

VII: BATTLE OF MORTAIN

After the breakthrough at St. Lo, the U.S. 3rd Army raced out of Normandy toward Brittany, but its divisions had to drive through a bottle-neck east of Avranches, because the Germans had flooded large areas of the country-side. The German High Command saw the chance for a major counter-attack across that narrow corridor to Avranches, to split the 3rd Army. On August 7 the Germans struck in the area of Mortain.

The 30th Infantry Div. was in the Mortain area when the Germans struck, and took the brunt of the German attack, suffering huge losses. General Bradley decided to send the 12th Regiment from the 4th Div. to assist the 30th Div. Initially, we, the 12th Regt. were to be used as 30th Div. reserve, but when we arrived near Juvigny in the dark early morning hours of August 8, the 30th Div. was near disintegration, and we were committed to the front line immediately. One battalion of the 30th Div. had lost 350 men during that day, and many of its units were isolated and disorganized.

We were to attack in a gap that existed between two of the 30th Div. regiments, take some high ground north of Mortain, then attack south to relieve pressure on the 30th Division's other regiment.

The first part of our approach to Mortain--on trucks-- was a nightmare. As described in the 12th History, armored vehicles jammed the only available road, and in the dark, the columns of vehicles became intermingled with vehicles from other units. Supply vehicles and ambulances trying to go in the opposite direction made things even worse. There was total confusion. At about 2:00 A.M. German fighters flew over and scored a direct hit on one of our half-tracks, demolishing it and killing the occupants. The half-track was loaded with ammunition and burst into flames and exploding shells. It looked like a movie of Hell.

Eventually, we unloaded off the trucks, and trudged along for a long while--a column on each side of the road. There were constant flashes and explosions from artillery shells. We dove into the ditches when the explosions were close, and also when a German "spotting" plane droned over the column. We finally stopped beside a farm house. Co. K was to be in battalion reserve, and since we did not get any order to dig in or to move out, I curled up beside a pile of hay and went to sleep. It was still dark out, but dawn was approaching.

When I awoke, the sun was up and Co. K was getting ready to move out. Our time in battalion reserve had lasted only a couple of hours. We were to relieve Co. I, which had gone on the front line when we stopped at the farmhouse in the dark of that same morning. Co. I had received a terrible artillery pounding, and the survivors were pretty badly shaken. We took over their foxholes, which were dug into a hedgerow (we were not completely out of hedgerow country), and Co. I pulled back a couple of fields and hedgerows.

The Germans had a lot of tanks and artillery pieces and they were firing constantly. At that time, I didn't know Mortain was so critical to the Germans. Shells whistled over our heads continuously--from both German and our own artillery. The "bur-r-r-p" from their machine guns and machine pistols was never-ending. It would have been foolhardy to attack that day--and we didn't.

Our P47 planes were active over the fields around us, and knocked out some tanks, which were burning fiercely with black smoke billowing into the clear blue sky. The planes flew very low, and a few times I thought they were strafing us, but they were strafing the Germans one or two hedgerows in front of us.

Giampola and I, with our noses in the dirt at the bottom of our foxhole, were quite shaken from the never-ending explosions, which were so many and so close. Sometime in the afternoon, Alvin (Jake) Jacobson stuck his head out of his foxhole--called to Sgt. Grimes, and whimpered that he couldn't take it any more and was "going back" to the Battalion aid station. As I said, Grimes was a very kind, considerate person, and did not object when Jake said he was going. Jake, carrying only his rifle, quickly ran along the hedgerow and headed back for the aid station.

Usually, German and American artillery would quiet down a little at night. But that night they did not--the shelling continued incessantly.

The next morning we waited for the order to attack, but prayed the order would never come. We were pretty sure we couldn't attack while the shelling was so heavy, but the order to attack would probably be given by someone miles behind the lines and passed down through the echelons--the orders had to be followed regardless of the local situation. After being on the receiving end of so much shelling, Giampola and I were too shaken to eat, talk, or do anything but lay in our foxhole and shiver.

In the afternoon, a shell hit the hedgerow directly above the foxhole occupied by two soldiers whom I did not know. They were both killed immediately. Another shell hit on the other side of us where Lewis and another soldier were dug in. Lewis was hurt badly and died shortly after, but the other man panicked and despite his wounds, got out of his foxhole and ran around it dazedly. Then he jumped into the foxhole where Giampola and I were hugging the ground. The man was crying and hollering, but Giampola and I were close to panicking ourselves, and couldn't do anything for him. A piece of shrapnel also hit and mangled the foot and lower leg of a boy whom we knew only as "Walter Winchell".

