

I never had the chance to show him, not that I wanted to. Suddenly machine guns began blazing from a hedgerow not far away, and we scattered. The guns were not German, but American firing into the opposite side of the canal where Germans were seen scattering faster than we. When the Germans had disappeared, our rescuers came out from hiding. They were our Captain and the rest of the split unit who had been watching this little scenario knowing exactly where the Germans were positioned.

For one brief and uncertain moment I was held captured by the enemy. The next time would not be so pleasant and favorable.

WAR IS MAD AND PECULIAR

Our stay in Normandy lasted about 35 days. None of it was a pleasure, as war can never be. But as I found later, the moods of war differed between the Normandy Battle and the Battle of the Bulge just by the weather. At Normandy, the days were warm and comfortable and seemed to encourage the Germans into executing captured Americans for the sheer fun of it. Whereas, during the Battle of the Bulge, later, the bitter cold days left them thinking mostly of how not to freeze to death; except for the willful massacre of American prisoners at Malmedy, Belgium commanded by an arrogant German officer. No one in the fierce cold of those December days had the energy or will power to fight much less engage in frivolous execution. Here at Normandy it was a grisly, ugly thing to see troopers hanging upside down from a tree, their middles slit down with what was most surely bayonets.

Six guys from my company were caught by the Germans. They were

Staaahovlak from somewhere in Pennsylvania, Sgt. Hornbaker from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Bobby Miller, my best friend from Potstown, Pennsylvania, Jesus Casas from an island, and Captain Sovian who was a doctor, and another who I don't recall; they were all medics. They were all executed but Miller who escaped and was still running when a bunch of us stumbled onto him.

"My God! are you son-sa-guns a sight for sore eyes," he blasphemed wildly. Between tears and a jumble of incoherent sentences, Miller commenced to tell us what happened:

"The Germans got us, but we weren't expecting anything but to be prisoners. Then they started to interrogate us, then taking the guys out and shooting them, one by one. I could hear shooting ... God, it was mad. I was praying hard ... I was last, you see. When finally it was my turn, I stood there waiting, my hand locked over my head. I was sure I was a goner ... I couldn't bare this goddamn moment ... I don't know what I was praying. I just prayed, blabbering my Hail Mary's.

"The damn gun wouldn't go off. All I heard was the damn click, then another. The gun wasn't working. I now prayed that it would ... or it wouldn't. I just couldn't stand it. Now the German in charge grabbed the gun. He was mad. 'Give me the damned thing,' he swore in German, then tried to discharge it, but it still didn't work. He finally threw the gun and said, 'Go!'

"I can't figure out why they didn't have other guns and didn't bayonet me. Anyway, when the German told to me go, I ran, praying for feet that would get me away from them as fast as they could and for an American unit ... Oh, man ...

PFC LONGACRE,

Reporting



by

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