

FAMILY HISTORY - ORIEL AND MARY KEARL  
Chapter Thirteen - In Europe during World War II.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, when he was a soldier in the Civil War said, "War is an organized bore." It hasn't changed much since then. I was shipped to Europe through the Boston Port of Embarkation. While we waited to embark we stayed at Camp Miles Standish. I don't think any place can be as cold as an unheated tin paper shack in Boston in February with only a couple of space heaters to heat a barracks.



Earl at sea on his way to Europe  
in flight in WW II.

He sailed to Europe in 1945 in a tremendous convoy. It was one of the last big convoys of the war. It formed out at sea, off the East Coast, and included ships from ports all along the eastern seaboard. The convoy had a small Aircraft carrier as one of its escort ships. I slept on one of the outer decks that had been enclosed with canvas walls so that they could be used for sleeping quarters. When we got into the English Channel we were attacked by German U Boats but I don't think that any of our ships were sunk. All of one night we listened to depth charges being detonat-

ed. It didn't seem to bother us. I wasn't afraid then but I was young.



The docks at Le Havre where we  
landed when we arrived in France.

Our ship unloaded at Le Havre using amphibious landing craft to carry our personnel and equipment from our ship to the shore. The damage done to the port by our bombing and demolition had not yet been repaired.



The Chateau at Perriers-sur-Andelle  
where we stayed when we first arrived  
in France.

While we waited for our vehicles to be unloaded we lived in a small France village called Perriers-sur-Andelle 30 miles or so inland from the coast. We stayed in a beautiful old chateau that had been used by the Germans before

as as their barracks. The graves of a couple of dead Germans were in our front yard.

We were not far from Rouen and I drove in often to get gas for the battery. A Jewish fellow went in with me and would get off in Rouen and sell cigarettes on the black market there. I didn't see my ration of cigarettes but was too honest or dumb to sell them.

Along the side of the roads around Rouen there were many burned out shells of both German and American tanks, left from the days right after the invasion, some six months earlier. This was the badge new country that was so difficult for our armored forces to break out of.



A picture of Cyril taken at a Red Cross  
canton in Paris in 1945.

The "battle of the bulge" had just occurred when we arrived in Europe and all of the drivers in the battalion, including me, were immediately assigned to drive supply trucks from Cherbourg, France to Namur and Liège in Belgium to re-stock the supply dumps that had the Meuse River. Each trip took 2 - 3 days. They had been badly depleted during the German Ardennes offensive. I made two round trips which gave me an opportunity to see a lot of French

country-side.

I spent a couple of days in Paris while we were on these trips. I was shocked at the number of prostitutes who were openly soliciting on the streets of Paris.

I bought a camera from another GI (Government) issue - a common soldier in WW II who had liberated (taken) it from a German. I took pictures all through Europe with this small camera.

We were then attacked by the 3rd Army (Patton) and our firing batteries shelled Köln from the south bank of the Rhine as a diversionary action. I would see the tanks at night and their

shelling was like watching a July 4th fireworks. For some time our trucks were used to transfer supplies from air strips to advanced supply dumps for the ground forces. After delivering our supplies we would bring loads of prisoners back. No guards were needed since these Germans were thoroughly whipped and just happy to be in the hands of Americans instead of Russians. I usually found one of them who could speak English and let him ride in the cab of my truck. Of course NONE of them were Nazis. Somehow all of the "bad" guys had disappeared. The Germans in the Ruhr had been trapped in the pocket and there were lots of prisoners.

We were now assigned to the 8th Army. Our commanding officer was a General Orlando Ward who didn't make much of a name during the war. We crossed the Rhine above Remagen and traveled to Mannheim where we were joined by the 42nd and 45th Infantry Divisions. These three divisions drove down to Munich and then over to Salzburg.

We were the Division that liberated the Jewish extermination camp at Sobibor. We were completely unaware of concentration camps or that one of the worst ones was right in the path of our Division. For the first time we learned how deep human depravity could go. I hope such a evil will never happen again.



The destruction of barracks.

I'm sure that the Division Command knew about these camps. There was no time for an ordinary soldier to stop and look around. The freed inmates of this camp, in their striped uniforms, were all over the city. One of the Jewish prisoners was trying to be nice to us and threw a box of synthetic butter into my truck. I kept imagining all of the things that it might have been made of and didn't dare eat it and threw it away.



The barracks of the U. S. Troops who guarded Hitler's "Eagle Nest" at Berchtesgarden.