Artillery shells were still coming into our field. I don't know what happened to "Walter Winchell", but when the shelling let up a little, Sgt. Grimes came over, and he and I took the other wounded man to a nearby vacant foxhole to wait for stretcher-bearers. The stretcher-bearers did not come, so Sgt. Darlin said he would go back to Battalion to get them--but Darlin never came back. I never saw him again. After dark, Grimes, himself, went back to the aid station and brought back two stretcher-bearers.

In the morning, the shelling was light compared to the day before. Giampola called to Sgt. Grimes and told him his nerves were shot--he couldn't take it any more, and was going back to the Battalion Aid Station to get some pills or medication. I said I would go with him. Sgt. Grimes said "O.K.", but doubted that we could make it across the open field to the aid station.

The aid station was in a barn about 200 or 300 yards behind the line, and on higher ground. The barn had no Red- Cross markings on it, and there was an artillery piece set-up right next to it. We reported inside to the medical captain. He was fixing his coffee over a Bunsen burner, and didn't stop preparing his breakfast while he talked to us. He told us to wait outside the barn with the rest of the men who were out there, until he finished his breakfast. I never saw the Captain again.

It occurred to me that the Germans could see the aid station and the artillery piece next to it because they were not well-concealed by surrounding trees and brush. Giampola and I went outside where there were about 20 men--including Jake--waiting to see the doctor. Jake said he had been there since the previous day and the doctor had not seen him yet because so many badly wounded men had been brought in.

Our battalion's 81mm mortars (Co. M) were set up over the hedgerow in an adjoining field, and soon they fired a barrage of mortar shells. Then they were silent for a while before firing another barrage. I heard the mortar shells exploding in the distance. In a short time, we heard the whistle of incoming artillery shells, followed immediately by loud explosions in the field where the 81mm mortars were set up. The Germans had picked up the location of the mortars, and had zeroed in on them with artillery which was more explosive and damaging than the mortar shells. The explosions were close enough to us near the barn so that we all "hit the dirt". But soon the shells began exploding on our side of the hedgerow and we all scrambled in different directions to find an empty foxhole or other cover. Under the confusion of all the explosions, Giampola and I did not even think to grab our rifles, but ran more or less parallel with the front line until we came to a group of men dug in--I think they were survivors from our Co. I, who were in Battalion reserve.

We asked them if there were any vacant foxholes. They said there were some on the other side of the hedgerow, but they weren't very enthusiastic about it. We went over the hedgerow, and apparently came under direct observation of the Germans. The vacated holes were about three feet deep with roofs of branches and dirt--I wondered why they had been abandoned. The foxhole I jumped into looked pretty good, but it was too narrow to allow much movement. It was relatively quiet and Giampola and I sat in our respective foxholes with just our heads and shoulders protruding. Then suddenly "all hell broke loose". There were so many continuous explosions, I didn't know if they were artillery or mortar shells coming in--probably both--they just kept exploding very near us. Some of the explosions must have been just a few feet from my foxhole because the ground shook and seemed to bounce up and down. Dirt from the sides and top of the foxhole fell all over me. The shelling continued for about a half-hour, then stopped as suddenly as it had started. I lay in my foxhole too frightened and exhausted to do anything but repeat a simple prayer over and over. I'm sure Giampola was doing the same, and

when the shelling stopped we both lay quiet and didn't move or make a sound. After about 15 minutes I stuck my head out of the foxhole and called him.

At first he didn't answer, but when he did stick his head out of the foxhole, he looked so pale I thought he looked like a dead man. His face was waxen and covered with dirt knocked loose by the exploding shells, and his eyes had a wild panicky look. We agreed the Germans probably had clear observation of the foxholes we were in--that was why the foxholes had been abandoned. They must have seen us get in the foxholes. I said we had better get out while there was no shelling, but we were both too frightened and exhausted to do anything; and there was no place we could go.

As we talked, we sat in our foxholes with just our heads protruding, but we were probably still being observed by the Germans. Once again there were explosions after explosions right near us. It didn't make sense that the Germans would expend so many shells just to kill two soldiers; they must have seen us and thought there was a platoon of men dug in the area.

