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A Proposal

400 Days: One GI's Photo Record of World War II

by Saul Sokolow

Approximately 250 photos and 20,000 words

EXCERPT

Dedication

I want to dedicate this book to a few soldiers in my outfit who were killed in WW II: Staff Sgt. Conrad M. Johnson, Pvt. Raymond E. Batson, Pvt. Frederick C. Allen, and Corp. Raymond A. Bolduc. These men bravely fought by my side, never tiring, and were killed for their stand for freedom.

Preface

I was born on November 6, 1924, the first of two sons, Saul and Herman (1). (2) My father William Sokolow and my mother Mary Barnett (3) were Russian immigrants who came to America in the early 1900s.

As a teenager I took a lot of pictures of family and friends with a box camera. At that time, box cameras were very cheap, and almost everyone had one. I also taught myself how to process the film and I set up a lab in the basement of our three-decker house in Dorchester, Massachusetts. In those days money was very scarce and my family couldn't afford to help me out with photography in any way. In the depression years, between 1935 and 1943, I found I could make a few dollars by taking baby pictures and processing and printing photos for the neighbors. I did this before the war on a small commercial scale for a few years and it helped me to further my knowledge of photography.

During that time I worked in a clothing store named "Lindbrooks" (4), and during my lunch hour I sat with my camera in the Boston Common, which was not that far from my store. Once I noticed a little boy feeding the pigeons, so I took a photo of him. (5) After I developed and printed

the photo it occurred to me that the picture looked pretty darn good. So, I sent it in to the Boston Globe's photo contest. I was shocked when I learned I had won the contest with that photo (see the photo). The prize was \$25, which was a lot of money at that time for a 16 year old. The mother of the boy saw the picture in the Globe. My name and address were in the article, so she contacted me and bought a dozen pictures of her son.

A year later WW II broke out. I was drafted on August 18, 1943. I was 17 years old. My adventure began.

D-Day

June 6, 1944

It was a beautiful day, gorgeous, and we were all sitting on a lawn in England waiting for our orders when suddenly there were hundreds of planes over our heads. We knew that being in the 240mm Howitzers we would not be going in on the first wave, that was for the infantry. That day, and the next day, we heard the horrific reports of the mass casualties on the beaches.

June 27 -

We were put on trucks, and then unloaded in the town of Weymouth, England, where we then boarded ships carrying tanks and guns. These were not infantry boats. Guns and tanks were chained to the decks, our jeeps and trucks were

all water proofed, and all of us were given vomit bags, because the English Channel was one of the roughest water ways. The Germans thought we were going to Calais, France, because we set up a dummy ship filled with rubber trucks, and balloon troops; however, we ended up crossing to Normandy. This was the worst trip in my life, the sea was so choppy, the ship was nothing like the Aquitania. The Aquitania sailed like we were driving on land, but this ship clanked, the trucks and the tanks looked as though they were going to come loose at any time. It was terrible.

First Night on the Beach

June 28, 1944

The first night on Utah Beach was so dark. We were thrown out on the beach like any normal infantry and the gunfire continued almost non-stop. I thought for sure that this would be my end. We all had shovels, and I dug my hole faster than anyone, jumped in it, and stayed there. The morning broke, and I couldn't believe I was still alive. The firing had died down, it was light, and we started unloading the tanks, jeeps, trucks, and the crane. We didn't have combat tanks. Although the tanks we had were outfitted with 50 caliber machine guns, they were used to haul the gun. The soldiers had cleared enough land, so

we could bring the 240mm Howitzer. The Germans had bigger guns, but they were on railroad tracks and immovable, only being able to be fired stationed. Ours was portable, and the Germans never dreamed that we had a gun of this size. There were only 12 in the war, 6 in Italy, 6 in Northern Europe. The guns were valued at that time to be \$1 million, and we were told that if we didn't take good care of them we would be put right into the infantry.

