

from the cement between the bricks, but as long as the bricks themselves didn't come down we were ok.

Now, being as far forward as the battalion aid station is simply too far forward, but because of the terrain we were safer here than we would have been if we had tried to stop a bit farther back on the road. Finally the town forward was captured and the 2nd battalion aid moved out. Capt. Rudolph is in charge of this aid station and he is pretty well fed up on the war, having had a couple of close shaves in the past week or two. This has made him pretty irritable and he has been quite hard to get along with. He always orders vast quantities of supplies and doesn't send back nearly enough patients to account for his using it all up, and yet he will reorder supplies screaming that he needs them urgently. It is quite a job to get supplies up to the front in a hurry, since it takes hours for the order to get back to us and then we are supposed to send the order back to the clearing station where it is filled and then sent up to us and we in turn send it forward with the next ambulance going to the aid station which requested the supplies. Now, if the ambulance can't go all the way up to the aid station, the supplies have to be turned over to the litter bearers when they bring a patient down to the ambulance and they have to carry the supplies forward to the aid station.

All this takes time, and in the early days of combat it was felt that if supplies were ordered the expected time of delivery would be 24 hours later. However, this really takes much too long, especially in this mountain fighting where the aid stations have to carry their supplies on their backs, and therefore can't take very much up with them. It is this that we believe accounts for the peculiar ordering of Rudolph. We believe he orders the stuff, puts it on his jeep trailer and then when he has to move forward, leaves his jeep trailer behind and as a result is soon out of supplies. If he would send one of his men back to the trailer to get the supplies he would be better off, but no, he feels that this is a function of the collecting company and so he reorders the stuff from us. He has disturbed us so much with his crazy ordering that we are now having the ambulances carry additional supplies for any of the aid stations which might need them in a hurry. Thus, at least we can give them a bit of the order at once, and they won't run totally out of things.

To make things even more disagreeable in this poor building of ours, the ground on the outside of it comes up to about 1 foot from the floor inside, and as a result water soaks thru the walls and forms a regular pool on the floor. We have put down stones to keep our feet out of the water, and have even made a ditch out of the room thru the front door to draw off the excess water. To keep some of the rain out of the place, or at least off of our cots, we have strung a large piece of canvas which ordinarily serves us as a latrine screen over the rafters above our beds, and at least it will keep the water from dripping down on us tonight. Add to all this, a fire in the center of the room with all the smoke concomitant therewith, and you will get a slight idea of the discomfort of our present spot.

It has been hours since I first started this letter and the rain has continued unabated. I have been busy helping Leip with casualties and haven't had a chance to get back to the latter.

Yesterday we were so short on ambulances that I sent an urgent call to our battalion to rush us some extra ambulances. I didn't expect any from them because they don't have any of their own, but I hoped they might be able to get one from one of the other companies and it worked out just that way. We received one from Co. B, which has helped us considerably. To help us save time we delivered our patients to a clearing station from another division which was 4 miles closer to us than our own clearing station. We realized that this would cause confusion, but after all our first job is to get the patients out, back where they can get definitive medical care. It worked out very well because we were able to keep up with the influx of patients despite our limited number of ambulances. Of course, the sickness rate has increased considerably with this bad weather.



Tuesday, Oct. 3rd, 1944.

I spent practically the entire day, yesterday, in our little ruins of a building in order to keep out of the rain. We fixed up a tarpaulin over the rafters to keep the rain from leaking down on us from the roof and had a fire going on the floor. Of course this meant there was a moderate amount of smoke in the room but with all the holes in the walls, most of it escaped and only a bit of it remained to irritate our eyes. The rain continued right on up to dark, and the only time I would leave the building was to go down to the kitchen to eat. In fact, I skipped the noon meal because the food was not particularly appetizing and only went to the evening meal because I was starved. Altho the kitchen is only 25 yards down the hill, it was a feat to get to it without falling for one skidded and slipped all the way down to it.

I had ordered the litter bearers up with this station, earlier in the day when it looked like the rain might stop, because I felt that the infantry might attempt to drive forward and then I would need litterbearers to bring in the casualties and if they were back at the rear station with Van, it would take about 4 hours to get them up here. The place, despite its closeness to the front looked perfectly safe since the Germans had not thrown in a single shell in the 2 days we had been here, but oh my! was I wrong.

