.' But compared to politics groups, corporate groups and others, the officers about whom I speak represented the finest men the nation has produced.

I also should say that the media sources—the press, radio and television personnel—cannot even come close to the dedication of the people whom they so often criticize. Even today, this military group has a fundamental patriotism to the country and to the people of this country, and their patriotism is absolutely indivisible.

I also would like to comment on the general rank, and file American soldier and the American youth at that time. The young men grew up real fast. They might have been nineteen or twenty when they entered combat, but within two weeks, you would have thought they were in their thirties. It was a difficult assignment, and very few failed.

As a side issue, I would like to comment at this point on the contemporary aspects of the same issue. Having watched Youth for a good many years, and having served with Youth, I find that we never really have to be afraid of what our young people will do, including today. The forward thinking and the dedication which they have toward fellow human beings is somewhat of a change from the materialism which pervaded us during the last three decades. I think that Youth is wonderful, in spite of the information which often is served up by the various media. I pray that people will take the trouble to understand Youth, and to associate in their minds, the delightful companionship and respect which are so essential. I have failed to mention one of the great soldiers with whom I served—a man for whom I have a profound respect. His name is Gen. I.D. White. Gen. White and I became good friends when he came to Ft. Riley to serve as the commanding general. He had been the commanding general of the Second Armored Division, which division were the first American troops in Berlin. Gen. White was a graduate of Norwich University, and he represented the highest standards of the military service of which I am so proud.

At this time I think it is fair to offer an observation of the military personnel making up the regular or standing army and the rapid erosion—almost unbelievable—to an army of six to eight million personnel. During the enlargement of the armies, there were joking comments about the W.P.P.A.—the West Point Protective Association. This was not an official designation, but just ran the line of the gossip within the forces. Not having graduated from West Point, it was my keen observation that it made no difference among the higher officers whether a soldier had graduated from West Point or any other Military school; whether he was a member of ROTC or whether he had come up through the

ranks. The sole points of consideration for promotion were what did; how well he did it; and what his character was. This started right at the top with Gen. Marshall and Gen. Eisenhower. If a soldier failed to carry out his missions simply due to a lack of capability or due to an inability to hang on where the situation required that he hang on, made no difference. He would be relieved, and very properly so.

On the, contrary, those officers from reserve components—National Guard, ROTC and so on—who did their jobs outstandingly were promoted as easily as those officers who had graduated from the military academy at West Point. And I bring this subject up because I have heard remarks by fellow officers that they had no chance to advance because they were not from West Point. That was a bunch of nonsense. The only thing that held any officer down was himself; not all in life are destined to go to higher levels.

It is my opinion that one of the greatest safeguards we have in this country is the dedication of the military to prevent any untoward oligarchy from moving into a position of absolute power. I believe this protection also is provided by the individual state National Guards for which I have great admiration. The National Guards usually are mobilized immediately and often become the first troops to engage enemy forces. This is why they are there. In the midst of a fantastic expansion, the standing army personnel, for the most part, are cadre in the true sense of the word. The exception is the general staff end plans and training groups such as used to be at the War College and the Commanding General Staff School at Ft. Leavenworth. They must be there, and they must be planning. And when you go bombed at night, I think that you can rely on this wonderful nucleus of standing or regular army personnel,

A-few, incidents: North Africa/Our headquarters in Douera.

I think I mentioned to you that we were patrolling a good deal of Algeria, for important reasons—some civil, some military—and these patrols were in the mountain areas, little villages, mostly inhabited by Arabs. However, you may know that the French had many large holdings of land, most of which were very productive and very profitable vineyards. Many of the Italian prisoners of war were farmed out to the French farmers who worked them very, very hard—in my opinion, much too hard for any human beings. One must remember, however, that the Italians caused (and I quote FDR) “the stab in the back by Italy of France”; riding on the back of German victories. The result in North Africa was that the Italians were hated by the French, and the French farmers made their lives miserable.

I came upon the following situation one day because of a surprise inspection of all of the kitchens in our units. Because

of the knowledge of medical authorities about disease-spreading organisms, it became apparent that the fly was our greatest threat of disease in the area. Consequently, my staff and I were rabid on having the kitchens clean and without flies, even though this was a fly-infested area.

Oh the inspection of the kitchens, we came to one of the reconnaissance troops. As we walked in, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a man whom I didn't recognize disappear quickly. I didn't say much about it since Capt. Brown was the commander. But when we left, I asked the staff officer, "Did you see that rather strange looking soldier disappear quickly when we walked in?" He said, "Yes, Sir."

I said, " You go back end quietly find out who he was, but don't say anything about it until we find out what's going on here."

The' staff officer came back a little later, and he actually was chuckling, . . .

I said, "What are you laughing about?"

He said, "As you know, Colonel, there were no flies in that area, But the man you saw duck out, was an Italian prisoner."

I, said, "Capt. Baker, what do you think?"

Baker said, "I'm amused, but evidently there are quite a few, of them around here whom we haven't caught' up with. According to Capt. Brown, the French have been so mean and brutal to the Italian prisoners that they all are dissenting. They are trying to find their way to American units which have many Italian members in them.

I said, "Isn't that interesting! I wonder how many of them there are?"

Baker said, "I don't know, but my hunch is that there are a good many."

I said to Baker, "Call a meeting this afternoon of the commanders, and let's see what, we can find out."