Saul Sokolow's Photo Shop

One day, as a matter of conversation, I told my Captain, Captain Benjamin, I had found a ten year old box camera in some rubble in France. (All the war pictures that are in this book are from that camera which I still have.) I told him I could take photos of the war and process them on the field so the men could have pictures to send home. Being his radio operator I was with him constantly. At first he thought I was crazy, and he asked, "How would you do this?" I replied, "That's easy. Give me a jeep and a driver, and I'm sure mostly all the towns in France and Germany have abandoned photo stores. I could go by and pick up my supplies." He wondered how I know how to do all this. I explained that I used to develop film before the war and undersell the drug stores. He asked how I would process the film. I said, "Easy! The tank that

Sergeant Saroffeen operates to pull the gun is dark' inside, has electrical work, and I can use that to process it."

Well, it worked out fine. All the men had pictures to send home. If the tank wasn't available, I would sometimes use chicken coops. I could bring all of my equipment with me on a truck. This went on almost to the end of the war.

After going into ruined towns in France (and later Germany), I would look for supplies in abandoned or bombed out photography shops. To do the processing I needed:

1. A small adjustable rotary developing tank to develop the negatives
2. A funnel
3. Three trays a little bit larger than 5" x 7" to develop the contact prints
4. A measuring cup
5. A red safelight
6. Liquid or powder developer and "hypo" (fixer)
7. 2 ¼' x 4" photo paper
8. Two pieces of clear glass about 3" x 5"
9. A supply of #120 [2 ¼"] film that took 8 photos on each roll
10. A photo thermometer to determine the water temperature, which must be maintained for proper development

11. Water from clear running streams or Army drinking water from a "Lister Bag"

12. Last, but not least, the box camera I found in the ruins in France.

To develop the negatives I did the following:

1. After I finished taking the 8 photos with the box camera, I would load the film in pitch dark inside the battle tank that pulled our gun (photo).

2. I would pour the developer solution into the film-developing tank and agitate the film development with a clothes pin device that would rotate the negatives in the development tank. The temperature of the film developer solution would determine the time.

3. I would then empty the developer solution into a jar to reuse the solution for additional film processing. Times would be increased as the developer solution became exhausted from use.

4. I would fill the tank with plain water; rotate it, and drain the rinse water, discarding it.

5. I would then fill the tank with "hypo" or fixer which would prevent the image from fading away. After the "hypo" was in the tank for awhile, I would return the fixer solution to its jar for further use.

6. After rinsing the tank again with fresh water, I would open the tank and hang up the negatives to dry. This had to be done on a clear cool day, as they would not dry properly when it was raining.

This process would be repeated for each roll of negatives before they could be contact printed:

Contact printing means the negative was placed in flat direct contact with the photo printing paper sandwiched between two pieces of clear glass which held them in place. The process was as follows:

1. The printing process was done using a small red safelight to allow me to what I was doing. Photo printing is only affected by blue light.
2. I would expose the sandwich of negative against the photo paper to white light which I ran off a spare car battery borrowed from the motor pool. It was recharged for me whenever needed. All this was done in the battle tank that pulled the big gun, when it was available, or on clear dark nights when I couldn't use the tank. Many times I was in a chicken coop.
3. I would then immerse the photo printing paper into the developer solution and wait until a visible image appeared on the printing paper.

4. Once the image looked good, I would rinse the print in clean water.

5. I would then immerse the print in "hypo" that would make the image permanent.

6. Then I would rinse the photo again in clean water and lay the finished photos on a blanket on the ground and leave them until they were dry.

This was the procedure used for every roll of film I developed. To me, this was only a matter of routine. I had been doing this at home since I was 12 years old. What made this different was that I had to adapt to these adverse conditions. These battle conditions were difficult, but my Captain was able to make certain accommodations that allowed me to do this; without his support none of these photographs would exist. I was able to produce hundreds of images for the men of "C" Battery with whom I served.

The word got around and my Captain came to me and requested that I develop some of the pictures for "B" Battery. I told him that I didn't have the time to do all that and do all of our own. I could barely fulfill the orders for pictures of the men in our outfit. The Captain asked me to do him a personal favor and develop the film for the "B" Captain. He asked if I was sure about the

other pictures. "They'll pay you," he said. I replied, "The money's no good to me. I could die here at any moment. Besides, I'm doing most of our pictures when I am supposed to be sleeping. I just can't do it."