The second shelling lasted for an eternity, and when it finally let up I think Giampola and I were both shell- shocked. Without saying a word to each other, we got out of the foxholes and began running--we didn't know where. We ran to the summit of the hill where we saw other vacant foxholes that we jumped in to rest. In a few minutes shells began falling in that area. By that time, we were wild with the thought that the shells and explosions were following us--and there was no way we could get away from them. We got up and ran over the summit of the hill and came to an anti-tank gun.

The anti-tank gun crew had set up their gun near an old house; there were no shells coming in, and the crew members were standing in a little group by the house. Anti-tank guns are usually pretty close to the front lines, but at least a little behind the lines, so they were not being shelled constantly, and the men looked relatively clean and shaven. We walked up to them, and then we saw that Jake was with them. He came toward us and it was obvious that he too was very badly shaken. He said the same thing happened to him as had happened to us after the aid station was shelled.

The anti-tank boys had given Jake a rifle because he had left his back at the aid station, as Giampola and I had also done. Rifles were pretty easy to come by, as they were left behind by soldiers that were killed or wounded, or the rifles were left in the panic of a shelling.

Jake, Giampola and I were really "beat", and didn't know what to do--we couldn't even think about it. We decided to walk toward Co. K, but to stop someplace to sleep first.

We cut through a couple of fields and walked by a farmhouse with a French family and two G.I.s sitting outside on the porch talking and laughing. One of the G.I.s yelled over and asked what company we were with. We told him, and he said he was from Co. C, and he'd be damned if he'd ever go back there. He invited us to stay with him, his buddy and the French family; he said nobody could live through all that artillery fire, and after we

were all dead, they would just make out another requisition for more expendable men; "they don't give a damn about us!".

The soldier's comments were true, but we didn't know what to do and, in fact, lacked the fortitude to make any decision at that time, so we kept walking until we came to another anti-tank crew. They had opened a can of "ten-in-one" rations and had just finished eating their rations, which they had heated over a Bunsen burner. Their meals were a lot better than ours; the 10-in-one rations came in large cans and I remember they even had bacon and butter. Our meals were single K-rations which we ate cold, or if possible, heated by burning the waxed-paper container the ration came in. The breakfast unit was a small can of eggs with ham bits mixed in, crackers and a one-serving package of Nescafe; lunch was the same size can with cheese, plus crackers and lemonade; the supper unit was the same size can with some kind of ground meat, plus crackers and a 1-serving packet of bouillon. All three units had a small package of cigarettes.

The anti-tank men knew we were front-line riflemen because of our dirty, unshaven, gaunt appearance; I could tell they felt sorry for us. They gave us some crackers and jam that were left over from their supper--and it did taste good; we were very hungry. They suggested we spend the night at a nearby farmhouse. Jake, Giampola and I went to the farmhouse, but it was already occupied by some tank medics. We started to dig a foxhole in the yard, but since there was no small arms fire in the vicinity, and the only artillery or mortar explosions were some distance away, we slept an exhausted sleep, without digging in.

The following morning, we still did not know what to do, and none of us could even suggest anything. We were lying on the ground near a large foxhole we found, when we saw another soldier wandering back towards us. We could tell he was a front-line infantryman because he was so dirty and nervous. We called him over and found that he too was from Co. K. He told us he came in on D-Day, had been wounded, returned to duty, and just couldn't take it anymore. His name was Baker.

The four of us, Baker, Jake, Giampola and I lay on the ground near the foxhole, resting, although Giampola and I read pocket bibles we had been issued. In the afternoon, the four of us began walking again and we came across some abandoned K-rations, which we really appreciated because we were still hungry. We spent that night in some foxholes Germans soldiers had dug.

The next morning we started walking again, without much direction, and then, unbelievably we walked right into our own Battalion motor pool area. Surprisingly, the vehicles were loaded and appeared to be getting ready to move out. We went over to the vehicles assigned to Co. K; the drivers recognized Baker and told him the 12th Regt. was pulling out and we were going back to a rest area. That was great news. Baker and Jake got on a jeep, and Giampola and I rode on a "Weasel" back to Co. K. Sgt. Grimes and the other men were very glad to see us--especially Sgt. Grimes.

It was true--the Battle of Mortain was over. German forces had pulled out August 11 and 12, and were rushing back toward western France and Germany to avoid encirclement by Allied troops who had advanced eastward after the St. Lo breakthrough.

