



MY MILITARY CAREER

(SOME REMEMBRANCES OF SERVICE IN WORLD WAR II)

by William J. Newman

As recalled in September 1994



## DUSSELDORF ON THE RHINE

We started moving again and with little resistance moved to the Rhine river at Dusseldorf. The Germans evidently decided to make their next stand behind the Rhine. It's a broad, deep river and they hoped it would be a major obstacle to us.

That was good luck for us as Dusseldorf was a big industrial city. If the Germans chose to fight for it, we'd have taken casualties like we had at Saarlautern.

We set up our observation post right on the river in a Bayer laboratory (the same Bayer that made Bayer aspirin, although our government confiscated all Bayer property in the U. S. when we went to war with Germany).

Things were very quiet on the river. It became a drag with no target to fire at and no German shells coming in.

One day a couple of infantrymen asked us if we would like some wine. Now when you are on the continent it is customary to have wine with your meals. We asked them where it was available. They said, "Go to such and such street in downtown Dusseldorf. In one of the shopping sections, you'll see a row of stores. One of them is a wine shop. Below the main floor the basement goes down 6 floors. Each floor has 15 or 20 huge barrels of wine. Bring a 5 gallon water can and take your choice".

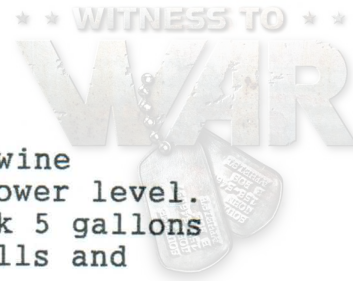
Paul and I borrowed a jeep, picked up two 5 gallon water cans and drove to the store. One problem. There were Military Police posted at the front and back entrances to the store. No GI's were allowed in.

We drove away and a couple of blocks down saw GI's walking with 5 gallon water cans that appeared to be full of something. Upon inquiring they told us the cans contained wine. We asked how they got it.

One of the guys said, "So many soldiers were getting sloshed on the wine that the commanding general put the store off limits. He shut down the freeloading by putting MP's on guard 24 hours a day."

I asked the soldier, "Did you get your wine before the place was closed?" He said, "No we got it a little while ago. Some enterprising bazookamen went into a basement a few doors down from the wine shop. They used their bazookas to blast through the basement walls into the wine cellar. We'll show you what store you have to enter to get through to the wine."

Stoicheff and I went through the basement walls into the wine cellar. What a sight. GI's were all over the place and so was the wine. They would turn on a spigot, sample the wine from a cupped hand, fill their water can or whatever with wine, if they liked the taste. If they did not care for it, they would walk away, letting the wine spill onto the floor.



When we got to the cellar there were 3 or 4 inches of wine on the floor and running down the stairs to the next lower level. Paul and I did some sampling, made our selections, took 5 gallons each, returned through the bazooka-blasted basement walls and headed back to our post.

The experience of quenching your thirst with wine was interesting for a couple of days. But it got old fast. It was too rich for our taste and also it did not help us concentrate on our jobs.

It was a great adventure while it lasted but we poured it out before we made much of a dent in each of our 5 gallons.