The Breakout at St. Lo

July 1944

As we were waiting to go into combat, we were sitting in the fields of Normandy, and for two days, day and night, we saw and heard Patton's tanks going to the front. As my outfit, the 552nd Field Artillery Battalion, was waiting in the hedgerows of Normandy, we watched Patton and his tanks move by us night and day. The Air Force started to bomb St. Lo. American bombers flew overhead and could see the vapor trails left behind. (21,22) German anti-aircraft were fired, sending the planes hurling to the ground in a fiery silver ball. Then we were called to set up our guns for the first time and help the infantry during the breakout of St. Lo. We were ordered to fire our guns, and open up the front. We tried to close the gap between us and the Germans, trying to capture men, but some escaped (23).

That day we saw hundreds of planes come over to bomb St. Lo and the troops in the surrounding area. It was terrible to see the bright burst from the explosion of a

hit to a plane from the German anti-aircraft gun. At that moment we knew at least ten men had died. As history would tell us, that was when we broke out, and it was the beginning of the end of Hitler's reign.

Artillery Barrages

During the day, and all night, the artillery barrages were furious. We were shelling them with the Howitzer, and they were responding with their German-88s and their artillery (13,14,15). Luckily, many of their shells fired would be heard coming, land with a thud, but not explode. This was due to sabotage in their plants. In between the artillery barrages, the front was always moving forward. We were in many different positions where we had to pack and unpack the gun while we were in France. This was a huge undertaking for our battalion of 525 men. I was in the "C" Battery which consisted of 200 men, capable of firing the two guns we had. The nights were dreaded more than the days, because even though we were in foxholes, the artillery barrages were intense. When dawn came on every day, we would take account as to how many men were wounded or killed. Some of the men that were killed were disintegrated because the German shells landed right in their foxholes. The explosion was so tremendous that we couldn't even find their dog tags.

On one of these nights, I and another soldier dug a foxhole, putting a great amount of dirt on top of some wood that we pulled over our heads, hoping to gain some protection from the German artillery. I had my phone connected to my radio, which was outside in the command car. (We used the radio only in the worst emergency because the Germans could detect where you were when it was in use. The only other time we used the radio was when the telephone wires were out for communication.) At that time I got a call on my radio from my Captain, telling me I had to come out to give the fire commands on the radio because the lines were out. Private Gates and I (12), being a T4, were in the foxhole and water began to come up from beneath us. Luckily, the water only rose to our waists. We couldn't get out of the hold because the enemy fire was so fierce. All of a sudden my Captain wanted us to come out and give the commands, but I told him we'd be dead for sure. He said, "Stay where you are."

Mine Detecting

As I was the radio operator, I was in charge of the mine detecting equipment, which consisted of a long rod with a round disc at the bottom, and a meter on the handle that could detect any type of metal within a small distance down. When a mine was detected, someone had to take a

bayonet or a long knife and run it along the side of the mine, clearing away some of the dirt, and exposing the mine (25). I couldn't do that job because I was detecting the mine; someone else had to do the probing. This was an extremely dangerous job because if anyone hit the top of the mine it would go off, killing not only the prober, but also the detector. Captain Benjamin didn't have the heart to put anyone on this detail, which could be on the roads or in the fields where we were travelling. We did have a few trucks that were blown away by mines and we lost some men that way also. So, Captain Benjamin did the probing himself.

Paris

September 21, 1944

When Paris was captured (69-77,79,80), the Americans built a night club in the first landing of the Eiffel Tower. We had a band and dancing. The elevators were broken at that time and we were never able to go to the top. However, I was able to get pictures from the first landing which show the American Army coming into Paris right beneath the Eiffel Tower (67,68). I managed to get to Paris two or three times. While there I was able to take in the Follies Bergere and the Casino de Paris. I still have one of the programs. One day (60,61) I got a

haircut, shampoo, shave, and a manicure. When I was through I decided to go to the movies to see "The Picture of Dorian Grey." On my way into the theater a middle-aged woman stopped me. She asked, "Can you help me? My daughter and I are freezing in an apartment." I asked her to show me and then I went and got her a blanket. In thanks she gave me a great big pear.

