Medical Detachment
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It is a difficult task, especially when one is not present to witness the goings on, to write of the initial activities of this medical detachment, from the division's activation to the time we inductees were finally selected to serve as medics for the battalion. So, we'll start with the opening words of the bible—"In the beginning was the word"—and that word was Dawson and Jaccorina. They were the cadre for this outfit and they constantly reminded us of that fact, also, that their word was law. But some of the boys had a tendency to forget quickly, especially since they were still civilians at heart, and as a result, the dispensary was always provided with a mopping and dusting detail.

Basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina was pretty tough. The medics learned soldiering with Service Battery, then under the command of Capt. Allen Greene. We studied Anatomy, Physiology, and Materia Medica under the supervision of our medical officer, Lieutenant Herbert Mores, and all the other medical officers in Division Artillery. Toward the end of March, 1943, after a lot of hard work in the form of drilling, road marches, obstacle courses, and of course, not overlooking KP and the study of our medical work, we completed our basic period in good form.

The following months found us on numerous combat team problems intermingled with furloughs. Then too, this was the period that we lost some of our medics. The detachment consisted of:

Kenneth E. Best    John F. Corcoran    Vincent R. Marrone    Evert G. Olsen
Herbert L. Bornstein    Linwood B. Dawson    Joseph Napoli    George E. Richardson
About the middle of November 1943, with then Lieutenant Kenneth Prince in command of the medical detachment, we said goodbye to Fort Jackson and headed for the Tennessee Maneuvers, where we were to prove just how effective our training had been.

Living out in the cold, rain, and snow really toughened the lot of us more than we realized at the time for the hardships we were to endure in combat.

The one thing that gripped the medics most during maneuvers was that the umpires would go around tagging a half dozen "wounded" soldiers about the time everyone was ready to move on a "Close Station March Order" and all the wounded would have penetrating wounds, with fractures of the left femur. Occasionally, they would tag a man with a fractured forearm or chest injury — but this was not common.

The 17th of January, 1944, saw the end of maneuvers, and we headed east toward Fort Bragg, North Carolina, a weary and dirty lot. Boy, it sure felt good to take a shower again, and it took quite some time to get used to those beds, too! Then more furloughs...

From that time on, activities were varied, but all pointed in one direction — getting ready for the real thing. And then, one day it came — the band was playing "Over There". It was then that most of us realized what our future course would be. We, too, were wondering just how we would react to combat. It was during this period that Lieutenant Dean F. Nelson came to us. He was destined to command the detachment throughout the battle campaigns of the 100th Division.

The following days were full of confusion, commotion, and sea sickness. Then, we landed at Marseilles, France. It sure felt good to be back on terra firma again. After 10 days of earnest work uncrating and readying our vehicles, supplies, and equipment, we were set for the long motor march to the battle front. Our vehicles and helmets were resplendent in their newly acquired red crosses. The EM's ribbed us about it with "You're an easy mark for a sniper" — but we could just laugh it off.
Our route to the "front" took us along the Rhone River Valley, through the cities of Dijon and Valence. It was on this road march that everyone saw some of the ravages of war — the destroyed bridges, homes, shell craters, and a grave occasionally where a mighty Superman had fallen. We knew that the front was very close now for the booming of artillery pieces was apparent, and here and there would be a sign warning of the presence of mines which had not yet been cleared. At dusk, after a 3 day trip, we reached our bivouac area in the woods outside of St. Hélène.

Our first move in combat was made into St. Benoît where we saw our first German planes skim over the area. Most of the fellows looked up in wonderment not realizing the immediate danger — that the jellies were still able to get some planes into the air. Subsequent moves were made to Baccarat, Bertrichamps, where we had our first baptism of enemy fire, and Raon L'Étape which opened the gateway to the Vosges Mountains. The campaign ran smoothly for us until we arrived at Les Voilines where several casualties were brought into the aid station, including a rifleman wounded by a mortar fragment, and a French civilian shot by the jellies as they retreated. Our furthest penetration into the Vosges was at Plaine, where we were ordered back with the battalion to Raon L'Étape to await further orders.

Shortly afterwards, we found ourselves beyond Sarrebourg in the town of Neiderschulzbach. Our aid station was located in the house of Jacob Klein, Postmaster. He was our house boy in a sense, for he kept the stove going all the time, and saw to it that plenty of fresh fruit was always available on the table. Every night he would provide, out of his generous heart, a little night cap of red or white wine. It was here that on a
Sunday morning, a lone jerry plane streaked out of the blue to strafe the immediate area. That same night German artillery came down on us, and Jacob, in his old fashioned nightgown, came into our room very much upset and yelled, “Herr doctor, Die Deutsche Soldat schissen in hier — Kommen sie im keller!” He was waved off and the men continued to sleep amidst the crescendo of whining 88’s. Our next set-up in Schillersdorf wasn’t very good and the only remembrance of that place was that our medical officer was promoted to Captain.

Then came a rapid series of moves until we reached Hasselthal, a hamlet not far from the Maginot stronghold of Bitche. It was near here that a Headquarters wire jeep was blown up by a mine. First aid was administered to three men and they were evacuated to the rear. Two of the batteries and the aid station displaced forward much closer to the fortress of Bitche for tactical purposes, and the small group of medics dug laboriously into the side of a hill for two days to provide a reasonably safe shelter for the aid station. This area was fairly active, and every so often the enemy would send some 88’s in just to let us know that he was still in the fight. The night with its accompanying wailing and roaring of shells overhead was grotesque indeed — like a bad dream. A week of that sort of thing and we were ordered to another sector. On Xmas Eve we moved into Binning.