At such meetings we always could operate with some humor—it was not forbidden. I said, "Gentlemen, I understand that we have some guests in our units who recently have been in Italy and other places. I'd like to know how many we have."

There was some shuffling of feet, some smiles, some blank stares. So finally I said, "Capt. Brown, do you have any in your unit?"

He, being a jolly type of leader, said, "Colonel, we have about nine.

"I said, "Nine?"

He said, "Yes, Sir, we have found that they are very good KPs, very good tailors, and there are some who are very good cooks. Some of them are musical, so we're enjoying them, and they are enjoying, us."

With a breakthrough like that, the other commanders chimed

in. Everybody had caught on real fast, and they said to me, "Haven't you noticed how well our shoes are shined, how clean the kitchen is, how good the food is when you visit?"

I said, "Yes, I have, but I thought that was just a matter of experience."

They said, "Well, it's experience, but it is also the aid of our forty-five captured prisoners of war who have been living with us."

I didn't even know about it until that one occasion.

In our unit under Troop B, which was a good unit, we had three brothers when we started off with the family name of Stewart. They were three high-grade, young American boys; all of them had been horsemen and were the type of Americans we all are proud of. One of the boys was transferred out to Officer Candidate School in the Air Force and became a pilot. He subsequently was lost in action. In Italy, the second brother was killed. This obviously left only one. I thought, and I was supported by all of my officer personnel, that the merciful thing to do was to take the remaining brother, really wrap him in cellophane and get him home as fast as we could. It was not possible just to order a man home for reasons such as this. It was possible, however, to see that within the confines of our own unit we placed him in a position of less hazardous duty than he would have met if he stayed in a line troop or company,

We placed the remaining brother in our rear echelon headquarters, which normally was five miles behind the line. That was where all the paper work, personnel records, grave registration, etc., were kept and done. This headquarters followed us whenever we moved, and in the case of emergencies or breakthroughs, of course, it was brought right into the line to give us as many personnel as possible. So we took the remaining Stewart and put him back there with the hope that as soon as we hit Southern France, things would develop that we could send him home to the United States. We thought his family had paid a high enough price.

We did a lot of joking about it, but as I have said before humor is sometimes a way of expressing emotions. At mess every once in awhile—when we could have mess—we would all say, "How is our cellophane boy? He hasn't gotten hurt today has he? He hasn't dropped anything on his leg, has he?" And Baker would say, "No Sir, we've got him so that he's practically walking around with guards." The end of the story is that we did get Stewart back to the USA alive and uninjured. The higher headquarters knew what we were doing and was highly cooperative in our efforts to get him back.

As I am sitting here, dictating these memoirs, I am looking at a picture that was taken at Maison Blanc, a town situated about five or ten miles east of Algiers. In Maison Blanc

was one of the important airports in Algeria. During our period as security force for Algiers and Algeria, one of our missions was to take over any VIP airplane which arrived and to make sure that a strict guard was placed on it. ; You will remember the situation in Merrakech with the Prime Minister; well, here came another one of them in the form of King, George of England. Our designated guard for such a mission normally was comprised of either one or two platoons or, in some cases, even a complete troop. As soon as King George's airplane had landed, these troops took over the area where the plane had parked, and nobody approached that airplane. And when I say nobody was allowed, I mean nobody who was not completely identified as either crew or designated maintenance men, each of whom had to report to the officer of the day or the officer of the guard before approaching the craft.

It happened that the King had left a British "warm," which is a short type military coat, aboard the plane. It was chilly during the time he was in Algiers as it was the winter season. About twenty minutes after the guard had taken over, the King sent an equerry back to get his coat. An equerry is a high-grade word for an aide and personal secretary. This officer had the rank of a general officer.

He came back and said, "I want to go into the airplane and get the King's-jacket."

The guard said, "I'm sorry, Sir, but have you any identification?"

The aide said, "No, but I just came in on the airplane about half an hour ago."

The guard said, "Unless you have identification and pass which can be verified, you cannot proceed." It was another one of those confrontations, and the equerry was very much upset, saying that the King needed his coat and that he was going, to go get it. The officer of-the guard came upon the scene, and he said, "I'm very sorry, general, but there is no way you can get on that airplane if you don't have the proper identification and if your name is not on the list of those permitted on the plane."

He fumed away—he was not too unpleasant, but he was very disappointed.

The next day, I received a call from Allied Force Headquarters, and the secretary of the general staff said, "I understand that you had a little trouble at the airport."

I said, "If you are talking about the equerry seeking the King's coat, the answer is that he had trouble, we didn't. We had our orders, and we carried them out to the letter."

He said, "I just want you to know that you are receiving a note from King George, saying that he appreciated the situation, and all he can do is to commend the unit guarding his airplane

for being a real guard with no punches pulled. In addition to that, the equerry, when he had thought the matter over, came in and reported to us what a splendid unit it was, and while he was upset, he hoped there would be no hard feelings."

I am just looking at the picture now, as the King was leaving Maison Blanc, and I see in the picture opposite him is General Eisenhower and some other very high-ranking British personnel. I'm not in the picture, I wasn't that important, but I'm standing right behind General Eisenhower.



Editor's Epilogue

The 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron served briefly attached to 102d Cavalry Group in March, which brought the entire New Jersey family back together for a short time. The squadron crossed Rhine on 30 March, occupied Mannheim. It advanced through Heidelberg toward Stuttgart during April attached to various divisions, entered Austria in May, and ended war near Reutte.