Merry-Go-Round

September 1944

As we pushed through Holland, I met a Dutch family whose name was Van-Der-Doos. They invited me and a few other soldiers to their home for supper, and they all kept asking the same question, "When is the war going to end?" (84) Unfortunately, we didn't know. The only answer we could give was, "As soon as we win." I have a picture of them and their family calling card.

When we entered Maastricht it was almost deserted. We found a spot with a little carnival, but there was no electricity. So, we used the gas-powered generator, and we all had a blast on the merry-go-round (48).

German Film and Souvenirs

November 1944

Although I worked on mine detection, I was young and very curious as to what was lying under the rubble in the

many cities in Germany. One day I was standing near the ruins of a bombed out Nazi building, when the reflection of the sun on a metal object caught my eye. When I walked over to it, I saw it was an empty film can. We were told not to touch anything because of the possibility that it might be mined. However, I was one of the lucky ones that didn't listen. As I started to pick up some of the bricks I came upon 4000 feet of 16mm films, all taken by Germans (47).

As I held some of the films up to the sunlight, I could see Hitler, Goering, and some of the other war criminals. I made no secret that I had these films. Many evenings we could not get a regular Hollywood movie, so I would put these silent films on outside. Many of the German houses had white plaster fronts which made a very good screen. When Hitler's image would come on the screen, the GI's would throw bottles, tomatoes, and yell at the screen. The German civilians that were watching were not very happy. But we were winning the war and they were not, thank God.

On another day as I was going through the ruins of a bombed out German church (62,63), I ran across a little magazine that had pictures of German movie stars. I still have them for display today.

We captured some German food supplies. Among the supplies were German beef steaks. They weren't like regular steaks, but were thinner and would curl up after cooking. Everyone went through the chow line, because those steaks were so delicious. I decided to go back for seconds, but the cook said, "You can't get seconds until everyone here had firsts." I said, "I'm not here for seconds!" He asked, "What are you here for?" I replied, "I'm here for thirds!" (66) I had already weaseled my way through for seconds, and the cook was so surprised that he gave me another helping.

There is something that I did that I am definitely now proud of. I found a Nazi flyer's uniform in ruins in Germany. I put it on as a joke to my buddies and me. (16-20) The photos I took show me as a German soldier surrendering, heiling, and surrendering my gun to my Supply Sergeant. Everyone was standing around laughing at me. I made it out like I was Hitler. I even brought the uniform home, but when I wasn't home my mother threw it in the trash. (It would be worth over \$2000 as a collectible today.)

I also managed to pick up two German radios, which I ran on car batteries, and was able to listen to Glen Miller from England. I could also pick up short-wave from the

U.S. I have photos of the radios and the shack that I lived in for awhile (81-83). I made a box for one of the radios. One was a Telefunken. It was a one tube radio with a good range. The Germans used to broadcast radio programs and they had an announcer who said that all the Russian soldiers on the eastern front were killed. We listened to him and called him "Lord HaHa." He spoke with a British accent and the only reason we listened to his propoganda was because he played great American swing music. As I look back, I think to myself that I can't believe I did all of these things, but I did!

Piper Cub

March 26, 1945

As we advanced across France, the front halted at the Rhine River. Things were quiet for awhile. As I sat in my Captain's command car I was listening to the radio, and picked up the voice of a Piper Cub. A Piper Cub was a small plane used for observation. (26) The Germans would not risk firing at these planes, because missing would cause them to give out their location. Thankfully there was no longer a threat from the German air force to fire on us. I could hear the pilot calling for artillery fire on specific German positions. I told him I was able to pick up his radio commands and that I could relay them to our

guns, which were in position on our side of the Rhine.

(24,27) We opened fire on those coordinates, and as we crossed the Rhine into Germany, from the back of the truck I was riding in, I could see the other vehicles going across on a pontoon bridge. As our vehicle crossed, I took a picture from the back of the vehicle as we got to the edge of the pontoon bridge. (28,29,78)

After crossing the Rhine, we came across the woods we had fired on. Everywhere there were German soldiers strewn about dead. The Captain called me into his quarters to thank me and tell me how well I did by picking up the Piper Cub signal. He wanted to reward me in some fashion. The Colonel decided to give the award to the entire gun crew who had fired on the coordinate.