In the spring of 1945 German resistance collapsed and our fighting consisted of securing territory that the Germans were eager to surrender to the allies instead of the Russians. A couple of times we were fired on by snipers or were strafed by a lone plane or two but it was only a nuisance type of action that could not be sustained. The Germans were crushed. It was feared that they would carry on guerrilla warfare



Hitler's lodge at Berchtesgarden, where he negotiated the surrender of German Slovakia with Neville Chamberlain.

I never had to shoot my gun at a German at any time. During our march east almost as many Germans were traveling to the west to get into American occupied territory frantic to escape from the vengeance of the brutal Russian soldiers by surrendering to the Americans. The end of the war was effectively over. The roads were choked with these pitiful refugees, military and civilian, carrying all they had on their backs, in wagons, or carts. A few lucky ones had bicycles but there were no cars at all.

I don't think that privates in any war knew what they were fighting for. As a private I knew very little about the politics of the war. I knew that Hitler and the Nazis were pretty bad guys. Our Division was poorly informed about what was happening. I suppose this might be true of every war that was ever fought. We didn't get to look at maps. We had a general idea of where we were but we had no detailed information. The enlisted men didn't know which specific enemy units they were fighting against or where they were going, or what our strategy was.

The Army presented the idea that the Russians were great guys, our comrades in arms, with a democratic government only slightly different than



Private Karl in Europe.

sure it's pretty apparent that Eisenhower and Roosevelt were naive and that "Unconditional Surrender" only prolonged the war and gave away much of Eastern Europe to the Russians who then deprived the people who lived there of the human rights for which we had fought for in the war.

The war in Europe ended on May 7, 1945. I had been in Europe for only 3 months. I was on the Austrian border near Salzburg when the end came and I remember so vividly how nice it was to drive at night with car headlights on. We then went into garrisons in one of the villages of Alttöding and Traunstein that were north and east of Salzburg. We were supposed to be doing occupational duty but I think we were only looting car lines until we could be sent to the Pacific.



Karl in his "office" in Traunstein.

I found a typewriter in one of the

German Army Supply Depots where we picked up some prisoners and I "liberated" it. I had it in the back of my trailer so that in an instant I could be typing a letter.



Me doing "occupational duty" in June of 1945.

I had too little battle duty to be eligible for discharge or even occupation duty but was a perfect candidate for duty in the Pacific.

I made regular trips into Munich to pick up gasoline and would drive down the Autobahn, Germany's Interstate Highway, past the Chinese and one of Mad King Ludwig's" castles which was built on an island in middle of a lake.

That summer I and 3 or 4 other truck drivers were sent to Strasbourg, France with loads of GI's to a "Rest and Recreation" Center there. We were to have brought another group of soldiers back with us the next day but they never showed up so we stayed there in Strasbourg for a week. We finally ran out of food and money or we might have stayed there all summer.

I received regular letters from Mary and once in a while a picture to keep my spirits up.

During this time I started having attacks of appendicitis and finally after a severe one I had my appendix taken out in a field hospital. The hospital was a tent with wooden planks for a floor.



Mary knitted me a pair of socks while I was overseas.

A visiting doctor took film x-rays of the operation. It would be nice if I could have had a copy of it, after the operation I was sent to a recuperation hospital in Hursenburg for a couple of weeks while my incision healed. This hospital had about a thousand patients. All but 50 were there to be treated for venereal diseases. They were a rough bunch of soldiers. Night and day there



Delmer and Lt. Gen. Lucky Strike. I was on my way back to the USA.

were tired of patients getting their penicillin or mercury shots. It wasn't a very pleasant place to be. I got a release and hitched a ride back to the zone just as it was packing up to go to back to the U. S. In July of 1945 we were redeployed to the Pacific via the United States. On my way back to the US I passed near Camp Lucky Strike and we were staying there for the night. It was a German POW camp and Delmer's unit was running it. I got in touch with him and he came over in a Jeep and got me. We had a good visit, exchanged family news and spent the night together.



We at the Recovery hospital in Hursenburg.



Mary and I in Lincoln Park in Chicago during my 30 day furlough after I got back to the US in August.

After we got home I was given a 30 day furlough after which I was ordered to report to Camp Cooke, California. I met Mary in Chicago. The girl I left behind was now a woman and after my 8 month absence she looked wonderful.



Mary met me in Chicago for my 30 day furlough.