Our mortar section had twelve soldiers when the battle for Mortain started; only six of us were left when it ended about four days later.

According to the 12th Regt. History, the regiment suffered 1,150 casualties in about four-and-a-half days at Mortain. The Regiment had 3,084 men when it left England; 4034 men (including replacements) had been killed, wounded or were missing since D-Day.

VIII: A FEW DAYS REST

After St. Lo and Mortain, we were essentially out of the hedgerows, and into open country where our tanks and vehicles could maneuver. Also, the sky had cleared so our fighter planes were able to strafe and bomb German vehicles and troops.

We were pulled back from the front line, and given a few days of rest. There were no sounds of rifles, machine guns or even artillery. All we had to do was "pull guard" one hour each night--which was just great. During the day we played cards or sat around and talked. A jeep came into our company area; it had a radio and we could hear music from the BBC. It was beautiful--the first music I had heard since leaving England.

Furthermore, we were told that baseballs, baseball bats and other sports equipment were on the way. It's hard to imagine how wonderful all that sounded. It didn't seem possible that they planned to send us to the front again soon if they were getting us sports equipment.

I've never been a very religious person, but I did pray a lot--short, repetitive prayers--when we were advancing for an attack, or in a foxhole with enemy shells exploding nearby. At this rest area, and also when we were in reserve, I would sometimes read from a pocket Bible--the New Testament, which was given to the soldiers. At least I got acquainted with the New Testament, especially the Sermon on the Mount and the 23rd Psalm.

After a few days in that rest area, word came down that we were moving out again--but somebody said we were just going to a different sector to continue our rest. Still, I wasn't happy with that news, because I didn't believe it, and thought we were being sent to the front line again. My suspicions were well-founded; we were moved to the vicinity of Carrouges to fill in a gap surrounding the Falais pocket. Fortunately, the entire 4th Div. was "pinched out", so we were able to continue our rest in a new area. When we arrived in the new area we could hear a lot of artillery firing in the distance, but after that day it was quiet.

We were in the new rest area about two days when nine or ten soldiers came walking toward our section. They had on clean uniforms, new equipment, large packs, and were clean-shaven...obviously replacements! That did not make us happy at all. It was great to be "replaced" on line by another unit, because then we could get away from the front line at least for a while. But replacements meant "they" were building up our depleted ranks with more expendable men so we could be sent to the front line again. At that time, Grimes and Grade were the only ones in our section who were not "replacements" (i.e., they had come in on D-Day), never-the-less we all had been through a lot, and were a little cold toward the newest replacements who hadn't seen any combat.

The replacements that came to our section were Lt. Collins, Leo (Butch) Oneyear, Marcellus (Pat) Nilges, Alban (Al) Atkocious, Ben (Giby) Giberson, Frank (Zeke)

Zupancic, Tarangeau, Hoffman, and a few others whose names I don't remember. This group of replacements, and another on Thanksgiving day, are the only groups I can actually remember coming to us. Other replacements throughout the war just seemed to appear in our area, one or two at a time.

Lt. Collins "broke" in combat a few months later in the Siegfried Line during the battle of Huertgen Forest. He survived the war--according to the 12th History.

Al Atkocious was from Worcester, MA. He was a tall, clean-cut looking boy who had attended Teachers' College for two years, been drafted, trained and thrown overseas about as fast as I was. His brother was a priest. I felt Al and I had a lot in common--except for his strong Catholicism--and we got along very well. He was wounded in the Huertgen Forest in November, and I did not see him again until after the war when we met in Framingham. I haven't seen him since then.

Leo "Butch" Oneyear was an Irish-Indian from DeBuque, Iowa. My first impression was that he was rough, uneducated, and a heavy drinker--not someone I would want for a friend. He was rough and without much education, but before long I found he was a real good guy, and a great "buddy". I never saw him again after we were discharged from the army.

Marcellus "Pat" Nilges from St. Louis, was the youngster of our section. I think he was 18 years old. Thompson was also 18, but Nilges looked and acted younger; Thompson was rougher and seemed more mature for his age. During a business trip to St. Louis in 1952, I called Nilges on the phone from the airport; he came over to the airport with his baby son. It was really nice to see him--he said he was working for Firestone, I think.