Booze and The Battle of the Bulge

December 1944

Alcohol was a coveted commodity. I knew this from experience, even though I didn't drink. One day a package arrived from the states for a soldier named Burke. When he opened it, it was a large tin labeled "Pineapple Juice." Very exasperated, he said, "What the hell is my wife sending me pineapple juice for?" As he took the label off the can, he could see two little holes that had been soldered on the side. When he opened the can and poured

some, he realized it wasn't pineapple juice, but Scotch Whiskey. His wife had cleverly conceived a way to smuggle him his favorite drink. Had the Captains found out they would have taken it. I knew because one day two of my Lieutenants came over to me. They said, "Sokolow, we know you speak German." (I was the interpreter for my outfit.) They ordered me to get into the car, and said they were going to get some booze. They told me, "We know where a farm is around here."

When we got to the farm, one Lieutenant said to me, "Alright Sokolow, go do your stuff." So, I found the farmer and asked him, "Vo ist de Schnapps?" The farmer replied, "Hub kein Schnapps." (Which means I haven't got any whiskey.) I repeated back to him to confirm, "Hub kein Schnapps?" I then pointed my rifle at him and said, "Boom, boom." Then he changed his mind, and said, "Hub Schnapps." He led us behind the barn, lifted up a piece of sheet metal, revealing ten cases of Cognac. We loaded the ten cases of Cognac into our trucks and headed back. (30) I told the Lieutenant that I wanted a case. "I got it for you, so I want a case." The Lieutenant said he knew I didn't drink, so what did I want with the Cognac? I said that was immaterial, so they gave me a case.

When we got back, I put my case in my captured German trailer, in which I slept and kept my supplies. That night everyone got drunk.

As the war progressed, the Battle of the Bulge broke out. (31-33) We were in Stolberg at the time. That is where I found the German Nazi flag which I brought home with me. It still contains the original bullet holes and dirt. The gun crew had been firing day and night into the battle, they were exhausted and it was the coldest winter in Germany in years. So they were not only tired, but freezing. This is when I decided to break out my case of Cognac. I saved it for a time when it would be used for the best good. Before I gave out the booze, one guy by the name of Kaiser came into my tent. He said, "I hear you've got some booze." I asked how he knew. He said it didn't matter. We all knew this guy was crazy, because we found him one day firing his gun into the dirt. He told us he was shooting glow worms. I gave him a bottle and told him not to bother me any more. I passed the Cognac out to the rest of the boys; they stayed nice and warm, and that's how my case got used for medicinal purposes.

Lighting Up the POW Stockade

We captured hundreds of German prisoners (37,38) and were told to hold them until the MP's could come in trucks

and take them away. At that time our command post was in an abandoned German aircraft factory, which we captured (34-36). My Captain always asked my advice, so he asked how we were going to keep all of these prisoners from escaping. If they had escaped they would have come back to haunt us. I said to the Captain, "We'll pull all of these half finished German aircraft outside (39,40), and I'll pull down all the wires and fixtures from inside the plant and we can use this as our stockade. We can have our own guards to watch over them. We can also use the captured German generator to help us to see at night." I spent the whole night running around fixing wires and bulbs that would pop. No one escaped. (41-43)

We had many German soldiers behind barbed wire waiting to be transported to wherever the army wanted to take them. One day I went up to the fence and found a German officer, and asked him if he had a watch he wanted to trade for cigarettes. He said yes; we made the trade, then I figured I'd antagonize him. I said, "I am a Jew!" I was very curious as to what his response would be, and to my surprise it was not anti-Semitic. This was during the height of the war, and he said to me, "I'll be in the U.S. before you," because he knew that many prisoners were being shipped to the states.

The next day the MP's came with trucks. The German prisoners were filthy dirty (44). The reason we wanted to keep them from escaping as because there were SS soldiers hiding amongst the regular soldiers. These were the ones that committed the major atrocities during the war.

(45,46) The regular German soldiers were in a Wermach, and we knew that some may be hiding amongst them. They had SS tattoos on their arms, but we hadn't checked. As we loaded them up we had them wash up in the lake. There were 300 prisoners, but when we counted them when they came out of the lake there were only 297. I asked where the other three were and was told that the soldiers knew who the SS men were and they drowned them. We never got our hands on them.

