

Corporal G. S. *June* McColley Tells *29,* Division's Battles *1945*

Newton Corporal Tells of Campaigns in Which His Division Participated; Is Now in Germany

Corporal George S. McColley writes his mother, Mrs. George W. McColley of Newton, from Gross Umstadt, Germany, where he is with the Third Armored division.—“This is Saturday afternoon. We have Saturday afternoons off now. I haven't done much this afternoon, just sat around and took it easy. Tomorrow the Protestant chaplain is holding services in the Protestant church here.—I think probably it is a Lutheran church. I am rather planning to go. The Catholics are also having services at the Catholic church. We are getting a pretty good supply of PX rations each week now. We get about seven cigars or cigarettes, six candy bars, chewing gum, toilet articles, canned peanuts or cookies, writing materials, etc.

“This town is pretty badly beat up. Some trains are running here now, just enough to take care of most essential needs. The people are all very busy on the farms. The whole family works in the field. They are well cultivated. Quite a few oxen and cattle are used for farm work.

“The censorship restrictions have been relaxed considerably and we can tell a lot of things which we couldn't heretofore. I suppose you have wondered what kind of a ship we came over on. We came across on an English liner, the Capetown Castle. In peace time, it ran between Southampton, England and Capetown, South Africa. It was a luxury liner and quite a large nice ship. We landed at Liverpool about September 17 or 18 after a ten day trip. We were fortunate to have such a good ship and generally I enjoyed the trip.

Pretty in the Moonlight

“There is a good deal of beauty about the ocean in the different lights of different times of the day and night. It is especially pretty in the moonlight. The first few days we spent most of our time on deck. Later we ran into cooler and rougher weather. I was more or less seasick but not seriously so for three or four days when the sea was quite rough.

“Liverpool is a few miles back from the coast and the wide river mouth of the Mersey river forms its harbor. Before one gets to Liverpool he passes some of its western suburbs. One of the first ones we saw was Crosby. After being at sea so long, the site of neat stucco and brick houses and green lawns looked very good, you can be sure.

"Liverpool is a very large city and a great port. There were ships of nearly every kind there, many of them great warships. We traveled by rail then to where we were stationed in England. Crossing the channel we traveled in an LST, like you can see in one of the pictures I sent you. They ran up to the beach until they hit bottom at high tide, then waited for the tide to go out. This left it sitting high and dry on the beach, so we could drive our vehicles right down the ramp which was made by lowering the end which formed a door to the front of the boat.

Landed Near Cherbourg

"We landed at the foot of the east side of the peninsula on which Cherbourg is located, near the small town of Esigney. You can't imagine how fascinating it was to land on the French coast in a country which had been shut away from the rest of the world for four years.

"We arrived at the beach about noon and left the boats at about 4:00 o'clock. We drove about fifteen miles that evening to an assembly area. The French countryside was extremely interesting. Coming across the channel, we had lovely weather and the water was perfectly, calm.

"During all the campaigns we were fortunate not to have suffered any more casualties than we did. We were in very hot spots a number of times. One of our vehicle's crew was

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killed by artillery fire in the Ardennes campaign and another was slightly wounded at Stolberg when shrapnel knocked a window glass out upon him while he was sleeping. We really had quite a few very close calls.

"The boy who was killed was one of our radio operators from St. Louis. He came to the United States from Greece in about 1937 and was a very handsome and bright boy. The boy who was slightly wounded was our half-track driver from Chester, Pennsylvania. A piece of glass cut him right across the nose between his eyes. He got a Purple Heart for it, but was not hospitalized.

Ardennes Was Worst Campaign

"The Ardennes, I think, was the worst campaign we took part in, largely because of the cold winter weather and snow. At the beginning of the break through there we were considerably north near Stolberg and very comfortably housed. We moved out to help head the Germans off in the bulge and spent about thirty days down there. The Ardennes is a large forested area, I imagine about the size of Jasper county, and is mostly pine. It seems to be rather high ground and is quite rough or hilly in places. The pines were very pretty with snow on them.

"We were at La Marche on the tip of the bulge on the day before Christmas. We got orders to move out of town two or three miles that evening. Since this area is rather sparsely populated and in order to be where we wished to set up, we had to camp outdoors, so we spent the week of Christmas outdoors and it was quite cold, although it hadn't snowed yet.

"We ate a turkey dinner in the field, Christmas. We had the enemy ringed around there with hundreds of artillery pieces and they fired almost continuously for about two or three days and nights. The Germans never got any farther. Just before New Year's we moved back into La Marche. Later on we had many tough days of fighting before the bulge was wiped out.

Has Eighty-Nine Points

"We did have three campaign stars, one for each, for Normandy, Northern France, Belgium and Germany. Now they have divided the German campaign into three campaigns — the Rhineland, the Ardennes, and Central Europe. This gives us two more campaign stars and ten more points, which makes me eighty-nine points altogether.

"We went to the Elbe river before V-E day and took the big town of Dessau. It was like Aachen, almost completely destroyed, and was about the size of Aachen. Another large and very important town we took was Paderborn, which again is about the same size. It was in about the same condition. Of course, in between, there were lots of towns of lesser importance. There are lots of towns and cities in Germany and one does not go very far until he comes to one.

"We crossed the Rhine just outside Godesberg where Hitler met Chamberlain. We stayed in Cologne several days; in fact that is where I rejoined the outfit after being at the hospital. I had occasion while there to go down to the Excelsior hotel, or what was left of it, on some business. This hotel is just to one side of the entrance to the great cathedral in Cologne, so I got a good view of the front of it. They were not allowing anyone to go inside at the time as it is right along the river and the Germans were just across the stream.

Railroad Station Is Gone

"Just to one side of the cathedral also was the wreckage of the great railway station, one of the largest in Europe. The cathedral, which the Germans call the dom, is certainly a monumental edifice and can be seen for several miles.

"When I heard Lily Pons, we were at Bruhl, a small town a few miles south of Cologne. She sang in the auditorium of the Cologne university. This school was very ordinary looking for such a large town. I understood that the main building was built in 1937. It looked like a huge five or six story apartment house and was without any campus worth the name. We crossed the Weser river not too far from Hamelin where the story of the Piper supposedly took place."