Tag had gone back to the rear in all the rain to pay some of the men back at hospitals and take care of getting the winter underwear for us officers, and instead of staying back in the rear with Van, where he could have remained in a nice dry building with a nice fire in it, he came on up here figuring that we might need the jeep. He had just arrived with all the extra boys from the rear station when Jerry took the crazy notion of throwing in some shells. We heard the damned things start dropping some distance away, each one dropping a bit closer. That leaves you with a helluva feeling because you can just feel those shells creeping up on you and it gives you plenty of time to think about them and hope that they change their target or at least that you are between the spot where one shell drops and the next one to it falls. Our small ruins (one can hardly call it a building as it consists of only 4 holey walls with a semi-roof over it) was filled with men who had crowded in to keep out of the rain, plus the new men who had just come up from the rear. It was a terrible situation because the walls of the place are so rickety that if a shell so much as hit close to it the concussion might make them collapse. However, one couldn't chase any of the boys out of the building when the shrapnel was flying around, so we all sat tight and got low down. Closer and closer came the shells, louder and louder was their explosion, until the building fairly vibrated with one. I knew that that was the closest one on the fore side. Now all we could do was pray that the next one would hit beyond us on the far side. We were lucky, it did--40 yards on one side of us, 40 yards on the other side of us. Our poor station crew plus Leip were down in the tent, which is absolutely no protection against flying shell fragments, and we were quite worried about them. Some of the boys jumped into their slit trenches which were filled with water, but that was no time to quibble about comfort or discomfort. Two of them that I saw afterwards had been lying in water with only their heads sticking out. You can imagine how miserable they felt afterward, altho the excitement at the time was all that occupied their attention. The closest shell fell 40 yards beyond the station and showered the entire tent with mud, luckily unaccompanied by shrapnel. Some of the boys who had come running for the protection of 4 walls of our ruins were likewise showered with mud, and one boy was hit in the back by a piece of spent shrapnel, which merely dropped off onto the ground from his field jacket. The next shell fell farther on just close to the spot which I had selected as an alternate place to put the station in order to get it out of the mud and then decided against it because we would have held up traffic loading and unloading patients there. Jake Hackett, my motor sergeant, had the maintenance truck parked there and was in his pup tent just below the truck when a shell dropped close by and knocked a few holes in a couple of our gas cans and one piece of shrapnel cut the rope which held up his pup tent. He wasted no time getting out of there and into the protection of



a ruined building farther up the road. Thus again, our luck held for us with not a single casualty despite a shelling which was far too close for comfort. However, some other units did not have the good fortune we had and just as soon as the shelling had ceased (about 30 shells all told) we received a hurry call for an ambulance to a unit just in front of us. The very first shell had made a direct hit on one of their tents with a few men in it and of course casualties resulted. It was no fun going down to the tent with the uncertain feeling that maybe Jerry might get the idea of throwing in a few more shells, but after all you do have to take care of casualties. So Leip and I worked excitedly and busily for quite some time taking care of the casualties as they were being brought in. We could appreciate how lucky we were when we saw that the casualties were brought in from a unit just 200 yards in front of us and one 100 yards behind us and yet we had none. I guess I'm destined to come home in one piece after all.

That shelling had us all plenty excited and just as soon as it was over I sent all the men that could squeeze into an ambulance right on back to the clearing station, to get them away from this supposedly hot area. Actually not another shell fell in all the rest of the night, but the poor suckers that I sent to the clearing station were again shelled at 3:30 in the morning. Fortunately there were no casualties back there either, altho shells did not fall as close to them as they did here. So the war is practically over? Phooey!

Yesterday, we had 3 patients from the Royal Air Corps, one being an English officer one a Scotsman, and the other a South African. They had been shot down over enemy lines in the middle of August, but somehow had been able to avoid capture with the aid of Italian civilians. They must have remained in hiding until we pushed up close to them, a matter of a month and a half. It was while they were making their way back to our lines that they were wounded, at least the Englishman was, and the shame of it was that he was wounded by an American advance patrol that saw them sneaking along in the fog and rain. He had a pretty nasty bullet wound in his leg but really wasn't hurt much. These Englishmen were pretty cool numbers, and had gotten considerable information which should be of some benefit to our Army in its advance forward.

Yesterday, when the rain was at its height, we saw the type of picture which has endeared the American doughboy to everyone, and which has gotten them the publicity of men like Ernie Pyle. In all that pouring down rain there walked forward along the muddy road outside our ruins a company of infantrymen. They were changing their sector in order to help out some company that was in trouble. The majority of them had no raincoats, apparently feeling that these hindered their activity, but straight on toward the front they walked, absolutely soaking wet, with water running off their helmets. Some of them ducked into our ruins to light a cigarette. Along with them they had 5 Jerry prisoners whom they had captured, and one of the doughboys had one of the prisoners carrying all of his equipment including his gun. Surprisingly, they were in good spirits despite the weather. Believe me, Bill Mauldin doesn't exaggerate the bedraggled appearance of the doughboy in his cartoons. One's heart went out to these poor boys slogging along soaking wet. So it goes in the infantry.

Yesterday while I was sitting in the ruins a jeep passed by going toward the front with two Red Cross girls in it. Now this is much farther forward than we ever allow Red Cross girls to go but I didn't know that they had passed by until it was too late to stop them. However, it wasn't long before they were stopped by someone else and sent on their way back. We stopped them as they passed by our place and learned that they had been up here looking for a certain unit, but had been unable to find it. Needless to say, we didn't let their doughnuts go to waste. All the boys in the vicinity saw to it that they got themselves their due--viz. 2 doughnuts. The girls were pretty nervous about having gone so far forward, and I don't blame them. It took a lot of courage for them to even come out on a nasty day like yesterday.