

S/Sgt. Herbert Harvey— Farewell to Another Good Soldier

by Rufus Dalton, 397-2B

He was the best known man in the Mortar Platoon, Company H, 397th Infantry, probably the best known in the company. He was slight of build, but sinewy and tough. He had an attractive hawk-like face and a no-nonsense countenance, but he had a twinkle in his eye. He led a section of mortars and regularly served as a forward observer with the rifle companies. He fought the war with an intensity that was beyond the normal. For him, the war was a necessary impediment that had to be negotiated before he could begin the search for his family—an expatriate German Jew, his mother and grandmother had been deported to a ghetto in Lodz, Poland, unknown if dead or alive. This man, Herbert Harvey, died in 2010. This is his story, as told by his wife, Lila, who knew him from childhood in Germany.

Herb was born in Frankfurt where his father was a partner in a metal firm. That is, they bought scrap iron and smelted it into bars and sold them. They lived in a suburb of Frankfurt called Mainkur. Herb's father supervised the smelting part and lived right there. From his bedroom, Herb could see the railroad tracks nearby, where the famous Orient Express passed by twice daily. He became very interested in railroads and that interest stayed with him the rest of his life.

At age six, he took the streetcar to school all by himself to an elementary school, from the suburb to the city of Frankfurt. When the business was sold in 1932, the family moved to Frankfurt and he started high school there. It was an excellent school which demanded a lot from its students. He was not asked to leave in 1937, but staying there became so unpleasant. By that I mean he was constantly annoyed by his fellow students—constant fighting and other unpleasanties—which the teachers either ignored or encouraged. His parents therefore took him out of school. First he worked as an apprentice in a Jewish business, until the business was forced to sell, and he was fired. Then a drycleaner took him on, but for a part of the year he had to do forced labor for the German government. So, life was not easy. I met Herb when my family moved to Frankfurt in 1935, when he was 13 years old and I was 12. You see, my mother, who grew up in Frankfurt, and his mother were school friends.

His brother and my younger brother were classmates, so we did family outings together often. Herb and I became good friends and we saw each other once in a while after school. My family and I left Germany in 1937. Herb and his father and brother arrived in New York on Labor Day 1941. He tried desperately to get a visa for his mother to go to Cuba, which was possible still in 1941. Despite his efforts, however, he was not able to obtain a visa and she was deported to the ghetto in Lodz before the visa was issued. So, only Herb, his father and brother were able to emigrate from Germany to the United States.

Herb was 19 years old when they arrived in New York. At this young age, he immediately found a job; rented an apartment; took care of his father, who was in his sixties and not well; and kept his fifteen-year old brother in school. When Herb landed in New York, his aunt, who lived in New York, was in touch with my mother. Herb got our address from her and looked us up very soon after his arrival. Since our families had been friendly in the old country, and the three men had a hard time managing without their wife and mother, my mom invited them to dinner every so often. Herb and I took up our friendship again, and we knew pretty soon that we would spend the rest of our lives together.

He was inducted into the Army in December 1942 and went to Fort Jackson to join the cadre of the newly formed 100th Infantry Division. We became officially engaged in April 1944 (six months before he went overseas).

During the fighting, S/Sgt. Harvey served with bravery and effectiveness. He received the Silver Star for accompanying a small party behind German lines at Mouterhouse to observe for Mortar fire (see *Newsletter*, April 2008, pg. 4). He played an important role in the battle for Rimling (see *Newsletter*, Holiday 2003, pg. 23). He called in mortar fire from a precarious and exposed position at Heilbronn (see *Newsletter*, July 2009, pg. 41). And, he led his section with distinction throughout the entire period of engagement. After the fighting was over, he endeavored to find the means to begin his search for his mother and grandmother. Company H's Headquarters put together some documents enabling him to be transferred to a unit that would allow him to stay in Germany.

Continuing Mrs. Harvey's story:

Because of his determination to find his family members, and with the help of his superiors, he was permitted to stay in Germany after the 100th Division left. He was transferred to an intelligence CIC (Counterintelligence) unit. In December 1945 he was civilianized and offered a contract to stay another year and half because of his language ability and area knowledge. He worked in Denazification, which was of great interest to him. Unfortunately, he was not able to find out anything of the fate of his mother and grandmother. He only was able to ascertain that they were deported to a ghetto in Lodz, Poland, in October 1941. They probably died there of hunger or disease. His mother was only 42 years old. The pain of this loss lasted all his life.

He came home on leave in the summer of 1946 for us to get married, and I was able to join him in the late fall. He did not renew his contract in September 1947 because he felt it was time to go back to the US and finish his education. Recall that he had to leave high school in the ninth grade in 1937. After our return, we lived in New York City where he worked during the day and in the evening finished High School and studied at Columbia University. It was tough but he did it all in five years. Our daughter, Carol, was born in May 1948. In 1951 he was offered a position at the CIA and he worked there until he retired. We were stationed overseas several times in Germany, and three wonderful years in Paris. It was an interesting life and Herb was happy in his career. We were able to do a fair amount of traveling and our young daughter learned to speak fluent German and become bilingual in French. Herb retired from his government job in 1978. He spent a lot of time gardening and worked as a volunteer for some twenty years for a local help organization. There he answered phone calls from needy persons and arranged help with food, pharmacy bills, utility bills, rides to doctors' offices, etc. After I retired some six years after he did, we had a great time together just sharing every day and doing some traveling. We enjoyed our grandchildren, saw them grow up and supervised their homework until they did not need us anymore. He passed away in January of 2010 and I thank God every day for the 63 wonderful years we were allowed to be together.

Since Herbert Harvey's death, I have communicated with two officers who served with him in Company H and had personal knowledge of his conduct during WWII. Lt. Leland Nelson was the officer in Company H who provided Harvey with the documents that paved the way for him to start his search. Lt. Murry Abrams was in command of a Mortar Section in Harvey's platoon and shared many combat experiences with him. Lt. Nelson wrote the following:

I served with Herbert at Ft. Bragg and overseas in France and Germany. I was the Mortar Section leader of the heavy weapons' platoon in which S/Sgt. Harvey was a part. He was a fearless soldier in combat and everyone respected him. Although I was wounded early in the fighting, I returned to Company H after several months in the hospital in England. I got to know Herbert even better after the war ended.

In a recent phone conversation with Lt. Abrams, he told me of the respect with which he held S/Sgt. Harvey. He recounted to me a number of personal examples where Harvey demonstrated his moral stature as well as his valor in combat. In addition, it was also my pleasure to have served with Herbert Harvey

and to have observed that he had the qualities of leadership and character that exemplifies the best in a United States infantryman. I am glad to have known this man and feel privileged to be able to bring “the rest of his story” to the other men in our unit.

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