Xmas was spent pleasantly singing carols with the Alsatians, but the evening was shortlived when a collision of vehicles occurred on the hill near Battalion Headquarters, and the medics rushed up to administer first aid.

On January 1st, 1945, the medical detachment was called upon to supply aid men to the infantry medics due to heavy casualties there. Herbert Bornstein, Kenneth Best, and John Corcoran were selected for the transfer to the 397th medics. This was the first sign of the original medics breaking up. The period from New Year’s Day to January 15th, 1945, was a hectic one, for we endured strafings,
bombings, and shellings — from 88's to the 210 variety. Word of infiltrating Germans reached us and we were given an order to be ready to move at any time. No doubt the move would have been an advance backwards.

During this time, replacements for the medical detachment were recruited from the battalion. John Caruso came from “A” Battery; Edward Kraus was formerly with “B” Battery; and Peter Elsbury was from “C” Battery. These men were new to the job as medic and the aid station personnel set about teaching them the ropes. After a brief period of learning, these men were sent to their respective batteries to act as aid men under the direction of experienced eyes.

When the situation quieted down, we took up new positions in Petit Rederching, with our aid station in a pill box of the Maginot Line. We stayed in that spot for six weeks, and only an occasional shelling or strafing would break the monotony of remaining in one place so long.

On March 15th, 1945, after two days of continuous artillery preparation and air bombings, our division moved forward to probe the defenses of the Siegfried Line, and consequently, made several short moves until we reached Waldhausen — the last French
city before Germany. It was here that the aid station was shaken a bit when a shell landed about twenty feet away. We thought that the cellar was a better place to be in, but upon inspection of the dirty lower quarters, we decided to take our chances by remaining in the room we had. That night the jerries blasted the town with over two hundred shells, but no damage was suffered by us other than that the Geneva Flag was torn to shreds.

Late one afternoon we started out on what was to be a three day dash across the Rhineland. The highlights of that trip were the Dragon's Teeth of the Siegfried Line — how they stood out in the light of that brilliant moon; the dozens of dead Germans strewn along our path who fought so vainly; and the bewildered civilians who were hanging up the white flags of surrender. Upon arrival at Oggersheim, Germany, which was about one kilometer from the Rhine River, a building was commandeered to house the aid station. It was there that we had our first real rest since coming into combat.

After six days of rest we proceeded deeper into the heart of Germany. The Rhine River was crossed via a pontoon bridge which was within the shadow of the once majestic span that connected Ludwigshafen and Mannheim. Our route was for the most part in a south-easterly direction to the town of Sinsheim where we remained overnight. This time the aid station was amidst more comfortable settings. It was fun to settle back in a big soft divan again, but it made us think of home. It wasn't long after we set up station that an emergency had occurred. A "C" Battery truck had detonated a mine which resulted in two casualties. They were given first aid and evacuated to the Collecting Company. A short while later, another mine was detonated by a Headquarters jeep bearing an officer and two enlisted men who were laying communication lines. To our regret one man was dead, the other dying, and the third badly wounded. All means were taken to make evacuation as rapid as possible in an effort to save them.

CSMO came early next morning, and we departed towards Heilbronn. Somewhere along the route, infantry piled into the vehicles and the men sensed that some sort of
task force was in the offing. Atop a hill, we could see that a town located just over the ridge to our right was being attacked. The nearness of the sound of machine guns and detonating shells made us a bit uneasy.

The convoy was stalled a few hundred yards up the road, and then it happened — the jerries were trying to adjust artillery fire on that conglomeration of vehicles. Luckily the rounds were all over the target, but the shrapnel was flying everywhere. A while later, we managed to proceed on to Frankenbach where we were to establish an aid station.

There was a great battle going on ahead of us in Heilbronn that was inflicting severe casualties, and we were called upon to furnish more aid men to the infantry units.

During our stay in Frankenbach, the more serious casualties included an "A" Battery man who had been burned with gasoline, and two Signal Company men who had been wounded by mortar fire.

The detachment had to work understrength for two weeks, until we reached the town of Wustenrot where four medics, fresh from the states, added to the strength of the detachment. They were Herbert Gardner, Roy Ladwig, Joseph Giromini, and Bernard Ellisberg.

The subsequent moves were very quiet until April 22nd, when we arrived at Manolzweiler during the encirclement of Stuttgart. A small party was ambushed there by approximately fifty German soldiers, and the ensuing fight cost us one dead, and two wounded. First aid was administered and the casualties evacuated to the rear.

April 23rd, 1945, found us moving in the direction of Ulm, when we were ordered into army reserve. The following weeks brought us to Lorch, Welzheim, and Böblingen where we pursued occupational duties.

In August 1945, the division was alerted
for redeployment to the Pacific via the states, when the surrender of Japan forced the cancellation of our plans. Now we are all waiting for that day when we can be civilians once again.

In conclusion of this brief history of our activities, we are proud to state that during the course of combat, all men — whether friend or foe, were given equal treatment. "Our duty is to relieve the suffering . . . ."
Fire at Heilbronn

For nine days men of the Century Division, fighting from zeroed-in positions and under constant observation from ridges overlooking Heilbronn from the East, endured a hell of Nazi hate in their efforts to cross the 100 yard Neckar River and capture the city of Heilbronn. Correspondents were unanimous in naming it the “toughest fighting East of the Rhine”. One veteran observer labeled the position “another Cassino”.

At night, watching from the West side of the Neckar, the city seemed a blazing, roaring inferno. Fire swept the city, as the terrific artillery duel continued relentlessly, and the infantry fought from house to house.