

Buddy

A. T. BLOCKER

My most unforgettable character is a Polish forced laborer that my platoon picked up near Leipzig, Germany. I was not long in finding out that we had quite a character on our hands.

First of all, I had better tell you how we acquired "Buddy," as our friend came to be known. Who gave him the name, I don't know, but he seemed to respond to it so well, we let it stick.

Our company was on a reconnaissance mission in the factory towns of Wolfen and Grippen when our platoon ran into some Wermacht and Volksgrenadiers. They proceeded to make things hot for us, but during the ensuing battle, Buddy, freshly liberated and nursing a hatred for the Germans, attached himself to one of our armored cars.

Buddy couldn't speak English, but because of his many years in the Reich, as a forced laborer, he could speak "Der Deutch." Paul Homer, a Chicago Jewish lad, could speak a little "school book German," so he and Buddy became friends. This is where I became involved in the triangle.

Homer was trying to learn more German by talking to Buddy and at the same time learn some of his experiences with the Germans and Russians. Buddy would tell Homer something in German and then Homer would tell me what he said, in English. I soon learned a few words and phrases myself, but the one I heard him repeat so much and became so indelible in my mind, was "Gross ankst," or "great fear."

Buddy, we found out, was a Partisan in Warsaw before being sent to Germany as a slave laborer for "The Reich."

In Warsaw, Buddy had many harrowing experiences. Once he was the only one chosen out of ten to be spared from the firing squad, but oddly enough, he thought that he was chosen to be shot. To avert this, he argued and pleaded with the officer to let him stay with his friends. Luckily, he lost his argument, or caught on, just in time. We all laughed at this story, and so did Buddy when he told it, but I could tell by the unsteadiness of his voice, his expression, and the hollow look on his face, that this was the truth. I could tell by such means that when he told us of some of these horrible tales that he was momentarily reliving those moments.

Buddy was very courageous, and a splendid soldier. After our first mission with him, it didn't take long to make a G. I. out of him, that is, if clothes make the man. One of us donated combat boots, another a field jacket, someone else a pair of pants and a shirt, and there he was, completely outfitted—a G. I.

He looked as G. I. as any of us did. Homer and I used to laugh at the thought of a General coming up to Buddy, alone, and asking him a question when Buddy couldn't speak English, or even a reasonable fascimile. This is one reason Homer would have Buddy stay close to him. Some G. I. might shoot him for a Nazi.

When we went into combat as infantry, Buddy and Homer were right behind me as I was leading my section. We had trouble in keeping Buddy from going out of line and looking for those "Nix Sute Nazis" all by himself. He was unafraid almost to the point of being stupid. I've seen snipers bullets come close to his

head and he wouldn't flinch. Many is the time I've wondered what we would do if he were wounded or killed.

Buddy had a well founded hate for the Germans, so whenever I got the chance I'd let him turn loose his wrath against them. In house-to-house fighting, I'd let him break in doors and window panes whenever necessary. This he would do with great glee. Now, at last, he was a man, a free man, a man with a gun, and a man who knew only too well for what he was fighting. He was out for revenge—and blood.

All of this came to an end at the close of the war, or soon after. Buddy lived with us as a conquering hero for a

few weeks, but when we had to move back to Frankfurt, he was told that we could no longer keep him. Tears filled his large brown eyes and he choked up inside. We all hated this as badly as he did, but before he left we showered him with gifts and secured him a good job with the military government in Nordhausen.

Buddy was more than a Polack, a forced laborer, a soldier. He was a legend! To me, the words courage, bravery, loyalty, valor, friendship and Buddy are synonymous. He was all this and more. There will never be another Buddy.

Home Again

(Impromptu)

JOSEPH ZIMMER

The times are too numerous to mention when my thoughts turned to home during my long three years overseas. Home and the general situation there was often discussed by us, and many letters contained information concerning changes came to me from home. Most everyone there was concerned with what he called radical changes and how they would affect the service man upon his return. Biggest changes were cost of living and lack of young men present in social and worldly activities. Then, too, women in industry were wearing slacks in winter and summer, changing our town and giving it the resort town appearance. New unity and cooperation of all was noticeable and agreeable to all.

Upon arriving in the States, I found that no place looked very similar to when I left three years before. The telephones were much busier, and, of course, transportation was crowded almost beyond description.

Even if I had been gone ten years instead of three, the changes I see now are minor, and the joy of seeing my parents and friends (who have not changed and never will for me, thanks to their charming outlook on life) is so wonderful that these minor changes around me go unheeded like the March winds we so notice when they blow, but that we so rapidly forget with their going. Home is home, and it can never change.