The 9 to 5

As the war was coming to a close, with the capture of the Rhur, which was the German industrial area, there were so many captured German soldiers that we didn't know what to do with them. They were all too willing to surrender (51). Capt. Benjamin, who was still my Captain, wondered how I would propose we would keep all of these soldiers. I suggested that we put a sign out front of our battalion headquarters that read, "You May Only Surrender from the Times of 9 till 5. Other Than That You Must Sleep in the

Woods Until the Next Day." The following day there still many that showed up from 9 to 5, because they knew they would get food. We loaded them on trucks, their families present to say good-bye (49,50) This was the scene often as we shipped off many soldiers to POW camps.

There was a German soldier I got to know very well. His name was Paul. We were encamped in the woods in Germany and saw a little house. Out of the house came a German soldier, not armed, but to greet us. He had deserted the army and was living there with his wife. Our soldiers got to know him very well. He helped us in the kitchen in return for scraps of food for him and his wife. He was also a mechanic, and at times we utilized his knowledge. As I could speak German, he asked me if I would like it if he built me a little room on the side of the house. (64) I accepted. So, I had some nice sleeping quarters and a place to develop my pictures. He also gave me a photo of himself which I have today (65). He knew the war was lost, that's why he deserted. He told me that he was forced to go into the army like many were. He seemed to have a brain, not simple blind obedience to Hitler. One day the Colonel came around for inspection, and noticed him working in the kitchen. He was ordered to be taken away to a POW camp.

Building of the Tennis Court

The war ended and not all of us could get home right away. We still had many prisoners to take care of, and we couldn't just leave them idle. My Captain asked me if I had any ideas as to what we could have them do. I mentioned that there was an old tennis court we could have them rebuild. (52) After they rebuilt it, we went 'around to the ruins and found some rackets and balls, and mended an old net. I asked the Captain if I could have some of the guys play, but I couldn't find any American soldiers who knew how. So, still being in love with tennis, I asked the Captain if I could ask the German soldiers to play, he said sure. So I played tennis with the German POWs!

Later I was stationed in Luxembourg. (57-59) One afternoon I was walking by the chapel and I heard beautiful organ music coming out of it. I walked into the chapel and it was empty, but I still heard the organ. It was upstairs, so I went up to see who it was. There was a soldier up there playing. I asked him to play me a few of my favorite tunes, and after about an hour I asked him if he played professionally. He said he played for Radio City Music Hall. I had a private concert!

Hagondange and Home

May 1945

When the war was over, our outfit was split up and we were all sent in different directions so we could all go home. I was sent to the town of Hagondange in France.

While there, they tried to make it pleasant for us by having dances with the local population, which we enjoyed very much because there was an abundance of girls, as there was throughout France. However, there was one bad situation that arose in this town.

The army had a radio repair section, and they wanted all of the soldiers, who were mostly new recruits, and myself, being a combat veteran, to be up at 8 o'clock to repair the radios that had been damaged in the war. Being a Technical Sergeant and a combat veteran, I refused to get up and told them I wouldn't do this work for them. The officers in charge, who were not combat veterans, were afraid that I would start an uprising with all the men there and then none of them would work either. So, they decided to get rid of me and ship me out. I figured this would be punishment for what I had refused to do. I was boarded on a jeep with my duffel bag and sent to a town in Belgium (85,86).

They dropped me off at a building which looked like an old hotel and the jeep scooted off. When I walked into the hotel, there was a Sergeant there who asked who I was. I

said, "My name is Sokolow." "Oh, we've been expecting you!" he retorted. I thought to myself, "Oh boy, here comes the punishment."

I asked the Sergeant, "What do you do here?" He answered, "We don't do anything. We take tours of the cities everyday. Take your things to your room upstairs, and the maid will be by every day to clean." I beat them again! Every time they tried to screw me, I screwed them instead.