Just before my furlough the atomic bomb was dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and shortly thereafter the war in the Pacific ended. We still debate about the morality of using the Atomic Bomb. At the time, because of the thought of a prolonged war, there didn't seem to be anything wrong with using the Atomic Bomb. We didn't know that Japan was desperately trying to surrender.



Kathryn, Susan, Cyril, & Mary in Yellowstone Park during that furlough.

If we had tried to invade the main islands of Japan, I'm sure they would have fought desperately and our losses of personnel would have been enormous. I had been scheduled to be a part of the 0-8th invasion force of Japan so I was glad that the Atomic Bomb had been used.

Gas rationing was discontinued while I was on my furlough so Russ, Katie, Mary and I went to Yellowstone for a few days to celebrate. Mary and I had only one sleeping bag which we shared. We were thinner in those days than we are now. Katie had fried a big pan of chicken. It's a wonder that we didn't die of food poisoning - we had no cooler or refrigeration.



(It's safe that Mary didn't see those girls that said DON'T FEED THE BEARS.)

We fed a bear cub some of the chicken gizzards. The mother bear came along and tried to climb into the car with us. Mary and Katie started calling slices of bread out of rear window but that didn't distract them at all.

Because of the sudden end to the war and because I had too much service for occupational duty and too little to be discharged I was kept in service for six months at Camp Cooke with nothing of a military nature to do. Mary fellowes stayed in the Army. Their years in the military had been happy ones. For many the war had been their finest hour. They had had a sense of purpose, excitement, usefulness and of being needed that they didn't find in their

their civilian lives and they never ceased talking about their experiences in the war.



Cecil feeding a bear on that trip.

Mary and I lived in a trailer while we were in Lamona. One night the Home Teachers come to our trailer and rocked it back and forth. We were in an earthquake area and we were just sure that we were experiencing one that night. Mary had been hired on the spot in the Signal Corps telegraph office as a clerk. The army kept giving us 30 day leaves. We didn't have the money to go anywhere, so I got a job at a Johns-Manville plant nearby that was surface mining discontinuous earths (a fine stream earth consisting of the fossil remains of one cell marine glass).



Cecil and Mary in the trailer they lived in while they were in Lamona.

a filter material. I was given a job as a draftsman making detailed drawings and blueprints for the small drafting group that they had at their plant. Between our busy army pay, Mary's pay and what I was making at Johns-Manville we were doing pretty well financially and saved enough to buy Mary a Sewing Machine.

The branch of the church in Lamona only had one family that were permanent members, the Stafferons. Mary never told them that she wasn't a member and they had her doing everything. You never knew when you went to church what you might be called upon to do. She gave many a prayer while we were there.



Mary, her Mother, Dad, and me by our second house trailer.

at this time Mary's parents were 300 miles away in San Francisco and we had several pleasant weekend visits with them, either going up to San Francisco or they would come down to visit us.

I had become a corporal and was the battery clerk at the time that I was discharged. I had decided to go back to school at either the University of California or to the Univ. of Michigan. The fellow I worked for at J-M, Herman Fischer, was a U. of California graduate

who did not think very highly of his university, so I finally decided on Michigan. My discharge in February came too late to get into the 2nd Semester so I had to wait until June to go to school.



Mary's parents, Coril, and Mary  
at Camp Dixie - 1945

Since I had four free months before school started, we went to Salt Lake City where I was discharged and we stayed with Mary's parents at 1200 Michigan Ave. Her father was well known and highly respected in the Salt Lake City Business Community and throughout Utah. With his help I obtained a job with the Utah State Highway Department working on the third floor of the capitol building as a draftsman.



Coril and Mary at her parents home.  
Coril had just been discharged.

I plotted information from the survey logs, and then planimetered and calculated the volume of soil needed to

balance the cuts with the fills on proposed roads to avoid the expense of bringing in soil. It was a tedious, boring job that made me decide that I didn't want to become a Civil Engineer. That type of work would now be done by computers in a very short time. When I finally got back in school in June, I studied Mechanical Engineering.



Coril's brother Russel and his wife  
Kathleen - 1945

Mary worked for her father at his insurance office while we were in Salt Lake City. With two incomes, not tremendous, but with no expenses, since we were living for free with her parents, we were able to save several hundred dollars. We made our first major purchase at that time, a sterling silverware service of 8 which we seldom used and finally gave to Jane. (Who also doesn't use it much.)