Ben Giberson was the "old man" of the section. He was 36 years old, and sometimes we called him "Pappy" because we really thought he was an old man; we didn't understand why he was drafted at that age. He was the only one of the men that I corresponded with after the war. For years we exchanged Christmas cards. But after a while one of us--probably me-- stopped writing. Frank "Zeke" Zupancic was a small, quiet, mild-mannered, friendly person. He was wounded once, but came back and was with us to the end of the war. I always thought his first name was Zeke.

Atkocious and Oneyear pitched their pup-tent next to mine and Giampola's, and that afternoon they called me over to play a little poker. Penales was already there, and the four of us could just barely fit in the pup tent. As we played and talked, it was clear that Oneyear's main interests in life were liquor women and poker. He didn't impress me much at that time.

Atkocious and I hadn't played much poker, and though at first I won 750 francs (\$15), within a half hour I had lost it all--to Oneyear, of course. I didn't think I was going to like Oneyear, and was not very polite to him.

Some of the boys had wandered away from the field we were in, and came back in the evening very happy--and quite drunk. If there was any cognac around, Oneyear wanted

his share, so the next day he talked Penales, Atkocious and me into going over a couple of hedgerows and fields to search a near-by town. We found the town or village--it was small and very badly shelled. Penales had taken French in high school, so when he would see a Frenchman, he would look very threatening (although not tall, he was tough-looking: unshaven, dirty, large facial features, carrying a rifle and wearing a bandoleer of ammunition), and he would ask the Frenchman "Ah-va vou any cognac". He didn't get any because they said something about "la Boche" and "alles Kaput".

A unit of the French army was set up in our vicinity, and, on our way back to our area (empty-handed), we stopped and talked to a group of French soldiers who were guarding an anti-tank gun. Penales talked to them--Oneyear, Atkocious and I couldn't understand them, so we stood to one side and watched. They had some cognac, and gave us some--I thought it tasted awful. After a while, Penales would point to himself, and then to where Oneyear, Atkocious and I were standing. When he was through talking to them and came over to where we were, he said we just had to be there the next day at 6 P.M., and three mademoiselles would be there waiting for us--and since there was four of us, one of us (not Penales!) would be left out. None of us went back the following day. When we got back to our Company area, I had decided I would stick around with Atkocious, and stay away from Oneyear and Penales.

The period of rest had to come to an end, and on the evening of August 23, we were told to roll up our tents and load on trucks. The weather seemed to fall right into my mood, as it became rainy and gloomy. Our truck had no canvas cover, and as we sat in the trucks soaking wet waiting for the trucks to move out, our spirits were very low.

The Falaise "pocket" had been closed by other Allied divisions, but many German troops escaped the Allied pincers and were streaming back toward Germany's Siegfried Line. We, and other divisions, began a rapid advance to pursue them.

IX: APPROACH TO PARIS

At 7:00 P.M., August 23, we started a 165 mile motor/ march, alternating between riding on trucks and walking. It seemed we did a lot more walking than riding, and some days we walked at least 15 miles with all our equipment. We were exhausted, but we were not fired on.

Although we didn't know it, the 12th Reg't was supposed to capture and hold the bridges over the Seine River about 25 miles southeast of Paris. When we started the motor/march it was a dark, stormy night, and our convoy crawled forward over wet, treacherous roads. The trucks drove slowly and stopped often, and driving with the lights out on the muddy road, some trucks skidded into ditches. Also, sometimes German planes hovered over the long columns. We were cramped and wet in the back of the uncovered trucks, but the trucks stopped every few hours to allow us to stretch.

Some time during the night, the truck I was in went into a ditch and was stuck. Everyone was thrown onto my side of the truck, and as I was near the open end of the truck, my helmet flew off and out of the truck. We never fastened the straps on our helmets because we believed that concussion from a shell explosion could blow the helmet and your head off together. Helmets would not stop a direct rifle shot, but they might stop shrapnel. We used to say they were morale builders, and I did feel exposed and unprotected without one. Since the truck was stuck in the ditch, I got out and felt the ground in the dark for my helmet. It was pitch dark and I had to crawl on my hands and knees feeling the ground. Then I remembered the Germans sometimes mined the ditches, so I jumped back on the truck and did without a helmet for several days until I found another. As we rode in the dark, some optimistic men again thought they saw land- marks which proved we were headed back to Cherburg and England.

At dawn we were traveling over a dirt road (north of Chartres.) There were no hedgerows; the terrain was gently rolling. We were on the plains before Paris, but we had no idea where we were or where we were going.