During the time in Belgium, while living at the hotel, I got a three day pass to Brussels. I had a wonderful time there. I liked it as much as Paris. What I liked most about it was the fact that no matter where you wanted to go in the city, the street cars had numbers on them and pamphlets in English that told you where each car went. This was very clever I thought. You never had to ask anyone for directions. In Paris you had to ask directions to go everywhere. (54-56)

After about a month in Belgium, all of us in the hotel were told that we were on our way home now. Where did they end up sending us? Back to Hagondange! After a couple of days in Hagondange, they put us on trucks and took us into a sort of mountainous region where the army had established camps for the soldiers while waiting for the boats to the

U.S. While we were waiting for the boat to take us home, a Sergeant came around and said, "We have furlows for anyone that wants them. Two weeks in Switzerland or two on the French Riviera." No one took the furlows because everyone was afraid of missing the boats back home. I told myself that I would be spending the rest of my life back home, so I took the two weeks on the French Riviera. (87-93)

They took us down in cattle cars. We stopped in Paris for a day or two on our way down. (94) When we finally arrived, after a few days on the train, I was taken to a fancy hotel, and was given a food pass. This pass enabled me to get free meals, a free bicycle for transportation, free tours on motorlodges, and free entertainment at all of the beautiful hotels. They had wonderful night clubs there and girls everywhere. They all wanted to go into the night clubs, but couldn't without a soldier. We had taken over the entire French Riviera. None of the girls could just waltz in, so you could pick from any of them. Inside the clubs everything was free: the food, the drinks, the band, everything. If a soldier smoked, a waiter would run over and light the cigarette for him.

We took many tours, one being to a perfume factory where Chanel No. 5 was made. The factory was in the mountains called the Maritime Alps. As we approached the

factory there were beautiful fields in square shapes, all containing different flowers used in manufacturing perfume. After the tour they gave us samples.

On another tour, we were on a boat that took us off the shores of Monaco, and we saw the museum of Jacques Cousteau (89). In the harbor there were many yachts and we were told that one of them belonged to Errol Flynn, the movie actor. Because the war was over, he had received permission to come to the Riviera.

The beaches on the French Riviera were very beautiful, but in a very different way from those in New England. There was no sand, just rocks that were oval and smooth. You couldn't cut your feet on them, but we were given straw shoes to use while walking on them. I managed to go swimming a few times, and the water was absolutely gorgeous. (95-102) In Ville Franche I photographed fishing nets being made ().

During the day there were big bands in a theater named "The Theater of Kings." Contests were held in which prizes could be won for answering questions about music. At that time a show called "Kay Kaiser" was very popular back home. His format was musical questions and they copied this on the Riviera.

After two weeks on the Riviera, and having the time of my life, we got back on the cattle cars and headed back to Camp Lucky Strike. We stopped in Paris again which was enjoyable. When I got back, my duffel bag was still there; nobody had touched anything. I took a great risk going on that adventure, unbeknownst to me then. The same men were still waiting when I returned. Two days later trucks arrived and we were on our way to the boat. The streets were lined with people seeing us off. We passed fields and fields of unused military equipment. I was so surprised that we had many thousands of pieces of equipment that had never been used. WE won the war because we drowned the enemy in our equipment.

As we left, the streets were lined with people. They didn't care for us Americans at all. They were not even upset that we were leaving. Even though we freed them from the Germans, they had little love for us. This is understandable because of the bad behavior displayed by many American soldiers. An incredible example was if soldiers were in a French bar room and started a fight, the proprietor would call the police. Even if the place was pretty messed up, they would still welcome the GI's back the next night because they were hungry for the American money.

As it goes at times, the good suffer for the bad. One time a soldier threw out a package of stockings into the crowd and no one batted an eye or even said thank you.

Later that day we boarded the Rock Hill Liberty Ship (103-107). We spent thirteen days on the sea; it was wretched. I have never seen so much ocean. The food was terrible, and the boat would list so terribly that one moment you were walking on the floor and the next you were walking on the wall. During one of the meals in the dining room, the ship was thrown so hard that we were tossed around. Luckily, I was not injured, but a guy who made it through the entire war broke his leg and was taken off the ship at home on a stretcher.

It was almost January, and as we neared the Statue of Liberty, I could see the snow covered the ground and the traffic in the city. I arrived home in Boston on New Year's Eve 1946. I had been away from home close to three years, and my life seemed very calm now, compared to all of the travelling I had done in those three years. It was hard to believe that the war was over and everything was changed.