The pouring rain finally let up, and at 11:00 A.M., August 24, we stopped outside a little town named Orphin. We got off the trucks, wrung out our clothes, and ate our K-rations, while the trucks were gassed-up. At 3:00 P.M. we were on our way again.

When we finally unloaded off the trucks, it was still light out, and we were not on the front line--I didn't hear any artillery. We were out of hedgerow country, and there were quite a few houses around. We walked single file, about 5 yards between men, on both sides of the road. We were dirty, unshaven, and loaded with rifles, ammunition, etc., but as we walked through the villages the French people seemed to get more and more enthusiastic and friendly toward us. Some stood by the side of the road cheering and clapping, or held out their hands to touch our out-stretched hands as we trudged by. Some brought us fruit and flowers.

Our section stopped on some high ground, and we were told we could "dig-in" if we wanted to, but it was not an order. From that high ground, we could see a very large city spread out in the distance, perhaps 10 miles away. A few columns of smoke were rising into the sky, but they looked like lazy smoke rising from chimneys rather than black smoke from burning buildings or vehicles. However, I also thought I saw a couple of artillery explosions in the distance. Someone said they thought the city was Paris, but I didn't think so; I said if it were Paris, a big battle would be going on right where we were.

I chose a spot between two large trees to dig a foxhole, so I would have a little added protection from the trees. I started taking off my equipment when Oneyear came over and suggested we "buddy-up" and dig a double foxhole. I had become friendly with Atkocious and had intended to dig a foxhole with him, but since Oneyear asked, I agreed. He took off his equipment and sat down while I started scraping the ground with my entrenching tool (a small shovel with a folding blade that we all carried with our back-packs). Then he suggested we not dig a hole that day; he said Grade and Griffith were going to sleep on top of the ground--and there were no shells falling in the area. I got angry and said I was going to dig a foxhole for myself, anyway. He used his pack for a pillow, and napped while I dug and scraped. Soon Atkocious came over to see how I was doing; he also was having a hard time digging into very rocky soil.

I dug down about a foot and decided that was enough; at least I would have some protection if we were shelled that night. At that point, Oneyear raised himself on one elbow and said he thought the foxhole was just fine; we could both sleep on the ground, then if we were shelled he thought we could both fit in it. I told him sarcastically that if we had to get in the foxhole, I was going in first. It was still afternoon, but after that discussion with Oneyear, I lay on the ground and quickly fell asleep.

Early that evening, Oneyear woke me up--it was still light out. He said some of the soldiers had gone to the nearby French houses and gotten some tomatos and bread, and he thought we should go there also. That sounded good, so after getting Penales to act as interpreter, we headed for one of the houses. Atkocious said he was too tired to go and would rather sleep.

In Normandy, the few French people we saw seemed hostile toward us. They had suffered a lot of property damage and some casualties from the war, and almost all the damage they incurred was from American planes, artillery and tanks. Furthermore, I have since read that the German soldiers in Normandy had behaved "correctly" during the occupation period. In any case, in Normandy the few French people we saw were not at all friendly, and seemed to glare at us the few times we passed any of them. But now the French people we were about to meet acted much differently toward us.

At the first house we went to, an elderly woman and her daughter smilingly brought us bread, jam and some fruit. We were very surprised, and thanked them, repeating "Mairsy Beaucoup"--the only French words Oneyear and I knew.

At the second house we approached, a very old man came to the door after Penales pounded on it with his rifle butt. Penales asked loudly, "A vay you any cognac?". The

man appeared to be afraid of us. All three of us were dirty, and badly needed shaves; Oneyear and I had our rifles slung over our shoulders, but Penales had his rifle in his hands as if he were ready to use it. The old man mumbled something and stepped back from the doorway, while we barged in after him. He called to someone in another room, and a little old lady brought out a small bottle of cognac. I had drunk very little in my lifetime, and a taste of it felt like it would burn my throat out. Oneyear and Penales said it was great.

We went back to our company area, and Oneyear and I slept on the ground that night. We each carried two blankets in our back-packs, so we would sleep on two blankets and under two. Of course, we always kept all our clothes on, including our combat boots for days or even weeks. Sometimes we would take our boots off, if we were far enough behind the front line.

We were near Nozay, 15 miles south of Paris, and late that night, Co. Lockett, our regimental commander received the order that we were to enter Paris. The Palais de Justice in the heart of Paris was our objective.